

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

*On the Genealogy
of Morality*

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Introduction: on Nietzsche's critique of morality

Introduction to Nietzsche's text

Although it has come to be prized by commentators as his most important and systematic work, Nietzsche conceived *On the Genealogy of Morality* as a 'small polemical pamphlet' that might help him sell more copies of his earlier writings.¹ It clearly merits, though, the level of attention it receives and can justifiably be regarded as one of the key texts of European intellectual modernity. It is a deeply disturbing book that retains its capacity to shock and disconcert the modern reader. Nietzsche himself was well aware of the character of the book. There are moments in the text where he reveals his own sense of alarm at what he is discovering about human origins and development, especially the perverse nature of the human animal, the being he calls 'the sick animal' (*GM*, III, 14). Although the *Genealogy* is one of the darkest books ever written, it is also, paradoxically, a book full of hope and anticipation. Nietzsche provides us with a stunning story about man's monstrous moral past, which tells the history of the deformation of the human animal in the hands of civilization and Christian moralization; but also hints at a new kind of humanity coming into existence in the wake of the death of God and the demise of a Christian-moral culture.

On the Genealogy of Morality belongs to the late period of Nietzsche's writings (1886–8). It was composed in July and August of 1887 and published in November of that year. Nietzsche intended it as a 'supplement'

¹ Letter to Peter Gast, 18 July 1887, in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Christopher Middleton (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 269.

to and ‘clarification’ of *Beyond Good and Evil*, said by him to be ‘in all essentials’ a critique of modernity that includes within its range of attack modern science, modern art and modern politics. In a letter to his former Basel colleague Jacob Burckhardt dated 22 September 1886, Nietzsche stresses that *Beyond Good and Evil* says the same things as *Zarathustra* ‘only in a way that is different – very different’. In this letter he draws attention to the book’s chief preoccupations and mentions the ‘mysterious conditions of any growth in culture’, the ‘extremely dubious relation between what is called the “improvement” of man (or even “humanisation”) and the enlargement of the human type’, and ‘above all the contradiction between every moral concept and every scientific concept of life’. *On the Genealogy of Morality* closely echoes these themes and concerns. Nietzsche finds that ‘all modern judgments about men and things’ are smeared with an over-moralistic language; the characteristic feature of modern souls and modern books is to be found in their ‘moralistic mendaciousness’ (*GM*, III, 19).

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche describes the *Genealogy* as consisting of ‘three decisive preliminary studies by a psychologist for a revaluation of values’. The First Essay probes the ‘psychology of Christianity’ and traces the birth of Christianity not out of the ‘spirit’ *per se* but out of a particular kind of spirit, namely, *ressentiment*; the Second Essay provides a ‘psychology of the conscience’, where it is conceived not as the voice of God in man but as the instinct of cruelty that has been internalized after it can no longer discharge itself externally; the Third Essay inquires into the meaning of ascetic ideals, examines the perversion of the human will, and explores the possibility of a counter-ideal. Nietzsche says that he provides an answer to the question where the power of the ascetic ideal, ‘the harmful ideal *par excellence*’, comes from, and he argues that this is simply because to date it has been the *only* ideal; no counter-ideal has been made available ‘until the advent of *Zarathustra*’.

The *Genealogy* is a subversive book that needs to be read with great care. It contains provocative imagery of ‘blond beasts of prey’ and of the Jewish ‘slave revolt in morality’ which can easily mislead the unwary reader about the nature of Nietzsche’s immoralism. In the preface, Nietzsche mentions the importance of readers familiarizing themselves with his previous books – throughout the book he refers to various sections and aphorisms from them, and occasionally he makes partial citations from them. The critique of morality Nietzsche carries out in the book is a complex one; its nuances are lost if one extracts isolated images

and concepts from the argument of the book as a whole. His contribution to the study of 'morality' has three essential aspects: first, a criticism of moral genealogists for bungling the object of their study through the lack of a genuine historical sense; second, a criticism of modern evolutionary theory as a basis for the study of morality; and third, a critique of moral values that demands a thorough reevaluation of them. Nietzsche's polemical contribution is intended to question the so-called self-evident 'facts' about morality and it has lost none of its force today.

Reading Nietzsche

Nietzsche is often referred to as an 'aphoristic' writer, but this falls short of capturing the sheer variety of forms and styles he adopted. In fact, the number of genuine aphorisms in his works is relatively small; instead, most of what are called Nietzsche's 'aphorisms' are more substantial paragraphs which exhibit a unified train of thought (frequently encapsulated in a paragraph heading indicating the subject matter), and it is from these building blocks that the other, larger structures are built in more or less extended sequences. Nietzsche's style, then, is very different from standard academic writing, from that of the 'philosophical workers' he describes so condescendingly in *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE, 211). His aim is always to energize and enliven philosophical style through an admixture of aphoristic and, broadly speaking, 'literary' forms. His stylistic ideal, as he puts it on the title page of *The Case of Wagner* (parodying Horace), is the paradoxical one of 'ridendo dicere severum' ('saying what is sombre through what is laughable'), and these two modes, the sombre and the sunny, are mischievously intertwined in his philosophy, without the reader necessarily being sure which is uppermost at any one time.

Nietzsche lays down a challenge to his readers, and sets them a pedagogical, hermeneutic task, that of learning to read him well. He acknowledges that the aphoristic form of his writing causes difficulty, and emphasizes that an aphorism has not been 'deciphered' simply when it has been read out; rather, for full understanding to take place, an 'art of interpretation' or exegesis is required (the German word is *Auslegung*, literally a laying out). He gives the attentive reader a hint of what kind of exegesis he thinks is needed when he claims that the Third Essay of the book 'is a commentary on the aphorism that precedes it' (he intends the opening section of the essay, not the epigraph from *Zarathustra*).

Genealogy and morality

For Nietzsche, morality represents a system of errors that we have incorporated into our basic ways of thinking, feeling and living; it is the great symbol of our profound ignorance of ourselves and the world. In *The Gay Science* 115, it is noted how humankind has been educated by ‘the four errors’: we see ourselves only incompletely; we endow ourselves with fictitious attributes; we place ourselves in a ‘false rank’ in relation to animals and nature – that is, we see ourselves as being inherently superior to them; and, finally, we invent ever new tables of what is good and then accept them as eternal and unconditional. However, Nietzsche does not propose we should make ourselves feel guilty about our incorporated errors (they have provided us with new drives); and neither does he want us simply to accuse or blame the past. We need to strive to be more just in our evaluations of life and the living by, for example, thinking ‘beyond good and evil’. For Nietzsche, it is largely the prejudices of morality that stand in the way of this; morality assumes knowledge of things it does not have.

The criticism Nietzsche levels at morality – what we moderns take it to be and to represent – is that it is a menacing and dangerous system that makes the present live at the expense of the future (*GM*, Preface, 6). Nietzsche’s concern is that the human species may never attain its ‘*highest potential and splendour*’ (ibid.). The task of culture is to produce sovereign individuals, but what we really find in history is a series of deformations and perversions of that cultural task. Thus, in the modern world the aim and meaning of culture is taken to be ‘to breed a tame and civilized animal, a *household pet*, out of the beast of prey “man”’ (*GM*, I, 11), so that now man strives to become ‘better’ all the time, meaning ‘more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian . . .’ (*GM*, I, 12). This, then, is the great danger of modern culture: it will produce an animal that takes taming to be an end in itself, to the point where the free-thinker will announce that the end of history has been attained (for Nietzsche’s criticism of the ‘free-thinker’ see *GM*, I, 9). Nietzsche argues that we moderns are in danger of being tempted by a new European type of Buddhism, united in our belief in the supreme value of a morality of communal compassion, ‘as if it were morality itself, the summit, the *conquered* summit of humankind, the only hope for the future, comfort in the present, the great redemption from all past guilt . . .’ (*BGE*, 202).

Nietzsche argues that in their attempts to account for morality philosophers have not developed the suspicion that morality might be ‘something

problematic'; in effect what they have done is to articulate 'an erudite form of true belief in the prevailing morality', and, as a result, their inquiries remain 'a part of the state of affairs within a particular morality' (*BGE*, 186). Modern European morality is 'herd animal morality' which considers itself to be the definition of morality and the only morality possible or desirable (*BGE*, 202); at work in modern thinking is the assumption that there is a single morality valid for all (*BGE*, 228). Nietzsche seeks to develop a genuinely critical approach to morality, in which all kinds of novel, surprising and daring questions are posed. Nietzsche does not so much inquire into a 'moral sense' or a moral faculty as attempt to uncover *the different senses* of morality, that is the different 'meanings' morality can be credited with in the history of human development: morality as symptom, as mask, as sickness, as stimulant, as poison, and so on. Morality, Nietzsche holds, is a surface phenomenon that requires meta-level interpretation in accordance with a different, superior set of extra-moral values 'beyond good and evil'.

On several occasions in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche makes it clear that certain psychologists and moralists have been doing something we can call 'genealogy' (see, for example, *GM*, I, 2 and II, 4, 12). He finds all these attempts insufficiently critical. In particular, Nietzsche has in mind the books of his former friend, Paul Rée (1849–1901), to whom he refers in the book's preface. In section 4 he admits that it was Rée's book on the origin of moral sensations, published in 1877, that initially stimulated him to develop his own hypotheses on the origin of morality. Moreover, it was in this book that he 'first directly encountered the back-to-front and perverse kind of genealogical hypotheses', which he calls 'the English kind'. In section 7 Nietzsche states that he wishes to develop the sharp, unbiased eye of the critic of morality in a better direction than we find in Rée's speculations. He wants, he tells us, to think in the direction 'of a real *history of morality*' (*die wirkliche* Historie der Moral); in contrast to the 'English hypothesis-mongering *into the blue*' – that is, looking vainly into the distance as in the blue yonder – he will have recourse to the colour 'grey' to aid his genealogical inquiries, for this denotes, 'that which can be documented, which can actually be confirmed and has actually existed . . . the whole, long, hard-to-decipher hieroglyphic script of man's moral past!' (*GM*, Preface, 7). Because the moral genealogists are so caught up in 'merely "modern" experience' they are altogether lacking in knowledge; they have 'no will to know the past, still less an instinct for history . . .' (*GM*, II, 4). An examination of the books of

moral genealogists would show, ultimately, that they all take it to be something given and place it beyond questioning. Although he detects a few preliminary attempts to explore the history of moral feelings and valuations, Nietzsche maintains that even among more refined researchers no attempt at critique has been made. Instead, the popular superstition of Christian Europe that selflessness and compassion are what is characteristic of morality is maintained and endorsed.

Nietzsche begins the *Genealogy* proper by paying homage to ‘English psychologists’, a group of researchers who have held a microscope to the soul and, in the process, pioneered the search for a new set of truths: ‘plain, bitter, ugly, foul, unchristian, immoral . . .’ (*GM*, I, 1). The work of these psychologists has its basis in the empiricism of John Locke, and in David Hume’s new approach to the mind that seeks to show that so-called complex, intellectual activity emerges out of processes that are, in truth, ‘stupid’, such as the *vis inertiae* of habit and the random coupling and mechanical association of ideas. In the attempt of ‘English psychologists’ to show the real mechanisms of the mind Nietzsche sees at work not a malicious and mean instinct, and not simply a pessimistic suspicion about the human animal, but the research of proud and generous spirits who have sacrificed much to the cause of truth. He admires the honest craftsmanship of their intellectual labours. He criticizes them, however, for their lack of a real historical sense and for bungling their moral genealogies as a result, and for failing to raise questions of value and future legislation. This is why he describes empiricism as being limited by a ‘plebeian ambition’ (*BGE*, 213). What the ‘English’ essentially lack, according to Nietzsche, is ‘spiritual vision of real *depth* – in short, philosophy’ (*BGE*, 252).

In section 12 of the Second Essay Nietzsche attempts to expose what he takes to be the fundamental naïveté of the moral genealogists. This consists in highlighting some purpose that a contemporary institution or practice purportedly has, and then placing this purpose at the start of the historical process which led to the modern phenomenon in question. In *GM*, II, 13 he says that only that which has no history can be defined, and draws attention to the ‘synthesis of meanings’ that accrues to any given phenomenon. His fundamental claim, one that needs, he says, to inform all kinds of historical research, is that the origin of the development of a thing and its ‘ultimate usefulness’ are altogether separate. This is because what exists is ‘continually interpreted anew . . . transformed and redirected to a new purpose’ by a superior power. Nietzsche is challenging the assump-

tion that the manifest purpose of a thing ('its utility, form and shape') constitutes the reason for its existence, such as the view that the eye is made to see and the hand to grasp. He argues against the view that we can consider the development of a thing in terms of a 'logical *progressus*' towards a goal. This naïvely teleological conception of development ignores the random and contingent factors within evolution, be it the evolution of a tradition or an organ. However, he also claims that 'every purpose and use is just a *sign* that the will to power' is in operation in historical change. This further claim has not found favour among theorists impressed by Nietzsche's ideas on evolution because they see it as relying upon an extravagant metaphysics. It is clear from his published presentations of the theory of the will to power that Nietzsche did not intend it to be such.

Nietzsche knows that he will shock his readers with the claims he makes on behalf of the will to power, for example, that it is the '*primordial fact* of all history' (*BGE*, 259). To say that the will to power is a 'fact' is not, for Nietzsche, to be committed to any simple-minded form of philosophical empiricism. Rather, Nietzsche's training as a philologist inclined him to the view that no fact exists apart from an interpretation, just as no text speaks for itself, but always requires an interpreting reader. When those of a modern democratic disposition consider nature and regard everything in it as equally subject to a fixed set of 'laws of nature', are they not projecting on to nature their own aspirations for human society, by construing nature as a realm that exhibits the rational, well-ordered egalitarianism which they wish to impose on all the various forms of human sociability? Might they be, as Nietzsche insinuates, masking their 'plebeian enmity towards everything privileged and autocratic, as well as a new and more subtle atheism'? But if even these purported facts about nature are really a matter of interpretation and not text, would it not be possible for a thinker to deploy the opposite intention and look, with his interpretive skill, at the same nature and the same phenomena, reading 'out of it the ruthlessly tyrannical and unrelenting assertion of power claims'? Nietzsche presents his readers with a contest of interpretations. His critical claim is that, whereas the modern 'democratic' interpretation suffers from being moralistic, his does not; his interpretation of the 'text' of nature as will to power allows for a much richer appreciation of the economy of life, including its active emotions. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche wants the seminal role played by the active affects to be appreciated (*GM*, II, 11). We suffer from the 'democratic idiosyncrasy' that opposes in principle everything

that dominates and wants to dominate (*GM*, II, 12). Against Darwinism, he argues that it is insufficient to account for life solely in terms of adaptation to external circumstances. Such a conception deprives life of its most important dimension, which he names ‘*Aktivität*’ (activity). It does this, he contends, by overlooking the primacy of the ‘spontaneous, expansive, aggressive . . . formative forces’ that provide life with new directions and new interpretations, and from which adaptation takes place only once these forces have had their effect. He tells us that he lays ‘stress on this major point of historical method because it runs counter to the prevailing instinct and fashion which would much rather come to terms with absolute randomness, and even the mechanistic senselessness of all events, than the theory that a *power-will* is acted out in all that happens’ (*GM*, II, 12).

Nietzsche’s polemic challenges the assumptions of standard genealogies, for example, that there is a line of descent that can be continuously traced from a common ancestor, and that would enable us to trace moral notions and legal practices back to a natural single and fixed origin. His emphasis is rather on fundamental transformations, on disruptions, and on psychological innovations and moral inventions that emerge in specific material and cultural contexts.

Undue emphasis should not be placed, however, on the role Nietzsche accords to contingency and discontinuity within history, as this would be to make a fetish of them as principles. Contrary to Michel Foucault’s influential reading of genealogy, Nietzsche does not simply oppose himself to the search for origins, and neither is he opposed to the attempt to show that the past actively exists in the present, secretly continuing to animate it.² Much of what Nietzsche is doing in the book is only intelligible if we take him to be working with the idea that it does. Nietzsche opposes himself to the search for origins only where this involves what we might call a genealogical narcissism. Where it involves the discovery of difference at the origin, of the kind that surprises and disturbs us, Nietzsche is in favour of such a search. This is very much the case with his analysis of the bad conscience. For Nietzsche, this is an ‘origin’ (*Ursprung*) that is to be treated as a fate and as one that still lives on in human beings today.

² Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History’ (1971), in *The Essential Works of Foucault*, volume II: 1954–84, ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 369–93.

'Good, bad and evil'

In the first of the three essays of which the *Genealogy* is composed, Nietzsche invites us to imagine a society which is split into two distinct groups: a militarily and politically dominant group of 'masters' exercises absolute control over a completely subordinate group of 'slaves'. The 'masters' in this model are construed as powerful, active, relatively unreflective agents who live a life of immediate physical self-affirmation: they drink, they brawl, they wench, they hunt, whenever the fancy takes them, and they are powerful enough, by and large, to succeed in most of these endeavours, and uninhibited enough to enjoy living in this way. They use the term 'good' to refer in an approving way to this life and to themselves as people who are capable of leading it. As an afterthought, they also sometimes employ the term 'bad' to refer to those people – most notably, the 'slaves' – who by virtue of their weakness are not capable of living the life of self-affirming physical exuberance. The terms 'good' and 'bad' then form the basis of a variety of different 'masters' moralities'. One of the most important events in Western history occurs when the *slaves* revolt against the masters' form of valuation. The slaves are, after all, not only physically weak and oppressed, they are also by virtue of their very weakness debarred from spontaneously seeing themselves and their lives in an affirmative way. They develop a reactive and negative sentiment against the oppressive masters which Nietzsche calls '*ressentiment*', and this *ressentiment* eventually turns creative, allowing the slaves to take revenge in the imagination on the masters whom they are too weak to harm physically. The form this revenge takes is the invention of a new concept and an associated new form of valuation: 'evil'. 'Evil' is used to refer to the life the masters lead (which *they* call 'good') but it is used to refer to it in a *disapproving* way. In a 'slave' morality this negative term 'evil' is central, and slaves can come to a pale semblance of self-affirmation only by observing that they are *not* like the 'evil' masters. In the mouths of the slaves, 'good' comes to refer not to a life of robust vitality, but to one that is 'not-evil', i.e. not in any way like the life that the masters live. Through a variety of further conceptual inventions (notably, 'free will'), the slaves stylize their own natural weakness into the result of a choice for which they can claim moral credit. Western morality has historically been a struggle between elements that derive from a basic form of valuation derived from 'masters' and one derived from 'slaves'.

The fate of bad conscience

In the Second Essay, Nietzsche develops a quite extraordinary story about the origins and emergence of feelings of responsibility and debt (personal obligation). He is concerned with nothing less than the evolution of the human mind and how its basic ways of thinking have come into being, such as inferring, calculating, weighing and anticipating. Indeed, he points out that our word ‘man’ (*manas*) denotes a being that values, measures and weighs. Nietzsche is keen to draw the reader’s attention to what he regards as an important historical insight: the principal moral concept of ‘guilt’ (*Schuld*) descends from the material concept of ‘debts’ (*Schulden*). In this sphere of legal obligations, he stresses, we find the breeding-ground of the ‘moral conceptual world’ of guilt, conscience and duty (*GM*, II, 6).

Nietzsche opens the Second Essay by drawing attention to a paradoxical task of nature, namely, that of breeding an animal that is sanctioned to promise and so exist as a creature of time, a creature that can remember the past and anticipate the future, a creature that can in the present bind its own will relative to the future in the certain knowledge that it will in the future effectively remember that its will has been bound. For this cultivation of effective memory and imagination to be successful, culture needs to work against the active force of forgetting, which serves an important physiological function. The exercise of a memory of the will supposes that the human animal can make a distinction between what happens by accident and what happens by design or intention, and it also presupposes an ability to think causally about an anticipated future. In section 2, Nietzsche makes explicit that what he is addressing is the ‘long history of the origins of *responsibility*’. The successful cultivation of an animal sanctioned to promise requires a labour by which man is made into something ‘regular, reliable, and uniform’. This has been achieved by what Nietzsche calls the ‘morality of custom’ (*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*) and the ‘social straitjacket’ which it imposes. The disciplining of the human animal into an agent that has a sense of responsibility (*Verantwortlichkeit*) for its words and deeds has not taken place through gentle methods, but through the harsh and cruel measures of coercion and punishment. As Nietzsche makes clear at one point in the text: ‘Each step on earth, even the smallest, was in the past a struggle that was won with spiritual and physical torment . . .’ (III, 9). The problem for culture is that it has to deal with an animal that is partly dull, that has an inattentive mind and a strong

propensity to active forgetfulness. In most societies and ages, this problem has not been solved by gentle methods: 'A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory' (II, 3). Nietzsche's insight is that without blood, torture and sacrifice, including 'disgusting mutilations', what we know as 'modern psychology' would never have arisen. All religions are at bottom systems of cruelty, Nietzsche contends; blood and horror lies at the basis of all 'good things'. In a certain sense it is possible to locate the whole of asceticism in this sphere of torment: 'a few ideas have to be made ineradicable . . . unforgettable and fixed in order to hypnotize the whole nervous and intellectual system through these "fixed ideas" . . .' (ibid.).

The fruit of this labour of *Cultur* performed on man in the pre-historical period is the sovereign individual who is master of a strong and durable will, a will that can make and keep promises. On this account freedom of the will is an achievement of culture and operates in the context of specific material practices and social relations. Nietzsche calls this individual autonomous and supra-ethical (*übersittlich*): it is supra-ethical simply in the sense that it has gone beyond the level of custom. For Nietzsche the period of 'the morality of custom' pre-dates what we call 'world history' and is to be regarded as the 'decisive historical period' which has determined the character of man (*GM*, III, 9). The sublime work of morality can be explained as the 'natural' and necessary work of culture (of tradition and custom). The sovereign individual is the kind of self-regulating animal that is required for the essential functions of culture (for example, well-functioning creditor-debtor relations). It cannot be taken to be his ideal in any simple or straightforward sense.³

In *GM*, II, 16 Nietzsche advances, albeit in a preliminary fashion, his own theory on the 'origin' of the bad conscience. He looks upon it 'as a serious illness to which man was forced to succumb by the pressure of the most fundamental of all changes which he experienced'. This change refers to the establishment of society and peace and their confining spaces, which brings with it a suspension and devaluation of the instincts. Nietzsche writes of the basic instinct of freedom – the will to power – being forced back and repressed (II, 17–18). Human beings now walk as if a 'terrible heaviness' bears down on them. In this new scenario the old animal instincts, such as animosity, cruelty, the pleasure of changing and destroying, do not cease to make their demands, but have to find new and

³ Nietzsche criticizes the ideal of 'a single, rigid and unchanging *individuum*' in *Human, All Too Human* 618.

underground satisfactions. Through internalization, in which no longer dischargeable instincts turn inward, comes the invention of what is popularly called the human 'soul': 'The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and granted depth, breadth, and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man's instincts was *obstructed*.' Nietzsche insists that *this* is 'the origin of "bad conscience"'. He uses striking imagery in his portrait of this momentous development.

On the one hand, Nietzsche approaches the bad conscience as the most insidious illness that has come into being and from which man has yet to recover, his sickness of himself. On the other hand, he maintains that the 'prospect of an animal soul turning against itself' is an event and a spectacle too interesting 'to be played senselessly unobserved on some ridiculous planet'. Furthermore, as a development that was prior to all *ressentiment*, and that *cannot* be said to represent any organic assimilation into new circumstances, the bad conscience contributes to the appearance of an animal on earth that 'arouses interest, tension, hope', as if through it 'something . . . were being prepared, as though man were not an end but just a path, an episode, a bridge, a great promise' (*GM*, II, 16). Nietzsche observes that although it represents a painful and ugly growth, the bad conscience is not simply to be looked upon in disparaging terms; indeed, he speaks of the '*active* bad conscience'. It can be regarded as the 'true womb of ideal and imaginative events'; through it an abundance of 'disconcerting beauty and affirmation' has been brought to light.

In the course of history, the illness of bad conscience reached a terrible and sublime peak. In prehistory, argues Nietzsche, the basic creditor-debtor relationship that informs human social and economic activity also finds expression in religious rites and worship, for example, the way a tribal community expresses thanks to earlier generations. Over time the ancestor is turned into a god and associated with the feeling of fear (the birth of superstition). Christianity cultivates further the moral or religious sentiment of debt, and does so in terms of a truly monstrous level of sublime feeling: God is cast as the ultimate ancestor who cannot be repaid (*GM*, II, 20).

Sin and the ascetic ideal

The sense of 'guilt' has evolved through several momentous and fateful events in history. In its initial expression it is to be viewed 'as a piece of

animal psychology, no more . . .' (*GM*, III, 20). In the earliest societies, a person is held answerable for his deeds and obliged to honour his debts. In the course of history this material sense of obligation is increasingly subject to moralization, reaching its summit with guilt before the Christian God. In the Third Essay, the ascetic priest comes into his own. Nietzsche had introduced the 'priests' into his account in the First Essay as a faction of the ruling class of 'masters', who distinguish themselves from the other masters by an extreme concern for purity (*GM*, I, 6–7). Originally, this concern is no more than a variant of the superiority of the master-caste as a whole over the slaves: the priests are masters and thus can afford to wash, wear clean clothes, avoid certain malodorous or unhealthy foods, etc. Slaves have no such luxury. Priestly purity, however, has a dangerous tendency to develop into more and more extreme and more and more internalized forms. Priests become expert in asceticism, and in dealing with all forms of human suffering. It is in the hands of the priest, an artist in feelings of guilt, Nietzsche says, that guilt assumes form and shape: "Sin" – for that is the name for the priestly reinterpretation of the animal "bad conscience" . . . – has been the greatest event in the history of the sick soul up till now: with sin we have the most dangerous and disastrous trick of religious interpretation' (*GM*, III, 20). The value of the priestly type of existence, says Nietzsche, lies in the fact that it succeeds in changing the direction of *ressentiment* (*GM*, III, 15).

In the First Essay, we saw the slaves in the grip of a creative *ressentiment* directed against the masters which could be expressed in the following terms: they – the masters – are 'evil', whereas we are not-evil (therefore, good). Important as the invention of the concept of 'evil' is historically, in itself it does not yet solve the slaves' problem. In fact, in some ways it makes it more acute: If we are good, why do we suffer? The correct answer to this question, Nietzsche believes, is that the slaves suffer because they are inherently weak, and it is simply a biological fact that some humans are much weaker than others, either by nature or as a result of unfortunate circumstances. This answer, however, is one no slave can be expected to tolerate because it seems to make his situation hopeless and irremediable, which, in fact, Nietzsche thinks it is. Humans can bear suffering; what they cannot bear is seemingly senseless suffering, and this is what the slaves' suffering is. It has no meaning, it is a mere brute fact. The priests' intervention consists in giving the slaves a way of interpreting their suffering which at least allows them to make some sense of it. 'You slaves are suffering', so runs the priestly account, 'because you are evil'. The *ressentiment* that was

directed at the masters is now turned by the slaves on themselves. The sick, suffering slave becomes a 'sinner'. In addition to this diagnosis of the cause of suffering, the priests also have a proposed therapy. Since 'evil' designates the kind of intense vitality the masters exhibit in their lives, the way to escape it is to engage in a progressive spiral of forms of life-abnegation and self-denial. In the long run, this therapy makes the original 'disease' – the suffering that results from human weakness – worse, but in the short run of 2,000 years or so, it has mobilized what energy the slaves command in the service of creating what we know as Western culture.

The 'healing instinct of life' operates through the priest, in which ideas of guilt, sin, damnation, and so on, serve 'to make the sick *harmless* to a degree', and the instincts of the sufferer are exploited 'for the purpose of self-discipline, self-surveillance, and self-overcoming' (*GM*, III, 16). The priests' remedy for human suffering is the ascetic ideal, the ideal of a human will turned utterly against itself, or self-abnegation *for its own sake*. Such an ideal seems to express a self-contradiction in as much as we seem to encounter with it life operating against life. Nietzsche argues, however, that viewed from physiological and psychological angles this amounts to nonsense. In section 13 of the Third Essay he suggests that, on closer examination, the self-contradiction turns out to be only apparent, it is 'a psychological misunderstanding of something, the real nature of which was far from being understood . . .'. His argument is that the ascetic ideal has its source or origins in what he calls 'the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life'. The ideal indicates a partial physiological exhaustion, in the face of which 'the deepest instincts of life, which have remained intact, continually struggle with new methods and inventions'. The ascetic ideal amounts, in effect, to a trick or artifice (*Kunstgriff*) for the preservation of life. The interpretation of suffering developed by the ascetic ideal for a long time now has succeeded in shutting the door on a suicidal nihilism by giving humanity a goal: morality. The ideal has added new dimensions and layers to suffering by making it deeper and more internal, creating a suffering that gnaws more intensely at life and bringing it within the perspective of metaphysical-moral guilt. But this saving of the will has been won at the expense of the future and fostered a hatred of the conditions of human existence. It expresses a 'fear of happiness and beauty' and 'a longing to get away from appearance, transience, growth, death'.

The real problem, according to Nietzsche, is not the past, not even Christianity, but present-day Christian-moral Europe. 'After such vistas

and with such a burning hunger in our conscience and science', he writes in an aphorism on the great health, 'how could we still be satisfied with *present-day man?*' (*GS*, 382). We live in an age in which the desire for man and his future – a future beyond mere self-preservation, security and comfort – seems to be disappearing from the face of the earth. Modern atheists who have emancipated themselves from the affliction of past errors – the error of God, of the world conceived as a unity, of free will, and so on – have only freed themselves from something and not for something. They either believe in nothing at all or have a blind commitment to science and uphold the unconditional nature of the will to truth. By contrast, Nietzsche commits himself to the '*supreme affirmation*' that is born out of fullness, and this is 'an affirmation without reservation even of suffering, even of guilt, even of all that is strange and questionable in existence'. Nietzsche stresses that this 'Yes to life' is both the highest and deepest insight that is 'confirmed and maintained by truth and knowledge' (*EH* 'BT', 2). It is not, then, a simple-minded, pre-cognitive 'Yes' to life that he wants us to practise, but one, as he stresses, secured by 'truth and knowledge'. The 'free spirit' knows what kind of 'you shall' he has obeyed, Nietzsche writes; and in so doing, 'he also knows what he now *can*, what only now he – *may* do . . .' (*HH*, Preface).

Nietzsche and political thought

Nietzsche's political thinking remains a source of difficulty, even embarrassment, because it fails to accord with the standard liberal ways of thinking about politics which have prevailed in the last 200 and more years. As in liberalism, Nietzsche's conception of politics is an instrumental one, but he differs radically from the liberal view in his valuation of life. For liberalism, politics is a means to the peaceful coexistence of individual agents; for Nietzsche, by contrast, it is a means to the production of human greatness. Nietzsche challenges what we might call the ontological assumptions that inform the positing of the liberal subject, chiefly that its identity is largely imaginary because it is posited only at the expense of neglecting the cultural and historical formation of the subject. The liberal formulation of the subject assumes individual identity and liberty to be a given, in which the individual exists independently of the mediations of culture and history and outside the medium of ethical contest and spiritual labour. Nietzsche is committed to the enhancement of man and this enhancement does not consist in

improving the conditions of existence for the majority of human beings, but in the generation of a few, striking and superlatively vital ‘highest exemplars’ of the species. Nietzsche looks forward to new philosophers who will be strong and original enough to revalue and reverse so-called ‘eternal values’ and, in teaching human beings that the future depends on their will, ‘will prepare the way for great risk-taking and joint experiments in discipline and breeding’, and in this way, ‘put an end to that terrible reign of nonsense and coincidence that until now has been known as “history”’ (*BGE*, 203).

In the two early essays from 1871–2 included in this volume, ‘The Greek State’ and ‘Homer’s Contest’, we see at work the stress Nietzsche places on political life not as an end in itself but as a means to the production of great human beings and an aristocratic culture. Nietzsche presents a stark choice between ‘culture’ and ‘politics’ (or the claims of justice). He argues that if we wish to promote greatness and serve the ends of culture, then it is necessary to recognize that an essential aspect of society is economic servitude for the majority of individuals. We must not let the ‘urge for justice . . . swamp all other ideas’; or, as Nietzsche memorably puts it, the ‘cry of compassion’ must not be allowed to tear down the ‘walls of culture’.

When Nietzsche took up his teaching appointment at Basel University, he sought to make a contribution to the so-called ‘Homeric question’ which was centred on issues about the authenticity, authorship and significance of the works ascribed to ‘Homer’. He addressed the topic in his inaugural lecture given in 1869, which was entitled ‘Homer and Classical Philology’ (originally conceived as an essay on ‘Homer’s Personality’). He comments upon the significance of the Greek *agon* (contest) in research he had done on a neglected (and maligned) Florentine manuscript on an imaginary contest between Homer and Hesiod (the first part of this research was published in 1870 and a second part in 1873).⁴ An exploration of what constitutes the kernel of the Hellenic idea of the contest (*agon, certamen*) becomes the major concern of Nietzsche’s speculations on the ‘event’ of Homer in the unpublished essay ‘Homer’s Contest’ that we publish here. Two points are worth noting about this research work by the young Nietzsche: first, that it is an early exercise in genealogy in the sense that it focuses on what it means to reclaim something from the past – in

⁴ See Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967 ff.), 2.1, pp. 271–339.

this case antiquity – for the present, and, second, that the motif of the contest is one that persists in Nietzsche and runs throughout his writings.

Nietzsche's positions on ethics and politics may not ultimately compel us but they are more instructive than is commonly supposed, and certainly not as horrific as many of his critics would have us believe.⁵ He is out to disturb our satisfaction with ourselves as moderns and as knowers. Although we may find it difficult to stomach some of his specific proposals for the overcoming of man and morality, his conception of genealogy has become a constitutive feature of our efforts at self-knowledge.

⁵ See the fine study by John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

ON THE GENEALOGY
OF MORALITY

A Polemic

Preface

I

We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason. We have never looked for ourselves, – so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves? How right is the saying: ‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also’;¹ *our* treasure is where the hives of our knowledge are. As born winged-insects and intellectual honey-gatherers we are constantly making for them, concerned at heart with only one thing – to ‘bring something home’. As far as the rest of life is concerned, the so-called ‘experiences’, – who of us ever has enough seriousness for them? or enough time? I fear we have never really been ‘with it’ in such matters: our heart is simply not in it – and not even our ear! On the contrary, like somebody divinely absent-minded and sunk in his own thoughts who, the twelve strokes of midday having just boomed into his ears, wakes with a start and wonders ‘What hour struck?’, sometimes we, too, *afterwards* rub our ears and ask, astonished, taken aback, ‘What did we actually experience then?’ or even, ‘Who *are* we, in fact?’ and afterwards, as I said, we count all twelve reverberating strokes of our experience, of our life, of our *being* – oh! and lose count . . . We remain strange to ourselves out of necessity, we do not understand ourselves, we *must* confusedly mistake who we are, the motto² ‘everyone is furthest from himself’ applies to us for ever, – we are not ‘knowers’ when it comes to ourselves . . .

¹ Gospel according to Matthew 6.21.

² ‘Jeder ist sich selbst der Fernste’ is a reversal of the common German saying, ‘Jeder ist sich selbst der Nächste’ ‘Everyone is closest to himself’ i.e. ‘Charity begins at home’, cf. also Terence, *Andria* IV. 1.12.

2

– My thoughts on the *descent* of our moral prejudices – for that is what this polemic is about – were first set out in a sketchy and provisional way in the collection of aphorisms entitled *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*,³ which I began to write in Sorrento during a winter that enabled me to pause, like a wanderer pauses, to take in the vast and dangerous land through which my mind had hitherto travelled. This was in the winter of 1876–7; the thoughts themselves go back further. They were mainly the same thoughts which I shall be taking up again in the present essays – let us hope that the long interval has done them good, that they have become riper, brighter, stronger and more perfect! The fact *that* I still stick to them today, and that they themselves in the meantime have stuck together increasingly firmly, even growing into one another and growing into one, makes me all the more blithely confident that from the first, they did not arise in me individually, randomly or sporadically but as stemming from a single root, from a *fundamental will* to knowledge deep inside me which took control, speaking more and more clearly and making ever clearer demands. And this is the only thing proper for a philosopher. We have no right to stand out *individually*: we must not either make mistakes or hit on the truth individually. Instead, our thoughts, values, every ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘if’ and ‘but’ grow from us with the same inevitability as fruits borne on the tree – all related and referring to one another and a testimonial to one will, one health, one earth, one sun. – Do *you* like the taste of our fruit? – But of what concern is that to the trees? And of what concern is it to *us* philosophers? . . .

3

With a characteristic scepticism to which I confess only reluctantly – it relates to *morality* and to all that hitherto on earth has been celebrated as morality –, a scepticism which sprang up in my life so early, so unbidden, so unstopably, and which was in such conflict with my surroundings, age, precedents and lineage that I would almost be justified in calling it my ‘*a priori*’, – eventually my curiosity and suspicion were bound to fix on the question of *what origin* our terms good and evil actually have. Indeed, as a thirteen-year-old boy, I was preoccupied with the problem of the origin of evil: at an age when one’s heart was ‘half-filled with childish

³ *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

games, half-filled with God',⁴ I dedicated my first literary childish game, my first philosophical essay, to this problem – and as regards my 'solution' to the problem at that time, I quite properly gave God credit for it and made him the *father* of evil. Did my '*a priori*' want *this* of me? That new, immoral, or at least immoralistic '*a priori*': and the oh-so-anti-Kantian, so enigmatic 'categorical imperative'⁵ which spoke from it and to which I have, in the meantime, increasingly lent an ear, and not just an ear? . . . Fortunately I learnt, in time, to separate theological from moral prejudice and I no longer searched for the origin of evil *beyond* the world. Some training in history and philology, together with my innate fastidiousness with regard to all psychological problems, soon transformed my problem into another: under what conditions did man invent the value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves have?* Have they up to now obstructed or promoted human flourishing? Are they a sign of distress, poverty and the degeneration of life? Or, on the contrary, do they reveal the fullness, strength and will of life, its courage, its confidence, its future? To these questions I found and ventured all kinds of answers of my own, I distinguished between epochs, peoples, grades of rank between individuals, I focused my inquiry, and out of the answers there developed new questions, investigations, conjectures, probabilities until I had my own territory, my own soil, a whole silently growing and blossoming world, secret gardens, as it were, the existence of which nobody must be allowed to suspect . . . Oh! how *happy* we are, we knowers, provided we can keep quiet for long enough! . . .

4

I was given the initial stimulation to publish something about my hypotheses on the origin of morality by a clear, honest and clever, even too-clever little book, in which I first directly encountered the back-to-front and perverse kind of genealogical hypotheses, actually the *English* kind, which drew me to it – with that power of attraction which everything contradictory and antithetical has. The title of the little book was

⁴ Goethe, *Faust* I. 378f.

⁵ Immanuel Kant gives a number of different formulations of what he takes to be the basic principle of morality in his two major works on ethics, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). The first formulation of the 'categorical imperative' in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* reads: 'Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (*Groundwork*, section 1).

The Origin of the Moral Sensations; its author was Dr Paul Rée; the year of its publication 1877. I have, perhaps, never read anything to which I said ‘no’, sentence by sentence and deduction by deduction, as I did to this book: but completely without annoyance and impatience. In the work already mentioned which I was working on at the time, I referred to passages from this book more or less at random, not in order to refute them – what business is it of mine to refute! – but, as befits a positive mind, to replace the improbable with the more probable and in some circumstances to replace one error with another. As I said, I was, at the time, bringing to the light of day those hypotheses on descent to which these essays are devoted, clumsily, as I am the first to admit, and still inhibited because I still lacked my own vocabulary for these special topics, and with a good deal of relapse and vacillation. In particular, compare what I say about the dual prehistory of good and evil in *Human, All Too Human*, section 45 (namely in the sphere of nobles and slaves); likewise section 136 on the value and descent of ascetic morality; likewise sections 96 and 99 and volume II, section 89 on the ‘Morality of Custom’, that much older and more primitive kind of morality which is *toto coelo*⁶ removed from altruistic evaluation (which Dr Rée, like all English genealogists, sees as the moral method of valuation *as such*); likewise section 92, *The Wanderer*, section 26, and *Daybreak*, section 112, on the descent of justice as a balance between two roughly equal powers (equilibrium as the precondition for all contracts and consequently for all law); likewise *The Wanderer*, sections 22 and 33 on the descent of punishment, the deterrent [*terroristisch*] purpose of which is neither essential nor inherent (as Dr Rée thinks: – instead it is introduced in particular circumstances and is always incidental and added on).⁷

5

Actually, just then I was preoccupied with something much more important than the nature of hypotheses, mine or anybody else’s, on the origin of morality (or, to be more exact: the latter concerned me only for one end, to which it is one of many means). For me it was a question of the *value* of morality, – and here I had to confront my great teacher Schopenhauer, to whom that book of mine spoke as though he were still

⁶ ‘completely, utterly’.

⁷ All the passages Nietzsche mentions here are to be found below in the supplementary material of this edition.

present, with its passion and its hidden contradiction (– it, too, being a ‘polemic’). I dealt especially with the value of the ‘unegoistic’, the instincts of compassion, self-denial, self-sacrifice which Schopenhauer⁸ had for so long gilded, deified and transcendentalized until he was finally left with them as those ‘values as such’ on the basis of which he *said* ‘no’ to life and to himself as well. But against *these* very instincts I gave vent to an increasingly deep mistrust, a scepticism which dug deeper and deeper! Precisely here I saw the *great* danger to mankind, its most sublime temptation and seduction – temptation to what? to nothingness? – precisely here I saw the beginning of the end, standstill, mankind looking back wearily, turning its will *against* life, and the onset of the final sickness becoming gently, sadly manifest: I understood the morality of compassion, casting around ever wider to catch even philosophers and make them ill, as the most uncanny symptom of our European culture which has itself become uncanny, as its detour to a new Buddhism? to a new Euro-Buddhism? to – *nihilism?* . . . This predilection for and overvaluation of compassion that modern philosophers show is, in fact, something new: up till now, philosophers were agreed as to the *worthlessness* of compassion. I need only mention Plato, Spinoza, La Rochefoucauld and Kant, four minds as different from one another as it is possible to be, but united on one point: their low opinion of compassion. –

6

This problem of the *value* of compassion and of the morality of compassion (– I am opposed to the disgraceful modern softness of feeling –) seems at first to be only an isolated phenomenon, a lone question mark; but whoever pauses over the question and *learns* to ask, will find what I found: – that a vast new panorama opens up for him, a possibility makes him giddy, mistrust, suspicion and fear of every kind spring up, belief in morality, all morality, wavers, – finally, a new demand becomes articulate. So let us give voice to this *new demand*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined* – and so we need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed (morality as result, as symptom, as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause,

⁸ In his ‘Über die Grundlagen der Moral’ (1840) Schopenhauer claimed that compassion was the basis of morality.

remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison), since we have neither had this knowledge up till now nor even desired it. People have taken the *value* of these 'values' as given, as factual, as beyond all questioning; up till now, nobody has had the remotest doubt or hesitation in placing higher value on 'the good man' than on 'the evil', higher value in the sense of advancement, benefit and prosperity for man in general (and this includes man's future). What if the opposite were true? What if a regressive trait lurked in 'the good man', likewise a danger, an enticement, a poison, a narcotic, so that the present *lived at the expense of the future*? Perhaps in more comfort and less danger, but also in a smaller-minded, meaner manner? . . . So that morality itself were to blame if man, as species, never reached his *highest potential power and splendour*? So that morality itself was the danger of dangers? . . .

7

Suffice it to say that since this revelation, I had reason to look around for scholarly, bold, hardworking colleagues (I am still looking). The vast, distant and hidden land of morality – of morality as it really existed and was really lived – has to be journeyed through with quite new questions and as it were with new eyes: and surely that means virtually *discovering* this land for the first time? . . . If, on my travels, I thought about the above-mentioned Dr Rée, amongst others, this was because I was certain that, judging from the questions he raised, he himself would have to adopt a more sensible method if he wanted to find the answers. Was I mistaken? At any rate, I wanted to focus this sharp, unbiased eye in a better direction, the direction of a real *history of morality*, and to warn him, while there was still time, against such English hypothesis-mongering *into the blue*. It is quite clear which colour is a hundred times more important for a genealogist than blue: namely *grey*, which is to say, that which can be documented, which can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short, the whole, long, hard-to-decipher hieroglyphic script of man's moral past! *This* was unknown to Dr Rée; but he had read Darwin: – and so, in his hypotheses, the Darwinian beast and the ultra-modern, humble moral weakling who 'no longer bites' politely shake hands in a way that is at least entertaining, the latter with an expression of a certain good-humoured and cultivated indolence on his face, in which even a grain of pessimism and fatigue mingle: as if it were really not worth taking all these things – the problems of morality – so seriously. Now I, on the

contrary, think there is nothing which more *rewards* being taken seriously; the reward being, for example, the possibility of one day being allowed to take them cheerfully. That cheerfulness, in fact, or to put it into my parlance, that *gay science* – is a reward: a reward for a long, brave, diligent, subterranean seriousness for which, admittedly, not everyone is suited. The day we can say, with conviction: ‘Forwards! even our old morality would make a *comedy!*’ we shall have discovered a new twist and possible outcome for the Dionysian drama of the ‘fate of the soul’ –: and he’ll make good use of it, we can bet, he, the grand old eternal writer of the comedy of our existence! . . .

8

– If anyone finds this script incomprehensible and hard on the ears, I do not think the fault necessarily lies with me. It is clear enough, assuming, as I do, that people have first read my earlier works without sparing themselves some effort: because they really are not easy to approach. With regard to my *Zarathustra*, for example, I do not acknowledge anyone as an expert on it if he has not, at some time, been both profoundly wounded and profoundly delighted by it, for only then may he enjoy the privilege of sharing, with due reverence, the halcyon element from which the book was born and its sunny brightness, spaciousness, breadth and certainty. In other cases, the aphoristic form causes difficulty: this is because this form is *not taken seriously enough these days*. An aphorism, properly stamped and moulded, has not been ‘deciphered’ just because it has been read out; on the contrary, this is just the beginning of its proper *interpretation*, and for this, an art of interpretation is needed. In the third essay of this book I have given an example of what I mean by ‘interpretation’ in such a case: – this treatise is a commentary on the aphorism that precedes it. I admit that you need one thing above all in order to practise the requisite *art* of reading, a thing which today people have been so good at forgetting – and so it will be some time before my writings are ‘readable’ –, you almost need to be a cow for this one thing and certainly *not* a ‘modern man’: it is *rumination* . . .

Sils-Maria, Upper Engadine
July 1887.

First essay: 'Good and Evil', 'Good and Bad'

I

– These English psychologists, who have to be thanked for having made the only attempts so far to write a history of the emergence of morality, – provide us with a small riddle in the form of themselves; in fact, I admit that as living riddles they have a significant advantage over their books – *they are actually interesting!* These English psychologists – just what do they want? You always find them at the same task, whether they want to or not, pushing the *partie honteuse* of our inner world to the foreground, and looking for what is really effective, guiding and decisive for our development where man's intellectual pride would least wish to find it (for example, in the *vis inertiae* of habit, or in forgetfulness, or in a blind and random coupling and mechanism of ideas, or in something purely passive, automatic, reflexive, molecular and thoroughly stupid) – what is it that actually drives these psychologists in precisely *this* direction all the time? Is it a secret, malicious, mean instinct to belittle humans, which it might well not admit to itself? Or perhaps a pessimistic suspicion, the mistrust of disillusioned, surly idealists who have turned poisonous and green? Or a certain subterranean animosity and *rancune* towards Christianity (and Plato), which has perhaps not even passed the threshold of consciousness? Or even a lewd taste for the strange, for the painful paradox, for the dubious and nonsensical in life? Or finally – a bit of everything, a bit of meanness, a bit of gloominess, a bit of anti-Christianity, a bit of a thrill and need for pepper? . . . But people tell me that they are just old, cold, boring frogs crawling round men and hopping into them as if they were in their element, namely a *swamp*. I am resistant to hearing this and, indeed, I do

not believe it; and if it is permissible to wish where it is impossible to know, I sincerely hope that the reverse is true, – that these analysts holding a microscope to the soul are actually brave, generous and proud animals, who know how to control their own pleasure and pain and have been taught to sacrifice desirability to truth, *every* truth, even a plain, bitter, ugly, foul, unchristian, immoral truth . . . Because there are such truths. –

2

So you have to respect the good spirits which preside in these historians of morality! But it is unfortunately a fact that *historical spirit* itself is lacking in them, they have been left in the lurch by all the good spirits of history itself! As is now established philosophical practice, they all think in a way that is *essentially* unhistorical; this can't be doubted. The idiocy of their moral genealogy is revealed at the outset when it is a question of conveying the descent of the concept and judgment of 'good'. 'Originally' – they decree – 'unegoistic acts were praised and called good by their recipients, in other words, by the people to whom they were *useful*; later, everyone *forgot* the origin of the praise and because such acts had always been *habitually* praised as good, people also began to experience them as good – as if they were something good *as such*'. We can see at once: this first deduction contains all the typical traits of idiosyncratic English psychologists, – we have 'usefulness', 'forgetting', 'habit' and finally 'error', all as the basis of a respect for values of which the higher man has hitherto been proud, as though it were a sort of general privilege of mankind. This pride *must be* humbled, this valuation devalued: has that been achieved? . . . Now for me, it is obvious that the real breeding-ground for the concept 'good' has been sought and located in the wrong place by this theory: the judgment 'good' does *not* emanate from those to whom goodness is shown! Instead it has been 'the good' themselves, meaning the noble, the mighty, the high-placed and the high-minded, who saw and judged themselves and their actions as good, I mean first-rate, in contrast to everything lowly, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was from this *pathos of distance* that they first claimed the right to create values and give these values names: usefulness was none of their concern! The standpoint of usefulness is as alien and inappropriate as it can be to such a heated eruption of the highest rank-ordering and rank-defining value judgments: this is the point where feeling reaches the opposite of the low temperatures needed for any calculation of prudence

or reckoning of usefulness, – and not just for once, for one exceptional moment, but permanently. The pathos of nobility and distance, as I said, the continuing and predominant feeling of complete and fundamental superiority of a higher ruling kind in relation to a lower kind, to those ‘below’ – *that* is the origin of the antithesis ‘good’ and ‘bad’. (The seigniorial privilege of giving names even allows us to conceive of the origin of language itself as a manifestation of the power of the rulers: they say ‘this *is* so and so’, they set their seal on everything and every occurrence with a sound and thereby take possession of it, as it were). It is because of this origin that from the outset, the word ‘good’ is absolutely *not* necessarily attached to ‘unegoistic’ actions: as the superstition of these moral genealogists would have it. On the contrary, it is only with a *decline* of aristocratic value judgments that this whole antithesis between ‘egoistic’ and ‘unegoistic’ forces itself more and more on man’s conscience, – it is, to use my language, the *herd instinct* which, with that, finally gets its word in (and makes *words*). And even then it takes long enough for this instinct to become sufficiently dominant for the valuation of moral values to become enmeshed and embedded in the antithesis (as is the case in contemporary Europe, for example: the prejudice which takes ‘moral’, ‘unegoistic’ and ‘*désintéressé*’ as equivalent terms already rules with the power of a ‘fixed idea’ and mental illness).

3

But secondly: quite apart from the fact that that hypothesis about the descent of the value judgment ‘good’ is historically untenable, it also suffers from an inner psychological contradiction. The usefulness of unegoistic behaviour is supposed to be the origin of the esteem in which it is held, and this origin is supposed to have been *forgotten*: – but how was such forgetting *possible*? Did the usefulness of such behaviour suddenly cease at some point? The opposite is the case: it is that this usefulness has been a permanent part of our everyday experience, something, then, that has been constantly stressed anew; consequently, instead of fading from consciousness, instead of becoming forgettable, it must have impressed itself on consciousness with ever greater clarity. How much more sensible is the opposite theory (that doesn’t make it any more true –), which is held, for example, by Herbert Spencer: he judges the concept ‘good’ as essentially the same as ‘useful’, ‘practical’, so that in their judgments ‘good’ and ‘bad’, people sum up and sanction their *unforgotten*, *unforgettable* experiences of

what is useful-practical, harmful-impractical. According to this theory, good is what has always shown itself to be useful: so it can claim validity as 'valuable in the highest degree', as 'valuable as such'. This route towards an explanation is wrong, as I said, but at least the explanation in itself is rational and psychologically tenable.

4

– I was given a pointer in the *right* direction by the question as to what the terms for 'good', as used in different languages, mean from the etymological point of view: then I found that they all led me back to the *same conceptual transformation*, – that everywhere, 'noble', 'aristocratic' in social terms⁹ is the basic concept from which, necessarily, 'good' in the sense of 'spiritually noble', 'aristocratic', of 'spiritually highminded', 'spiritually privileged' developed: a development that always runs parallel with that other one which ultimately transfers 'common', 'plebeian', 'low' into the concept 'bad'. The best example for the latter is the German word '*schlecht*' (bad) itself: which is identical with '*schlicht*' (plain, simple) – compare '*schlechtweg*' (plainly), '*schlechterdings*' (simply) – and originally referred to the simple, the common man with no derogatory implication, but simply in contrast to the nobility. Round about the time of the Thirty Years War, late enough, then, this meaning shifted into its current usage. – To me, this seems an *essential* insight into moral genealogy; that it has been discovered so late is due to the obstructing influence which the democratic bias within the modern world exercises over all questions of descent. And this is the case in the apparently most objective of fields, natural science and physiology, as I shall just mention here. The havoc this prejudice can wreak, once it is unbridled to the point of hatred, particularly for morality and history, can be seen in the famous case of Buckle; the *plebeianism* of the modern spirit, which began in England, broke out there once again on its native soil as violently as a volcano of mud, and with that salted, overloud, vulgar loquacity with which all volcanoes have spoken up till now. –

5

With regard to *our* problem, which can justifiably be called a *quiet* problem and fastidiously addresses itself to only a few ears, it is of no little

⁹ Nietzsche here uses a derivative of the word '*Stand*' ('estate').

interest to discover that, in these words and roots which denote 'good', we can often detect the main nuance which made the noble feel they were men of higher rank. True, in most cases they might give themselves names which simply show superiority of power (such as 'the mighty', 'the masters', 'the commanders') or the most visible sign of this superiority, such as 'the rich', 'the propertied' (that is the meaning of *arya*; and the equivalent in Iranian and Slavic). But the names also show a *typical character trait*: and this is what concerns us here. For example, they call themselves 'the truthful': led by the Greek aristocracy, whose mouthpiece is the Megarian poet Theognis.¹⁰ The word used specifically for this purpose, ἔσθλος,¹¹ means, according to its root, one who *is*, who has reality, who really exists and is true; then, with a subjective transformation, it becomes the slogan and catch-phrase of the aristocracy and is completely assimilated with the sense of 'aristocratic', in contrast to the *deceitful* common man, as taken and shown by Theognis, – until, finally, with the decline of the aristocracy, the word remains as a term for spiritual *noblesse*, and, as it were, ripens and sweetens. Cowardice is underlined in the word χαχός,¹² as in δειλός¹³ (the plebeian in contrast to the ἀγαθός): perhaps this gives a clue as to where we should look for the etymological derivation of the ambiguous term ἀγαθός.¹⁴ In the Latin word *malus*¹⁵ (to which I juxtapose μέλας)¹⁶ the common man could be characterized as the dark-skinned and especially the dark-haired man (*'hic niger est –'*),¹⁷ as the pre-Aryan occupant of Italian soil who could most easily be distinguished from the blond race which had become dominant, namely the Aryan conquering race, by its colour; at any rate, I have found exactly the same with Gaelic peoples, – fin (for example in Fin-gal), the word designating the aristocracy and finally the good, noble, pure, was originally a blond person in contrast to the dark-skinned, dark-haired native inhabitants. By the way, the Celts were a completely blond race; it is wrong to connect those traces of an essentially dark-haired population, which can be seen on carefully prepared ethnological maps in Germany,

¹⁰ Cf. esp. I. 53–68 (ed. Diehl).

¹¹ This word seems originally to have meant 'genuine, real', it later becomes one of the most commonly used words for 'noble'.

¹² (Greek) 'weak, ugly, cowardly, worthless'.

¹³ (Greek) 'cowardly (and thus despicable)'.

¹⁴ (Greek) 'capable, useful, good'.

¹⁵ 'bad, evil'.

¹⁶ (Greek) 'dark, black'.

¹⁷ 'That man is a dangerous character', literally 'He is black' (Horace, *Satires* I. 85).

with any Celtic descent and mixing of blood in such a connection, as Virchow does: it is more a case of the *pre-Aryan* population of Germany emerging at these points. (The same holds good for virtually the whole of Europe: to all intents and purposes the subject race has ended up by regaining the upper hand in skin colour, shortness of forehead and perhaps even in intellectual and social instincts: who can give any guarantee that modern democracy, the even more modern anarchism, and indeed that predilection for the ‘commune’, the most primitive form of social structure which is common to all Europe’s socialists, are not in essence a huge *throw-back* – and that the conquering *master race*, that of the Aryans, is not physiologically being defeated as well? . . .) I think I can interpret the Latin *bonus*¹⁸ as ‘the “warrior”’: providing I am correct in tracing *bonus* back to an older *duonus* (compare *bellum*¹⁹ = *duellum* = *duenum*, which seems to me to contain that *duonus*). Therefore *bonus* as a man of war, of division (*duo*), as warrior: one can see what made up a man’s ‘goodness’ in ancient Rome. Take our German ‘*gut*’: does it not mean ‘the godlike man’, the man ‘of godlike race’? And is it not identical with the popular (originally noble), name of the Goths? The grounds for this supposition will not be gone into here. –

6

If the highest caste is at the same time the *clerical* caste and therefore chooses a title for its overall description which calls its priestly function to mind, this does not yet constitute an exception to the rule that the concept of political superiority always resolves itself into the concept of psychological superiority (although this may be the occasion giving rise to exceptions). This is an example of the first juxtaposition of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ as signs of different estates; and later ‘good’ and ‘bad’ develop in a direction which no longer refers to social standing. In addition, people should be wary of taking these terms ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ too seriously, too far or even symbolically: all ancient man’s concepts were originally understood – to a degree we can scarcely imagine – as crude, coarse, detached, narrow, direct and in particular *unsymbolic*. From the outset the ‘pure man’ was just a man who washed, avoided certain foods which cause skin complaints, did not sleep with the filthy women from

¹⁸ ‘good’.

¹⁹ Both ‘*bellum*’ and ‘*duellum*’ mean ‘war’ (Latin).

the lower orders and had a horror of blood, – nothing more, not much more! And yet the very nature of an essentially priestly aristocracy shows how contradictory valuations could become dangerously internalized and sharpened, precisely in such an aristocracy at an early stage; and in fact clefts were finally driven between man and man which even an Achilles of free-thinking would shudder to cross. From the very beginning there has been something *unhealthy* about these priestly aristocracies and in the customs dominant there, which are turned away from action and are partly brooding and partly emotionally explosive, resulting in the almost inevitable bowel complaints and neurasthenia which have plagued the clergy down the ages; but as for the remedy they themselves found for their sickness, – surely one must say that its after-effects have shown it to be a hundred times more dangerous than the disease it was meant to cure? People are still ill from the after-effects of these priestly quack-cures! For example, think of certain diets (avoidance of meat), of fasting, sexual abstinence, the flight ‘into the desert’ (Weir-Mitchell’s bed-rest, admittedly without the subsequent overfeeding and weight-gain that constitute the most effective antidote to all hysteria brought on by the ascetic ideal): think, too, of the whole metaphysics of the clergy, which is antagonistic towards the senses, making men lazy and refined, think, too, of their Fakir-like and Brahmin-like self-hypnotizing – Brahminism as crystal ball and fixed idea – and the final, all-too-comprehensible general disenchantment with its radical cure, *nothingness* (or God: – the yearning for a *unio mystica* with God is the Buddhist yearning for nothingness, Nirvâna – and no more!) Priests make *everything* more dangerous, not just medicaments and healing arts but pride, revenge, acumen, debauchery, love, lust for power, virtue, sickness; – in any case, with some justification one could add that man first became an *interesting animal* on the foundation of this *essentially dangerous* form of human existence, the priest, and that the human soul became *deep* in the higher sense and turned *evil* for the first time – and of course, these are the two basic forms of man’s superiority, hitherto, over other animals! . . .

7

– You will have already guessed how easy it was for the priestly method of valuation to split off from the chivalric-aristocratic method and then to develop further into the opposite of the latter; this receives a special

impetus when the priestly caste and warrior caste confront one another in jealousy and cannot agree on the prize of war. The chivalric-aristocratic value judgments are based on a powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even effervescent good health that includes the things needed to maintain it, war, adventure, hunting, dancing, jousting and everything else that contains strong, free, happy action. The priestly-aristocratic method of valuation – as we have seen – has different criteria: woe betide it when it comes to war! As we know, priests make the most *evil enemies* – but why? Because they are the most powerless. Out of this powerlessness, their hate swells into something huge and uncanny to a most intellectual and poisonous level. The greatest haters in world history, and the most intelligent [*die geistreichsten Hasser*], have always been priests: – nobody else’s intelligence [*Geist*] stands a chance against the intelligence [*Geist*] of priestly revenge.²⁰ The history of mankind would be far too stupid a thing if it had not had the intellect [*Geist*] of the powerless injected into it: – let us take the best example straight away. Nothing that has been done on earth against ‘the noble’, ‘the mighty’, ‘the masters’ and ‘the rulers’, is worth mentioning compared with what *the Jews* have done against them: the Jews, that priestly people, which in the last resort was able to gain satisfaction from its enemies and conquerors only through a radical revaluation of their values, that is, through an act of *the most deliberate revenge* [*durch einen Akt der geistigsten Rache*]. Only this was fitting for a priestly people with the most entrenched priestly vengefulness. It was the Jews who, rejecting the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = blessed) ventured, with awe-inspiring consistency, to bring about a reversal and held it in the teeth of the most unfathomable hatred (the hatred of the powerless), saying: ‘Only those who suffer are good, only the poor, the powerless, the lowly are good; the suffering, the deprived, the sick, the ugly, are the only pious people, the only ones saved, salvation is for them alone, whereas you rich, the noble and powerful, you are eternally wicked, cruel, lustful, insatiate, godless, you will also be eternally wretched, cursed and damned!’ . . . We know *who* became heir to this Jewish revaluation . . . With regard to the huge and incalculably disastrous initiative taken by the Jews with this most fundamental of all declarations of war, I recall the words I wrote on another occasion (*Beyond Good and Evil*, section 195)²¹ – namely,

²⁰ The German term *Geist* and its derivatives, are generally rendered by ‘spirit’ and its derivatives, but can also, as in this sentence, be translated as ‘intelligence’ and, as elsewhere, ‘mind’, ‘intellectual’, etc.

²¹ See below, Supplementary material, p. 145.

that *the slaves' revolt in morality* begins with the Jews: a revolt which has two thousand years of history behind it and which has only been lost sight of because – it was victorious . . .

8

– But you don't understand that? You don't have eyes for something that needed two millennia to achieve victory? . . . There is nothing surprising about that: all *long* things are difficult to see, to see round. But *that* is what happened: from the trunk of the tree of revenge and hatred, Jewish hatred – the deepest and most sublime, indeed a hatred which created ideals and changed values, the like of which has never been seen on earth – there grew something just as incomparable, a *new love*, the deepest and most sublime kind of love: – and what other trunk could it have grown out of? . . . But don't make the mistake of thinking that it had grown forth as a denial of the thirst for revenge, as the opposite of Jewish hatred! No, the reverse is true! This love grew out of the hatred, as its crown, as the triumphant crown expanding ever wider in the purest brightness and radiance of the sun, the crown which, as it were, in the realm of light and height, was pursuing the aims of that hatred, victory, spoils, seduction with the same urgency with which the roots of that hatred were burrowing ever more thoroughly and greedily into everything that was deep and evil. This Jesus of Nazareth, as the embodiment of the gospel of love, this 'redeemer' bringing salvation and victory to the poor, the sick, to sinners – was he not seduction in its most sinister and irresistible form, seduction and the circuitous route to just those very *Jewish* values and innovative ideals? Did Israel not reach the pinnacle of her sublime vengefulness via this very 'redeemer', this apparent opponent of and disperser of Israel? Is it not part of a secret black art of a truly *grand* politics of revenge, a far-sighted, subterranean revenge, slow to grip and calculating, that Israel had to denounce her actual instrument of revenge before all the world as a mortal enemy and nail him to the cross so that 'all the world', namely all Israel's enemies, could safely nibble at this bait? And could anyone, on the other hand, using all the ingenuity of his intellect, think up a more *dangerous* bait? Something to equal the enticing, intoxicating, benumbing, corrupting power of that symbol of the 'holy cross', to equal that horrible paradox of a 'God on the Cross', to equal that mystery of an unthinkable final act of extreme cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the *salvation of mankind*? . . . At least it is certain

that *sub hoc signo*²² Israel, with its revenge and revaluation of all former values, has triumphed repeatedly over all other ideals, all *nobler* ideals. — —

9

— ‘But why do you talk about *nobler* ideals! Let’s bow to the facts: the people have won — or “the slaves”, the “plebeians”, “the herd”, or whatever you want to call them — if the Jews made this come about, good for them! No people ever had a more world-historic mission. “The Masters” are deposed; the morality of the common people has triumphed. You might take this victory for blood-poisoning (it did mix the races up) — I do not deny it; but undoubtedly this intoxication has *succeeded*. The “salvation” of the human race (I mean, from “the Masters”) is well on course; everything is being made appreciably Jewish, Christian or plebeian (never mind the words!). The passage of this poison through the whole body of mankind seems unstoppable, even though its tempo and pace, from now on, might tend to be slower, softer, quieter, calmer — there is no hurry . . . With this in view, does the Church still have a *necessary* role, indeed, does it have a right to exist? Or could one do without it? *Quaeritur*.²³ It seems that the Church rather slows down and blocks the passage of poison instead of accelerating it? Well, that might be what makes it useful . . . Certainly it is by now something crude and boorish, resistant to a more tender intelligence, to a truly modern taste. Should not the Church at least try to be more refined? . . . Nowadays it alienates, more than it seduces . . . Who amongst us would be a free-thinker if it were not for the Church? We loathe the Church, *not* its poison . . . Apart from the Church, we too love the poison . . .’ — This is the epilogue by a ‘free-thinker’ to my speech, an honest animal as he clearly shows himself to be, and moreover a democrat; he had listened to me up to that point, and could not stand listening to my silence. As a matter of fact, there is much for me to keep silent about at this point. —

²² Eusebius of Caesarea reports that Constantine (later called ‘the Great’) once had a vision of a cross with the attached legend: ‘By this, conquer’ (‘τούτῳ νίχῃ’) (*De vita Constantini* 1.28). This phrase was eventually transformed into the Latin: ‘In hoc signo vinces’ (‘In this sign you will conquer’). ‘Sub hoc signo’ (‘Under this sign’) is presumably to be understood as a variant of ‘In hoc signo’. In AD 312 Constantine defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, becoming the first Christian Emperor.

²³ ‘That is the question’.

IO

The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself, slave morality says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other', 'non-self': and *this* 'no' is its creative deed. This reversal of the evaluating glance – this *essential* orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself – is a feature of *ressentiment*: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, – its action is basically a reaction. The opposite is the case with the noble method of valuation: this acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say 'yes' to itself even more thankfully and exultantly, – its negative concept 'low', 'common', 'bad' is only a pale contrast created after the event compared to its positive basic concept, saturated with life and passion, 'we the noble, the good, the beautiful and the happy!' When the noble method of valuation makes a mistake and sins against reality, this happens in relation to the sphere with which it is *not* sufficiently familiar, a true knowledge of which, indeed, it rigidly resists: in some circumstances, it misjudges the sphere it despises, that of the common man, the rabble; on the other hand, we should bear in mind that the distortion which results from the feeling of contempt, disdain and superciliousness, always assuming that the image of the despised person is *distorted*, remains far behind the distortion with which the entrenched hatred and revenge of the powerless man attacks his opponent – in effigy of course. Indeed, contempt has too much negligence, nonchalance, complacency and impatience, even too much personal cheerfulness mixed into it, for it to be in a position to transform its object into a real caricature and monster. Nor should one fail to hear the almost kindly nuances which the Greek nobility, for example, places in all words that it uses to distinguish itself from the rabble; a sort of sympathy, consideration and indulgence incessantly permeates and sugars them, with the result that nearly all words referring to the common man remain as expressions for 'unhappy', 'pitiable' (compare δειλός, δειλαιός, πονηρός, μοχθηρός, the last two actually designating the common man as slave worker and beast of burden) – and on the other hand, 'bad', 'low' and 'unhappy' have never ceased to reverberate in the Greek ear in a tone in which 'unhappy'

predominates: this is a legacy of the old, nobler, aristocratic method of valuation that does not deny itself even in contempt (– philologists will remember the sense in which οἰζυρος,²⁴ ἀνολβος,²⁵ τλήμων,²⁶ δυστυχεῖν,²⁷ συμφορά²⁸ are used). The ‘well-born’ *felt* they were ‘the happy’; they did not need first of all to construct their happiness artificially by looking at their enemies, or in some cases by talking themselves into it, *lying themselves into it* (as all men of *ressentiment* are wont to do); and also, as complete men bursting with strength and therefore *necessarily* active, they knew they must not separate happiness from action, – being active is by necessity counted as part of happiness (this is the etymological derivation of ἐνπράττειν)²⁹ – all very much the opposite of ‘happiness’ at the level of the powerless, the oppressed, and those rankled with poisonous and hostile feelings, for whom it manifests itself as essentially a narcotic, an anaesthetic, rest, peace, ‘sabbath’, relaxation of the mind and stretching of the limbs, in short as something *passive*. While the noble man is confident and frank with himself (γενναῖος, ‘of noble birth’, underlines the nuance ‘upright’ and probably ‘naïve’ as well), the man of *ressentiment* is neither upright nor naïve, nor honest and straight with himself. His soul *squints*; his mind loves dark corners, secret paths and back-doors, everything secretive appeals to him as being *his* world, *his* security, *his* comfort; he knows all about keeping quiet, not forgetting, waiting, temporarily humbling and abasing himself. A race of such men of *ressentiment* will inevitably end up *cleverer* than any noble race, and will respect cleverness to a quite different degree as well: namely, as a condition of existence of the first rank, whilst the cleverness of noble men can easily have a subtle aftertaste of luxury and refinement about it: – precisely because in this area, it is nowhere near as important as the complete certainty of function of the governing *unconscious* instincts, nor indeed as important as a certain lack of cleverness, such as a daring charge at danger or at the enemy, or those frenzied sudden fits of anger, love, reverence, gratitude and revenge by which noble souls down the ages have

²⁴ ‘Oi’ is an interjection expressive of pain. A person whose life gives ample occasion for the use of this interjection is ‘oizuros’.

²⁵ ‘not prosperous, unfortunate’.

²⁶ ‘tlēnai’ = to bear, endure, suffer. A person who must endure things is ‘tlemon’.

²⁷ ‘to have bad luck’.

²⁸ ‘accident, misfortune’.

²⁹ This expression (*eu prattein*) has something like the ambiguity of the English ‘do well’ = ‘engage in some activity successfully’ or ‘fare well’. There is no expression in common use in German with a parallel ambiguity.

recognized one another. When *ressentiment* does occur in the noble man himself, it is consumed and exhausted in an immediate reaction, and therefore it does not *poison*, on the other hand, it does not occur at all in countless cases where it is unavoidable for all who are weak and powerless. To be unable to take his enemies, his misfortunes and even his *misdeeds* seriously for long – that is the sign of strong, rounded natures with a superabundance of a power which is flexible, formative, healing and can make one forget (a good example from the modern world is Mirabeau, who had no recall for the insults and slights directed at him and who could not forgive, simply because he – forgot.) A man like this shakes from him, with one shrug, many worms which would have burrowed into another man; actual ‘love of your enemies’ is also possible here and here alone – assuming it is possible at all on earth.³⁰ How much respect a noble man has for his enemies! – and a respect of that sort is a bridge to love . . . For he insists on having his enemy to himself, as a mark of distinction, indeed he will tolerate as enemies none other than such as have nothing to be despised and a *great deal* to be honoured! Against this, imagine ‘the enemy’ as conceived of by the man of *ressentiment* – and here we have his deed, his creation: he has conceived of the ‘evil enemy’, ‘*the evil one*’ as a basic idea to which he now thinks up a copy and counterpart, the ‘good one’ – himself! . . .

I I

Exactly the opposite is true of the noble one who conceives of the basic idea ‘good’ by himself, in advance and spontaneously, and only then creates a notion of ‘bad’! This ‘bad’ of noble origin and that ‘evil’ from the cauldron of unassuaged hatred – the first is an afterthought, an aside, a complementary colour, whilst the other is the original, the beginning, the actual *deed* in the conception of slave morality – how different are the two words ‘bad’ and ‘evil’, although both seem to be the opposite for the same concept, ‘good’! But it is *not* the same concept ‘good’; on the contrary, one should ask *who* is actually evil in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment*. The stern reply is: *precisely* the ‘good’ person of the other morality, the noble, powerful, dominating one, but re-touched, re-interpreted and reviewed through the poisonous eye of *ressentiment*. Here there is one point we would be the last to deny: anyone who came to know these ‘good

³⁰ Gospel according to Matthew 5.43–4.

men' as enemies came to know nothing but '*evil enemies*', and the same people who are so strongly held in check by custom, respect, habit, gratitude and even more through spying on one another and through peer-group jealousy, who, on the other hand, behave towards one another by showing such resourcefulness in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride and friendship, – they are not much better than uncaged beasts of prey in the world outside where the strange, the foreign, begin. There they enjoy freedom from every social constraint, in the wilderness they compensate for the tension which is caused by being closed in and fenced in by the peace of the community for so long, they *return* to the innocent conscience of the wild beast, as exultant monsters, who perhaps go away having committed a hideous succession of murder, arson, rape and torture, in a mood of bravado and spiritual equilibrium as though they had simply played a student's prank, convinced that poets will now have something to sing about and celebrate for quite some time. At the centre of all these noble races we cannot fail to see the beast of prey, the magnificent *blond beast* avidly prowling round for spoil and victory; this hidden centre needs release from time to time, the beast must out again, must return to the wild: – Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings – in this requirement they are all alike. It was the noble races which left the concept of 'barbarian' in their traces wherever they went; even their highest culture betrays the fact that they were conscious of this and indeed proud of it (for example, when Pericles, in that famous funeral oration, tells his Athenians: 'Our daring has forced a path to every land and sea, erecting timeless memorials to itself everywhere for good *and ill*').³¹ This 'daring' of the noble races, mad, absurd and sudden in the way it manifests itself, the unpredictability and even the improbability of their undertakings – Pericles singles out the ῥάθυμια of the Athenians for praise – their unconcern and scorn for safety, body, life, comfort, their shocking cheerfulness and depth of delight in all destruction, in all the debauches of victory and cruelty – all this, for those who suffered under it, was summed up in the image of the 'barbarian', the 'evil enemy', perhaps the 'Goth' or the 'Vandal'. The deep and icy mistrust that the German arouses as soon as he comes to power, which we see again even today – is still the aftermath of that inextinguishable horror with which Europe viewed the raging of the blond Germanic beast for centuries (although between the old Germanic peoples and us Germans there is

³¹ Thucydides II. 39ff.

scarcely an idea in common, let alone a blood relationship). I once remarked on Hesiod's dilemma³² when he thought up the series of cultural eras and tried to express them in gold, silver and iron: he could find no other solution to the contradiction presented to him by the magnificent but at the same time so shockingly violent world of Homer than to make two eras out of one, which he now placed one behind the other – first the era of heroes and demigods from Troy and Thebes, as that world retained in the memory of the noble races, who had their own ancestry in it; then the iron era, as that same world appeared to the descendants of the down-trodden, robbed, ill-treated, and those carried off and sold: as an era of iron, hard, as I said, cold, cruel, lacking feeling and conscience, crushing everything and coating it with blood. Assuming that what is at any rate believed as 'truth' were indeed true, that it is the *meaning of all culture* to breed a tame and civilized animal, a *household pet*, out of the beast of prey 'man', then one would undoubtedly have to view all instinctive reaction and instinctive *ressentiment*, by means of which the noble races and their ideals were finally wrecked and overpowered, as the actual *instruments of culture*; which, however, is not to say that the *bearers* of these instincts were themselves representatives of the culture. Instead, the opposite would be not only probable – no! it is *visible* today! These bearers of oppressive, vindictive instincts, the descendants of all European and non-European slavery, in particular of all pre-Aryan population – represent the *decline* of mankind! These 'instruments of culture' are a disgrace to man, more a grounds for suspicion of, or an argument against, 'culture' in general! We may be quite justified in retaining our fear of the blond beast at the centre of every noble race and remain on our guard: but who would not, a hundred times over, prefer to fear if he can admire at the same time, rather than *not* fear, but thereby permanently retain the disgusting spectacle of the failed, the stunted, the wasted away and the poisoned? And is that not *our* fate? What constitutes *our* aversion to 'man' today? – for we *suffer* from man, no doubt about that. – *Not* fear; rather, the fact that we have nothing to fear from man; that 'man' is first and foremost a teeming mass of worms; that the 'tame man', who is incurably mediocre and unedifying, has already learnt to view himself as the aim and pinnacle, the meaning of history, the 'higher man'; – yes, the fact that he has a certain right to feel like that in so far as he feels distanced from the superabundance of failed,

³² Hesiod, *Works & Days* 143ff.; cf. also *Daybreak*, section 189, and 'Homer's Contest' (see below, Supplementary material, pp. 174–81).

sickly, tired and exhausted people of whom today's Europe is beginning to reek, and in so far as he is at least relatively successful, at least still capable of living, at least saying 'yes' to life . . .

12

– At this juncture I cannot suppress a sigh and one last hope. What do I find absolutely intolerable? Something which I just cannot cope alone with and which suffocates me and makes me feel faint? Bad air! Bad air! That something failed comes near me, that I have to smell the bowels of a failed soul! . . . Apart from that, what cannot be borne in the way of need, deprivation, bad weather, disease, toil, solitude? Basically we can cope with everything else, born as we are to an underground and battling existence; again and again we keep coming up to the light, again and again we experience our golden hour of victory, – and then there we stand, the way we were born, unbreakable, tense, ready for new, more difficult and distant things, like a bow that is merely stretched tauter by affliction. – But from time to time grant me – assuming that there are divine benefactresses beyond good and evil – a glimpse, grant me just one glimpse of something perfect, completely finished, happy, powerful, triumphant, that still leaves something to fear! A glimpse of a man who justifies man *himself*, a stroke of luck, an instance of a man who makes up for and redeems man, and enables us to retain our *faith in mankind!* . . . For the matter stands like so: the stunting and levelling of European man conceals *our* greatest danger, because the sight of this makes us tired . . . Today we see nothing that wants to expand, we suspect that things will just continue to decline, getting thinner, better-natured, cleverer, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian – no doubt about it, man is getting 'better' all the time . . . Right here is where the destiny of Europe lies – in losing our fear of man we have also lost our love for him, our respect for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man. The sight of man now makes us tired – what is nihilism today if it is not *that?* . . . We are tired of *man* . . .

13

– But let us return: the problem of the *other* origin of 'good', of good as thought up by the man of *ressentiment*, demands its solution. – There is nothing strange about the fact that lambs bear a grudge towards large

birds of prey: but that is no reason to blame the large birds of prey for carrying off the little lambs. And if the lambs say to each other, 'These birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey and most like its opposite, a lamb, – is good, isn't he?', then there is no reason to raise objections to this setting-up of an ideal beyond the fact that the birds of prey will view it somewhat derisively, and will perhaps say: 'We don't bear any grudge at all towards these good lambs, in fact we love them, nothing is tastier than a tender lamb.' – It is just as absurd to ask strength *not* to express itself as strength, *not* to be a desire to overthrow, crush, become master, to be a thirst for enemies, resistance and triumphs, as it is to ask weakness to express itself as strength. A quantum of force is just such a quantum of drive, will, action, in fact it is nothing but this driving, willing and acting, and only the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it), which construes and misconstrues all actions as conditional upon an agency, a 'subject', can make it appear otherwise. And just as the common people separates lightning from its flash and takes the latter to be a *deed*, something performed by a subject, which is called lightning, popular morality separates strength from the manifestations of strength, as though there were an indifferent substratum behind the strong person which had the *freedom* to manifest strength or not. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought, – the doing is everything. Basically, the common people double a deed; when they see lightning, they make a doing-a-deed out of it: they posit the same event, first as cause and then as its effect. The scientists do no better when they say 'force moves, force causes' and such like, – all our science, in spite of its coolness and freedom from emotion, still stands exposed to the seduction of language and has not rid itself of the changelings foisted upon it, the 'subjects' (the atom is, for example, just such a changeling, likewise the Kantian 'thing-in-itself'): no wonder, then, if the entrenched, secretly smouldering emotions of revenge and hatred put this belief to their own use and, in fact, do not defend any belief more passionately than that *the strong are free* to be weak, and the birds of prey are free to be lambs: – in this way, they gain the right to make the birds of prey *responsible* for being birds of prey . . . When the oppressed, the downtrodden, the violated say to each other with the vindictive cunning of powerlessness: 'Let us be different from evil people, let us be good! And a good person is anyone who does not rape, does not harm anyone, who does not attack, does not retaliate, who leaves the taking of

revenge to God, who keeps hidden as we do, avoids all evil and asks little from life in general, like us who are patient, humble and upright' – this means, if heard coolly and impartially, nothing more than: 'We weak people are just weak; it is good to do nothing *for which we are not strong enough*' – but this grim state of affairs, this cleverness of the lowest rank which even insects possess (which play dead, in order not to 'do too much' when in great danger), has, thanks to the counterfeiting and self-deception of powerlessness, clothed itself in the finery of self-denying, quiet, patient virtue, as though the weakness of the weak were itself – I mean its *essence*, its effect, its whole unique, unavoidable, irredeemable reality – a voluntary achievement, something wanted, chosen, a *deed*, an *accomplishment*. This type of man *needs* to believe in an unbiased 'subject' with freedom of choice, because he has an instinct of self-preservation and self-affirmation in which every lie is sanctified. The reason the subject (or, as we more colloquially say, *the soul*) has been, until now, the best doctrine on earth, is perhaps because it facilitated that sublime self-deception whereby the majority of the dying, the weak and the oppressed of every kind could construe weakness itself as freedom, and their particular mode of existence as an *accomplishment*.

14

– Would anyone like to have a little look down into the secret of how *ideals are fabricated* on this earth? Who has enough pluck? . . . Come on! Here we have a clear glimpse into this dark workshop. Just wait one moment, Mr Nosy Daredevil: your eyes will have to become used to this false, shimmering light . . . There! That's enough! Now you can speak! What's happening down there? Tell me what you see, you with your most dangerous curiosity – now *I* am the one who's listening. –

– 'I cannot see anything but I can hear all the better. There is a guarded, malicious little rumour-mongering and whispering from every nook and cranny. I think people are telling lies; a sugary mildness clings to every sound. Lies are turning weakness into an *accomplishment*, no doubt about it – it's just as you said.' –

– Go on!

– 'and impotence which doesn't retaliate is being turned into "goodness"; timid baseness is being turned into "humility"; submission to people one hates is being turned into "obedience" (actually towards someone who, they say, orders this submission – they call him God). The

inoffensiveness of the weakling, the very cowardice with which he is richly endowed, his standing-by-the-door, his inevitable position of having to wait, are all given good names such as “patience”, also known as *the* virtue; not-being-able-to-take-revenge is called not-wanting-to-take-revenge, it might even be forgiveness (“for *they* know not what they do – but we know what *they* are doing!”).³³ They are also talking about “loving your enemies” – and sweating while they do it.’

– Go on!

– ‘They are miserable, without a doubt, all these rumour-mongers and clandestine forgers, even if they do crouch close together for warmth – but they tell me that their misery means they are God’s chosen and select, after all, people beat the dogs they love best; perhaps this misery is just a preparation, a test, a training, it might be even more than that – something that will one day be balanced up and paid back with enormous interest in gold, no! in happiness. They call that “bliss”.’

– Go on!

– ‘They are now informing me that not only are they better than the powerful, the masters of the world whose spittle they have to lick (*not* from fear, not at all from fear! but because God orders them to honour those in authority)³⁴ – not only are they better, but they have a “better time”, or at least will have a better time one day. But enough! enough! I can’t bear it any longer. Bad air! Bad air! This workshop where *ideals are fabricated* – it seems to me just to stink of lies.’

– No! Wait a moment! You haven’t said anything yet about the masterpieces of those black magicians who can turn anything black into whiteness, milk and innocence: – haven’t you noticed their perfect *raffinement*, their boldest, subtlest, most ingenious and mendacious stunt? Pay attention! These cellar rats full of revenge and hatred – what do they turn revenge and hatred into? Have you ever heard these words? Would you suspect, if you just went by what they said, that the men around you were nothing but men of *ressentiment*? . . .

– ‘I understand, I’ll open my ears once more (oh! oh! oh! and *hold* my nose). Now, at last, I can hear what they have been saying so often: “We good people – *we are the just*” – what they are demanding is not called retribution, but “the triumph of *justice*”; what they hate is not their enemy, oh no! they hate “*injustice*”, “godlessness”; what they believe and hope for

³³ Gospel according to Luke 23.34.

³⁴ Romans 13.1.

is not the prospect of revenge, the delirium of sweet revenge (– Homer early on dubbed it “sweeter than honey”),³⁵ but the victory of God, the *just* God, over the Godless; all that remains for them to love on earth are not their brothers in hate but their “brothers in love”,³⁶ as they say, all good and just people on earth.’

– And what do they call that which serves as a consolation for all the sufferings of the world – their phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss?

– ‘What? Do I hear correctly? They call it “the last judgment”, the coming of *their* kingdom, the “kingdom of God” – but *in the meantime* they live “in faith”, “in love”, “in hope”.’³⁷

– Enough! Enough!

15

Faith in what? Love of what? Hope for what? – These weaklings – in fact *they*, too, want to be the powerful one day, this is beyond doubt, one day *their* ‘kingdom’ will come too – ‘the kingdom of God’ *simpliciter* is their name for it, as I said: they are so humble about everything! Just to experience *that*, you need to live long, well beyond death, – yes, you need eternal life in order to be able to gain eternal recompense in ‘the kingdom of God’ for that life on earth ‘in faith’, ‘in love’, ‘in hope’. Recompense for what? Recompense through what? . . . It seems to me that Dante made a gross error when, with awe-inspiring naïvety he placed the inscription over the gateway to his hell: ‘Eternal love created me as well’:³⁸ – at any rate, this inscription would have a better claim to stand over the gateway to Christian Paradise and its ‘eternal bliss’: ‘Eternal *hate* created me as well’ – assuming that a true statement can be placed above the gateway to a lie! For *what* is the bliss of this Paradise? . . . We might have guessed already; but it is better to be expressly shown it by no less an authority in such matters than Thomas Aquinas, the great teacher and saint. ‘Beati in regno coelesti’, he says as meekly as a lamb, ‘videbunt poenas damnatorum, *ut beatitudo illis magis complacet*.’³⁹ Or, if you want

³⁵ *Iliad* XVIII, 107ff.

³⁶ First Thessalonians 1.3.

³⁷ First Corinthians 13.13; First Thessalonians 1.3.

³⁸ Dante, *Inferno* III. 5–6.

³⁹ The blessed in the heavenly kingdom will see the torment of the damned *so that they may even more thoroughly enjoy their blessedness*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Supplement to the Third Part*, question XCVII, article 1, ‘conclusio’. Some modern editions do not contain this ‘conclusio’.

it even more forcefully, for example from the mouth of a triumphant Church Father⁴⁰ who advised his Christians against the cruel voluptuousness of the public spectacles – but why? ‘Faith offers us much more’ – he says, *De Spectaculis*. Chs. 29ff⁴¹ – ‘something *much stronger*; thanks to salvation, quite other joys are at our command; instead of athletes we have our martyrs; we want blood, well then, we have the blood of Christ . . . But think what awaits us on the day of his second coming, of his triumph!’ – and then the enraptured visionary goes on: ‘At enim supersunt alia spectacula, ille ultimus et perpetuus iudicii dies, ille nationibus insperatus, ille derisus, cum tanta saeculi vetustas et tot ejus nativitates uno igne haurientur. Quae tunc spectaculi latitudo! *Quid admirer! Quid rideam! Ubi gaudeam! Ubi exultem*, spectans tot et tantos *reges*, qui in coelum recepti nuntiabantur, cum ipso Jove et ipsis suis testibus in imis tenebris congemescerent! Item praesides (the Provincial Governors) persecutores dominici nominis saevioribus quam ipsi flammis saevierunt insultantibus contra Christianos liquescentes! Quos praeterea sapientes illos philosophos coram discipulis suis una conflagrantibus erubescerent, quibus nihil ad deum pertinere suadebant, quibus animas aut nullas aut non in pristina corpora redivituras affirmabant! Etiam poetàs non ad Rhadamanti nec ad Minois, sed ad inopinati Christi tribunal palpitantes! Tunc magis tragoedi audiendi, magis scilicet vocales (in better voice, screaming even louder) in sua propria calamitate; tunc histriones cognoscendi, solutiores multo per ignem; tunc spectandus auriga in flammea rota totus rubens, tunc xystici contemplandi non in gymnasiis, sed in igne jaculati, nisi quod ne tunc quidem illos velim vivos, ut qui malim ad eos potius conspectum insatiabilem conferre, qui in dominum desaevierunt. “Hic est ille, dicam, fabri aut quaestuarie filius (Tertullian refers to the Jews from now on, as is shown by what follows and in particular by this well-known description of the mother of Jesus from the Talmud), sabbati destructor, Samarites et daemonium habens. Hic est, quem a Juda redemistis, hic est ille arundine et colaphis diverberatus, sputamentis dedecoratus, felle et aceto potatus. Hic est, quem clam discentes subriperunt, ut resurrexisse dicatur vel hortulanus detraxit, ne lactucae suae frequentia commeantium laederentur.” Ut talia spectes, *ut*

⁴⁰ Tertullian.

⁴¹ In chapter XV of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon cites this same passage and comments: ‘the Christians, who, in this world, found themselves oppressed by the power of the pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph’.

talibus exultes, quis tibi praetor aut consul aut quaestor aut sacerdos de sua liberalitate praestabit? Et tamen haec jam habemus quodammodo *per fidem* spiritu imaginante repraesentata. Ceterum qualia illa sunt, quae nec oculus vidit nec auris audivit nec in cor hominis ascenderunt? (1. Cor. 2, 9) Credo circo et utraque cavea (first and fourth rank or, according to others, the comic and tragic stages) et omni stadio gratiora.⁴²

(*Per fidem*:⁴³ that is what is written.)

16

Let us draw to a close. The two *opposing* values ‘good and bad’, ‘good and evil’ have fought a terrible battle for thousands of years on earth; and

⁴² But there are yet other spectacles: that final and everlasting day of judgement, that day that was not expected and was even laughed at by the nations, when the whole old world and all it gave birth to are consumed in one fire. What an ample breadth of sights there will be then! *At which one shall I gaze in wonder? At which shall I laugh? At which rejoice? At which exult*, when I see so many great *kings* who were proclaimed to have been taken up into heaven, groaning in the deepest darkness together with those who claimed to have witnessed their apotheosis and with Jove himself. And when I see those [provincial] governors, persecutors of the Lord’s name, melting in flames more savage than those with which they insolently raged against Christians! When I see those wise philosophers who persuaded their disciples that nothing was of any concern to God and who affirmed to them either that we have no souls or that our souls will not return to their original bodies! Now they are ashamed before those disciples, as they are burned together with them. Also the poets trembling before the tribunal not of Minos or of Radamanthus, but of the unexpected Christ! Then the tragic actors will be easier to hear because they will be in better voice [i.e. screaming even louder] in their own tragedy. Then the actors of pantomime will be easy to recognize, being much more nimble than usual because of the fire. Then the charioteer will be on view, all red in a wheel of flame and the athletes, thrown not in the gymnasia but into the fire. Unless even then I don’t want to see them [alive +], preferring to cast an *insatiable* gaze on those who raged against the Lord. ‘This is he’, I will say, ‘that son of a carpenter or prostitute [– Tertullian refers to the Jews from now on, as is shown by what follows and in particular by this well-known description of the mother of Jesus from the Talmud –] that destroyer of the Sabbath, that Samaritan, that man who had a devil. He it is whom you bought from Judas, who was beaten with a reed and with fists, who was defiled with spit and had gall and vinegar to drink. He it is whom his disciples secretly took away so that it might be said that he had risen again, or whom the gardener removed so that his lettuces would not be harmed by the crowd of visitors.’ What praetor or consul or quaestor or priest will grant you from his largesse the chance of seeing and *exulting in such things*? And yet to some extent we have such things already *through faith*, made present in the imagining spirit. Furthermore what sorts of things are those which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, and which have not come into the human heart? (1. Cor. 2, 9) I believe that they are more pleasing than the circus or both of the enclosures [first and fourth rank of seats, or, according to others, the comic and the tragic stages] or than any race-track.’

The material above in square brackets is Nietzsche’s addition to Tertullian’s text. At [‘alive +’] Nietzsche incorrectly reads ‘vivos’ (‘alive’) for ‘visos’ (‘seen’).

⁴³ ‘By my faith’.

although the latter has been dominant for a long time, there is still no lack of places where the battle remains undecided. You could even say that, in the meantime, it has reached ever greater heights but at the same time has become ever deeper and more intellectual: so that there is, today, perhaps no more distinguishing feature of the 'higher nature', the intellectual nature, than to be divided in this sense and really and truly a battle ground for these opposites. The symbol of this fight, written in a script which has hitherto remained legible throughout human history, is 'Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome': – up to now there has been no greater event than *this* battle, *this* question, *this* contradiction of mortal enemies. Rome saw the Jew as something contrary to nature, as though he were its antipodean monster (*Monstrum*); in Rome, the Jew was looked upon as *convicted* of hatred against the whole of mankind:⁴⁴ rightly, if one is right in linking the well being and future of the human race with the unconditional rule of aristocratic values, Roman values. What, on the other hand, did the Jews feel about Rome? We can guess from a thousand indicators; but it is enough to call once more to mind the Apocalypse of John, the wildest of all outbursts ever written which revenge has on its conscience. (By the way, we must not underestimate the profound consistency of Christian instinct in inscribing this book of hate to the disciple of love, the very same to whom it attributed that passionately ecstatic gospel –: there is some truth in this, however much literary counterfeiting might have been necessary to the purpose.) So the Romans were the strong and noble, stronger and nobler than anybody hitherto who had lived or been dreamt of on earth; their every relic and inscription brings delight, provided one can guess *what* it is that is doing the writing there. By contrast, the Jews were a priestly nation of *ressentiment par excellence*, possessing an unparalleled genius for popular morality: compare peoples with similar talents, such as the Chinese or the Germans, with the Jews, and you will realize who are first rate and who are fifth. Which of them has *prevailed* for the time being, Rome or Judea? But there is no trace of doubt: just consider to whom you bow down in Rome itself, today, as though to the embodiment of the highest values – and not just in Rome, but over nearly half the earth, everywhere where man has become tame or wants to become tame, to *three Jews*, as we know, and *one Jewess* (to Jesus of Nazareth, Peter the Fisherman, Paul the Carpet-Weaver and the mother of Jesus mentioned first, whose

⁴⁴ At *Annals* XV. 44 Tacitus describes 'those popularly called "Christians"' as 'convicted of hatred against the whole human species'; at *Histories* V.5 he claims that the Jews show benevolence to one another, but exhibit hatred of all the rest of the world.

name was Mary). This is very remarkable: without a doubt Rome has been defeated. However, in the Renaissance there was a brilliant, uncanny reawakening of the classical ideal, of the noble method of valuing everything: Rome itself woke up, as though from suspended animation, under the pressure of the new, Judaic Rome built over it, which looked like an ecumenical synagogue and was called 'Church': but Judea triumphed again at once, thanks to that basically proletarian (German and English) *ressentiment*-movement which people called the Reformation, including its inevitable consequence, the restoration of the church, – as well as the restoration of the ancient, tomb-like silence of classical Rome. In an even more decisive and profound sense than then, Judea once again triumphed over the classical ideal with the French Revolution: the last political nobility in Europe, that of the *French* seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, collapsed under the *ressentiment*-instincts of the rabble, – the world had never heard greater rejoicing and more uproarious enthusiasm! True, the most dreadful and unexpected thing happened in the middle: the ancient ideal itself appeared *bodily* and with unheard-of splendour before the eye and conscience of mankind, and once again, stronger, simpler and more penetrating than ever, in answer to the old, mendacious *ressentiment* slogan of *priority for the majority*, of man's will to baseness, abasement, levelling, decline and decay, there rang out the terrible and enchanting counter-slogan: *priority for the few!* Like a last signpost to the *other* path, Napoleon appeared as a man more unique and late-born for his times than ever a man had been before, and in him, the problem of the *noble ideal itself* was made flesh – just think *what* a problem that is: Napoleon, this synthesis of *Unmensch* (brute) and *Übermensch* (overman) . . .

17

– Was it over after that? Was that greatest among all conflicts of ideals placed *ad acta* for ever? Or just postponed, postponed indefinitely? . . . Won't there have to be an even more terrible flaring up of the old flame, one prepared much longer in advance? And more: shouldn't one desire *that* with all one's strength? or will it, even? or even promote it? . . . Whoever, like my readers, now starts to ponder these points and reflect further, will have difficulty coming to a speedy conclusion, – reason enough, then, for me to come to a conclusion myself, assuming that it has been sufficiently clear for some time what I *want*, what I actually want with that dangerous slogan which is written on the spine of my last book, *Beyond Good and Evil* . . . at least this does *not* mean 'Beyond Good and Bad.' –

Note. I take the opportunity presented to me by this essay, of publicly and formally expressing a wish that I have only expressed in occasional conversations with scholars up till now: that is, that some Faculty of Philosophy should do the great service of promoting the study of *the history of morality* by means of a series of academic prize essays: – perhaps this book might serve to give a powerful impetus in such a direction. With regard to such a possibility, I raise the following question for consideration: it merits the attention of philologists and historians as well as those who are actually philosophers by profession:

‘What signposts does linguistics, especially the study of etymology, give to the history of the evolution of moral concepts?’

– On the other hand, it is just as essential to win the support of physiologists and doctors for these problems (on the *value* of all previous valuations): we can leave it to the professional philosophers to act as advocates and mediators in this, once they have completely succeeded in transforming the originally so reserved and suspicious relationship between philosophy, physiology and medicine into the most cordial and fruitful exchange. Indeed, every table of values, every ‘thou shalt’ known to history or the study of ethnology, needs first and foremost a *physiological* elucidation and interpretation, rather than a psychological one; and all of them await critical study from medical science. The question: what is this or that table of values and ‘morals’ *worth?* needs to be asked from different angles; in particular, the question ‘value for *what?*’ cannot be examined too finely. Something, for example, which obviously had value with regard to the longest possible life-span of a race (or to the improvement of its abilities to adapt to a particular climate, or to maintaining the greatest number) would not have anything like the same value if it was a question of developing a stronger type. The good of the majority and the good of the minority are conflicting moral standpoints: we leave it to the naïvety of English biologists to view the first as higher in value as *such . . .* All sciences must, from now on, prepare the way for the future work of the philosopher: this work being understood to mean that the philosopher has to solve the *problem of values* and that he has to decide on the *rank order of values*. –

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