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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

THE BIRTH OF  
TRAGEDY  
AND  
THE GENEALOGY  
OF MORALS

IN NEW TRANSLATIONS BY  
FRANCIS GOLFFING

A DOUBLEDAY ANCHOR BOOK



✓  
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AND  
THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

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## Preface

### I

*Ein Gemüde*

We knowers are unknown to ourselves, and for a good reason: how can we ever hope to find what we have never looked for? There is a sound adage which runs: "Where a man's treasure lies, there lies his heart." Our treasure lies in the beehives of our knowledge. We are perpetually on our way thither, being by nature winged insects and honey gatherers of the mind. The only thing that lies close to our heart is the desire to bring something home to the hive. As for the rest of life—so-called "experience"—who among us is serious enough for that? Or has time enough? When it comes to such matters, our heart is simply not in it—we don't even lend our ear. Rather, as a man divinely abstracted and self-absorbed into whose ears the bell has just drummed the twelve strokes of noon will suddenly awake with a start and ask himself what hour has actually struck, we sometimes rub our ears after the event and ask ourselves, astonished and at a loss, "What have we really experienced?"—or rather, "Who are we, really?" And we recount the twelve tremulous strokes of our experience, our life, our being, but unfortunately count wrong. The sad truth is that we remain necessarily strangers to ourselves, we don't understand our own substance, we must mistake ourselves; the axiom, "Each man is farthest from himself," will hold for us to all eternity. Of ourselves we are not "knowers". . . .

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mens*

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*Jeder ist sich selbst der  
Nächste*

## II

My ideas about the provenance of our moral prejudices (for that is to be the subject of the present work) found their first brief and tentative formulation in a collection of aphorisms called *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. I began that book one winter in Sorrento, at a moment when it was given me to pause, as a wanderer might pause, and to look back over the wild and dangerous territory my mind had crossed. It was the winter of 1876-77; the ideas themselves had come to me earlier, however. And it is those same ideas I wish to take up in the present treatise: let us hope that the long interval has done them good, making them stronger and more luminous. At all events, the fact that I still hold them fast today, that through all these years they have continued to intertwine and draw nourishment from each other, encourages me to believe that from the very beginning they were not isolated thoughts, nor random or sporadic ones, but sprang from a common root, from a primary desire for knowledge, legislating from deep down in increasingly precise terms, increasingly precise demands. A philosopher should proceed in no other way. We have no right to isolated thoughts, whether truthful or erroneous. Our thoughts should grow out of our values with the same necessity as the fruit out of the tree. Our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts should all be intimately related and bear testimony to one will, one health, one soil, one sun. Supposing you find these fruits unpalatable? What concern is that of the trees—or of us, the philosophers?

## III

Because of a qualm peculiar to me and which I am loath to admit, since it refers to morals, or rather to anything that has ever been cried up as ethics—a qualm which, unbidden and irresistible, put me so at variance, from my earliest childhood, with environment, age, precepts, tradition that I feel almost entitled to call it my *a priori*—both my curiosity and my suspicions were focused betimes on the provenance of our notions of good and evil. Already at the age of thirteen I was exercised by the problem of evil. At an age when one's interests are "divided between childish games and God" I wrote my first essay on ethics. My solution of the problem was to give the honor to God, as is only just, and make him the father of evil. Was this what my *a priori* demanded of me—that new, immoral, or at any rate non-moral *a priori*—and that mysterious anti-Kantian "categorical imperative" to which I have hearkened more and more ever since, and not only hearkened? Fortunately I learned in good time to divorce the theological prejudice from the moral and no longer to seek the origin of evil behind the world. A certain amount of historical and philological training, together with a native fastidiousness in matters of psychology, before long transformed this problem into another, to wit, "Under what conditions did man construct the value judgments good and evil?" And what is their intrinsic worth? Have they thus far benefited or retarded mankind? Do they betoken misery, curtailment, degeneracy or, on the contrary, power, fullness of being, energy, courage in the face of life, and confidence in the future? A great variety of answers sug-

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gested themselves. I began to distinguish among periods, nations, individuals; I narrowed the problem down; the answers grew into new questions, investigations, suppositions, probabilities, until I had staked off at last my own domain, a whole hidden, growing and blooming world, secret gardens as it were, of whose existence no one must have an inkling. . . . How blessed are we knowers, provided we know how to keep silent long enough!

IV

I was first moved to make public some of my hypotheses concerning the origin of moral ideas by a well-written and clever (if somewhat pert) essay, which brought me face to face with a perverse and upside-down variety of genealogical hypothesis—the English variety. It had that attraction for me which ideas at the opposite pole from our own usually have. The title of the little book was *The Origin of Moral Perceptions*, its author Dr. Paul Rée, the year of its publication 1877. I believe I have never read anything from which I dissented so thoroughly from beginning to end, and yet I did so entirely without rancor. In the work mentioned earlier, which I was engaged on at the time, I made reference to certain passages from Rée's essay, not by way of controverting them—what have I to do with controversy?—but rather, as becomes a constructive spirit, to replace the improbable with the probable, or sometimes, no doubt, to replace his error with my own. On that occasion I formulated for the first time those hypotheses which are also the concern of the present work—awkwardly, as I am the last to deny, without freedom or the style proper to such a subject, and with occasional vacilla-

and his shadow" tions and backslidings. The reader may want to go back to what I had to say in *Human, All Too Human* about the double evolution of "good" and "evil"—in the ruling class and the slave class, respectively; about the origin and value of the ascetic code of ethics; about the "morality of custom," that much more ancient type of morality, which is worlds apart from any system of altruistic valuations, though Dr. Rée, like the English psychologists of ethics, considers the latter the moral valuation; also to what I said in *The Wanderer* and *Daybreak* about the origin of justice as a mutual adjustment between roughly equal powers (balance being the precondition of all covenants, and hence of all law); further, to what I said in *The Wanderer* about the origin of punishment, which cannot possibly be reduced to motives of intimidation (as Dr. Rée assumes; those motives being always secondary and only coming into play under special circumstances).

V

At bottom, I was concerned at that time with something much more important than either my own or someone else's hypotheses about the origin of ethics—more precisely, this origin mattered to me only as one of the means toward an end. The end was the value of ethics, and I had to fight this issue out almost alone with my great teacher Schopenhauer, to whom *Human, All Too Human*, with all its passion and hidden contradictions, addresses itself as though he were still alive. That book, be it observed, was likewise an attack. The point at issue was the value of the non-egotistical instincts, the instincts of compassion, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, which Schopenhauer above

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all others had consistently gilded, glorified, "transcendentalized" until he came to see them as *absolute* values allowing him to deny life and even himself. Yet it was these very same instincts which aroused my suspicion, and that suspicion deepened as time went on. It was here, precisely, that I sensed the greatest danger for humanity, its sublimest delusion and temptation—leading it whither? into nothingness? Here I sensed the beginning of the end, stagnation, nostalgic fatigue, a will that had turned *against* life. I began to understand that the constantly spreading ethics of pity, which had tainted and debilitated even the philosophers, was the most sinister symptom of our sinister European civilization—a detour to a new Buddhism? to a European species of Buddhism? to nihilism? This preference for and overestimation of pity, among philosophers, is an entirely new development in Western civilization. The philosophers of the past deny, to a man, all value to pity. I need only instance Plato, Spinoza, La Rochefoucauld, and Kant, four minds as different from each other as possible yet agreeing in this one regard, the low esteem in which they hold pity.

VI

At first sight, this problem of pity and the ethics of pity (I am strongly opposed to our modern sentimentality in these matters) may seem very special, a marginal issue. But whoever sticks with it and learns how to ask questions will have the same experience that I had: a vast new panorama will open up before him; strange and vertiginous possibilities will invade him; every variety of suspicion, distrust, fear will come to the surface; his belief in ethics of any

kind will begin to be shaken. Finally he will be forced to listen to a new claim. Let us articulate that new claim: we need a critique of all moral values; the intrinsic worth of these values must, first of all, be called in question. To this end we need to know the conditions from which those values have sprung and how they have developed and changed: morality as consequence, symptom, mask, *tartufferie*, sickness, misunderstanding; but, also, morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison. Hitherto such knowledge has neither been forthcoming nor considered a desideratum. The intrinsic worth of these values was taken for granted as a fact of experience and put beyond question. Nobody, up to now, has doubted that the "good" man represents a higher value than the "evil," in terms of promoting and benefiting mankind generally, even taking the long view. But suppose the exact opposite were true. What if the "good" man represents not merely a retrogression but even a danger, a temptation, a narcotic drug enabling the present to live at the expense of the future? More comfortable, less hazardous, perhaps, but also baser, more petty—so that morality itself would be responsible for man, as a species, failing to reach the peak of magnificence of which he is capable? What if morality should turn out to be the danger of dangers? . . .

VII

Suffice it to say that ever since that vista opened before me I have been on the lookout for learned, bold and industrious comrades in arms—I am still looking. The object is to explore the huge, distant and thoroughly hidden country of morality, morality as it has actually existed and actually

been lived, with new questions in mind and with fresh eyes. Is not this tantamount to saying that that country must be discovered anew? If, in this connection, among other possible assistants Dr. Rée came to mind, it was because I had not the slightest doubt that the nature of his investigations would lead him almost automatically to a more promising method. Have I deceived myself in entertaining such hopes? At all events I hoped to orient such a sharp and impartial thinker toward a sound history of ethics and to warn him, before it was too late, against random hypothesizing in the English manner. For it should be obvious that all that matters to a psychologist of morals is what has really existed and is attested by documents, the endless hieroglyphic record, so difficult to decipher, of our moral past. That past was unknown to Dr. Rée, but he had read Darwin. So it happened that in his hypotheses, most amusingly, the Darwinian brute and the ultramodern moral milksop who no longer bites walk hand in hand, the latter wearing an expression of bonhomie and refined indolence, even a shade of pessimism, of fatigue—as though it were really not worth-while to take all these things (the problems of morality) quite so seriously. My point of view is exactly the opposite, that nothing under the sun is more rewarding to take seriously; and part of the reward might be that someday we will be allowed to take it *lightly*. For lightheartedness, or to use my own phrase, a “gay science” is the reward of a long, courageous, painstaking, inward seriousness, which to be sure is not within every man’s compass. On the day when we can honestly exclaim “Let’s get on with the comedy! These antiquated morals are part of it too!” we shall have given a new turn to the Dionysiac drama of

man’s destiny, and doubtless the grand old writer of life’s comedy will make good use of it.

VIII

Should this treatise seem unintelligible or jarring to some readers, I think the fault need not necessarily be laid at my door. It is plain enough, and it presumes only that the reader will have read my earlier works with some care—for they do, in fact, require careful reading. As regards my *Zarathustra*, I think no one should claim to know it who has not been, by turns, deeply wounded and deeply delighted by what it says. Only such readers will have gained the right to participate in the halcyon element from which it sprang, with all its sunniness, sweep, and assurance. Also, the aphoristic form may present a stumbling block, the difficulty being that this form is no longer taken “hard” enough. An aphorism that has been honestly struck cannot be deciphered simply by reading it off; this is only the beginning of the work of interpretation proper, which requires a whole science of hermeneutics. In the third essay of this book I give an example of what I mean by true interpretation: an aphorism stands at the head of that essay, and the body of the essay forms the commentary. One skill is needed—lost today, unfortunately—for the practice of reading as an art: the skill to ruminate, which cows possess but modern man lacks. This is why my writings will, for some time yet, remain difficult to digest.

Sils-Maria, Upper Engadine  
July 1887

"Quality can do nothing but excite pictures  
of men. maybe they will influence someone  
or other."

First Essay

"GOOD AND EVIL," "GOOD AND BAD"

I

The English psychologists to whom we owe the only attempts that have thus far been made to write a genealogy of morals are no mean posers of riddles, but the riddles they pose are themselves, and being incarnate have one advantage over their books—they are interesting. What are these English psychologists really after? One finds them always, whether intentionally or not, engaged in the same task of pushing into the foreground the nasty part of the psyche, looking for the effective motive forces of human development in the very last place we would wish to have them found, e.g., in the inertia of habit, in forgetfulness, in the blind and fortuitous association of ideas: always in something that is purely passive, automatic, reflexive, molecular, and, moreover, profoundly stupid. What drives these psychologists forever in the same direction? A secret, malicious desire to belittle humanity, which they do not acknowledge even to themselves? A pessimistic distrust, the suspiciousness of the soured idealist? Some petty resentment of Christianity (and Plato) which does not rise above the threshold of consciousness? Or could it be a prurient taste for whatever is embarrassing, painfully paradoxical, dubious and absurd in existence? Or is it, perhaps, a kind of stew—a little meanness, a little bitterness, a bit of anti-Christianity, a touch of prurience and desire for condiments? . . . But, again, people tell me that these men are simply dull old frogs who hop and creep in and around man as in their own element—as though man were a bog. However, I am re-

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The Genealogy of Morals

luctant to listen to this, in fact I refuse to believe it; and if I may express a wish where I cannot express a conviction, I do wish wholeheartedly that things may be otherwise with these men—that these microscopic examiners of the soul may be really courageous, magnanimous, and proud animals, who know how to contain their emotions and have trained themselves to subordinate all wishful thinking to the truth—any truth, even a homespun, severe, ugly, obnoxious, un-Christian, unmoral truth. For such truths do exist.

II

All honor to the beneficent spirits that may motivate these historians of ethics! One thing is certain, however, they have been quite deserted by the true spirit of history. They all, to a man, think unhistorically, as is the age-old custom among philosophers. The amateurishness of their procedure is made plain from the very beginning, when it is a question of explaining the provenance of the concept and judgment good. "Originally," they decree, "altruistic actions were praised and approved by their recipients, that is, by those to whom they were useful. Later on, the origin of that praise having been forgotten, such actions were felt to be good simply because it was the habit to commend them." We notice at once that this first derivation has all the earmarks of the English psychologists' work. Here are the key ideas of utility, forgetfulness, habit, and, finally, error, seen as lying at the root of that value system which civilized man had hitherto regarded with pride as the prerogative of all men. This pride must

now be humbled, these values devalued. Have the debunkers succeeded?

Now it is obvious to me, first of all, that their theory looks for the genesis of the concept *good* in the wrong place: the judgment *good* does not originate with those to whom the good has been done. Rather it was the "good" themselves, that is to say the noble, mighty, highly placed, and high-minded who decreed themselves and their actions to be good, i.e., belonging to the highest rank, in contradistinction to all that was base, low-minded and plebeian. It was only this *pathos of distance* that authorized them to create values and name them—what was utility to them? The notion of utility seems singularly inept to account for such a quick jetting forth of supreme value judgments. Here we come face to face with the exact opposite of that lukewarmness which every scheming prudence, every utilitarian calculus presupposes—and not for a time only, for the rare, exceptional hour, but permanently. The origin of the opposites *good* and *bad* is to be found in the *pathos of nobility and distance*, representing the dominant temper of a higher, ruling class in relation to a lower, dependent one. (The lordly right of bestowing names is such that one would almost be justified in seeing the origin of language itself as an expression of the rulers' power. They say, "This is that or that"; they seal off each thing and action with a sound and thereby take symbolic possession of it.) Such an origin would suggest that there is *no a priori necessity* for associating the word *good* with altruistic deeds, as those moral psychologists are fond of claiming. In fact, it is only after aristocratic values have begun to decline that the egotism-altruism dichotomy takes possession of the human conscience; to use my own terms, it is the *herd instinct* that now asserts itself. Yet it takes

quite a while for this instinct to assume such sway that it can reduce all moral valuations to that dichotomy—as is currently happening throughout Europe, where the prejudice equating the terms *moral*, *altruistic*, and *disinterested* has assumed the obsessive force of an *idée fixe*.

III

Quite apart from the fact that this hypothesis about the origin of the value judgment *good* is historically untenable, its psychology is intrinsically unsound. Altruistic deeds were originally commended for their usefulness, but this original reason has now been forgotten—so the claim goes. How is such a forgetting conceivable? Has there ever been a point in history at which such deeds lost their usefulness? Quite the contrary, this usefulness has been apparent to every age, a thing that has been emphasized over and over again. Therefore, instead of being forgotten, it must have impressed itself on the consciousness with ever increasing clearness. The opposite theory is far more sensible, though this does not necessarily make it any the truer—the theory held by Herbert Spencer, for example, who considers the concept *good* qualitatively the same as the concepts *useful* or *practical*; so that in the judgments *good* and *bad*, humanity is said to have summed up and sanctioned precisely its unforgotten and unforgettable experiences of the *useful practical* and the *harmful impractical*. According to this theory, the *good* is that which all along has proved itself useful and which therefore may lay the highest claim to be considered valuable. As I have said, the derivation of this theory is suspect, but at least

the explanation is self-consistent and psychologically tenable within its limits.

IV

The clue to the correct explanation was furnished me by the question "What does the etymology of the terms for good in various languages tell us?" I discovered that all these terms lead us back to the same conceptual transformation. The basic concept is always *noble* in the hierarchical, class sense, and from this has developed, by historical necessity, the concept *good* embracing nobility of mind, spiritual distinction. This development is strictly parallel to that other which eventually converted the notions *common*, *plebeian*, *base* into the notion *bad*.<sup>1</sup> Here we have an important clue to the actual genealogy of morals; that it has not been hit upon earlier is due to the retarding influence which democratic prejudice has had upon all investigation of origins. This holds equally true with regard to the seemingly quite objective areas of natural science and physiology, though I cannot enlarge upon the question now. The amount of damage such prejudice is capable of doing in ethics and history, once it becomes inflamed with hatred, is clearly shown by the case of Buckle. Here we see the plebeian bias of the modern mind, which stems from England, erupt once

<sup>1</sup> The most eloquent proof of this is the etymological relationship between the German words *schlecht* (bad) and *schlicht* (simple). For a long time the first term was used interchangeably with the second, without any contemptuous connotation as yet, merely to designate the commoner as opposed to the nobleman. About the time of the Thirty Years' War the meaning changed to the present one.

again on its native soil with all the violence of a muddy volcano and all the vulgar and oversalted eloquence characteristic of volcanoes.

V

As for our own problem, which we may justly call a *quiet* one, addressing itself to a very restricted audience, it is of interest to note that many of the words and roots denominating *good* still, to this day, carry overtones of the meanings according to which the nobility regarded themselves as possessing the highest moral rank. It is true that, most often, they described themselves simply in terms of their superior power (as the rulers, lords, sovereigns) or else in terms of the visible signs of their superiority, as the rich, the possessors (this is the meaning of *arya*, and there are corresponding terms in the Iranian and Slavic languages); but also in terms of a typical character trait, and this is the case that concerns us here. They speak of themselves as "the truthful"; most resolute in doing this were members of the Greek aristocracy, whose mouthpiece is the Megarian poet *Theognis*. The word they used was *esthlos*, meaning one who *is*, who has true reality, who is true. By a subjective turn the *true* later became the *truthful*. During this phase the word provided the shibboleth of the nobility, describing the aristocrat, as *Theognis* saw and portrayed him, in distinction from the lying plebeian, until finally, after the decline of the aristocracy, the word came to stand for spiritual nobility, and ripened and sweetened. The words *kakos* and *deilos* (the plebeian, in contrast to the *agathos*) emphasize cowardice and provide a hint as to the direction in which we should look for

cf. 831

the etymology of *agathos*, a word allowing of more than one interpretation. The Latin *malus* (beside which I place *melas*) might designate the common man as dark, especially black-haired ("hic niger est"), as the pre-Aryan settler of the Italian soil, notably distinguished from the new blond conqueror race by his color. At any rate, the Gaelic presented me with an exactly analogous case: *fin*, as in the name Fingal, the characteristic term for nobility, eventually the good, noble, pure, originally the fair-haired as opposed to the dark, black-haired native population. The Celts, by the way, were definitely a fair-haired race; and it is a mistake to try to relate the area of dark-haired people found on ethnographic maps of Germany to Celtic bloodlines, as Virchow does. These are the last vestiges of the pre-Aryan population of Germany. (The subject races are seen to prevail once more, throughout almost all of Europe: in color, shortness of skull, perhaps also in intellectual and social instincts. Who knows whether modern democracy, the even more fashionable anarchism, and especially that preference for the commune, the most primitive of all social forms, which is now shared by all European socialists—whether all these do not represent a throwback, and whether, even physiologically, the Aryan race of conquerors is not doomed?) The Latin *bonus* I venture to interpret as warrior; providing that I am justified in deriving *bonus* from an older *duonus* (c.f. *bellum* → *duellum* → *duen-lum*, which seems to preserve that *duonus*). Bonus would then spell the man of strife, of discord, the warrior: we can now form some idea of what, in ancient Rome, constituted a man's goodness. And might not our German *gut* signify *göttlich*, the man of divine race? And further be identical with the racial

term, earlier also a term of rank, *Goth*? My arguments in support of this conjecture do not belong here.

## VI

Granting that political supremacy always gives rise to notions of spiritual supremacy, it at first creates no difficulties (though difficulties might arise later) if the ruling caste is also the priestly caste and elects to characterize itself by a term which reminds us of its priestly function. In this context we encounter for the first time concepts of pure and impure opposing each other as signs of class, and here, too, *good* and *bad* as terms no longer referring to class, develop before long. The reader should be cautioned, however, against taking pure and impure in too large or profound or symbolic a sense: all the ideas of ancient man were understood in a sense much more crude, narrow, superficial and non-symbolic than we are able to imagine today. The pure man was originally one who washed himself, who refused to eat certain foods entailing skin diseases, who did not sleep with the unwashed plebeian women, who held blood in abomination—hardly more than that. At the same time, given the peculiar nature of a priestly aristocracy, it becomes clear why the value opposites would early turn inward and become dangerously exacerbated; and in fact the tension between such opposites has opened abysses between man and man, over which not even an Achilles of free thought would leap without a shudder. There is from the very start something unwholesome about such priestly aristocracies, about their way of life, which is turned away from action and swings between brooding and emotional explosions: a way of life

which may be seen as responsible for the morbidity and neurasthenia of priests of all periods. Yet are we not right in maintaining that the cures which they have developed for their morbidities have proved a hundred times more dangerous than the ills themselves? Humanity is still suffering from the after-effects of those priestly cures. Think, for example, of certain forms of diet (abstinence from meat), fasting, sexual continence, escape "into the desert"; think further of the whole anti-sensual metaphysics of the priests, conducive to inertia and false refinement; of the self-hypnosis encouraged by the example of fakirs and Brahmans, where a glass knob and an *idée fixe* take the place of the god. And at last, supervening on all this, comes utter satiety, together with its radical remedy, nothingness—or God, for the desire for a mystical union with God is nothing other than the Buddhist's desire to sink himself in nirvana. Among the priests everything becomes more dangerous, not cures and specifics alone but also arrogance, vindictiveness, acumen, profligacy, love, the desire for power, disease. In all fairness it should be added, however, that only on this soil, the precarious soil of priestly existence, has man been able to develop into an interesting creature; that only here has the human mind grown both profound and evil; and it is in these two respects, after all, that man has proved his superiority over the rest of creation.

VII

By now the reader will have got some notion how readily the priestly system of valuations can branch off from the aristocratic and develop into its opposite. An occasion for

such a division is furnished whenever the priest caste and the warrior caste jealously clash with one another and find themselves unable to come to terms. The chivalrous and aristocratic valuations presuppose a strong physique, blooming, even exuberant health, together with all the conditions that guarantee its preservation: combat, adventure, the chase, the dance, war games, etc. The value system of the priestly aristocracy is founded on different presuppositions. So much the worse for them when it becomes a question of war! As we all know, priests are the most evil enemies to have—why should this be so? Because they are the most impotent. It is their impotence which makes their hate so violent and sinister, so cerebral and poisonous. The greatest haters in history—but also the most intelligent haters—have been priests. Beside the brilliance of priestly vengeance all other brilliance fades. Human history would be a dull and stupid thing without the intelligence furnished by its impotents. Let us begin with the most striking example. Whatever else has been done to damage the powerful and great of this earth seems trivial compared with what the Jews have done, that priestly people who succeeded in avenging themselves on their enemies and oppressors by radically inverting all their values, that is, by an act of the most spiritual vengeance. This was a strategy entirely appropriate to a priestly people in whom vindictiveness had gone most deeply underground. It was the Jew who, with frightening consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value equations good/noble/powerful/beautiful/happy/favored-of-the-gods and maintain, with the furious hatred of the underprivileged and impotent, that "only the poor, the powerless, are good; only the suffering, sick, and ugly, truly blessed. But you noble and mighty ones of the earth will

be, to all eternity, the evil, the cruel, the avaricious, the godless, and thus the cursed and damned!" . . . We know who has fallen heir to this Jewish inversion of values. . . . In reference to the grand and unspeakably disastrous initiative which the Jews have launched by this most radical of all declarations of war, I wish to repeat a statement I made in a different context (*Beyond Good and Evil*), to wit, that it was the Jews who started the slave revolt in morals; a revolt with two millennia of history behind it, which we have lost sight of today simply because it has triumphed so completely.

VIII

You find that difficult to understand? You have no eyes for something that took two millennia to prevail? . . . There is nothing strange about this: all long developments are difficult to see in the round. From the tree trunk of Jewish vengeance and hatred—the deepest and sublimest hatred in human history, since it gave birth to ideals and a new set of values—grew a branch that was equally unique: a new love, the deepest and sublimest of loves. From what other trunk could this branch have sprung? But let no one surmise that this love represented a denial of the thirst for vengeance, that it contravened the Jewish hatred. Exactly the opposite is true. Love grew out of hatred as the tree's crown, spreading triumphantly in the purest sunlight, yet having, in its high and sunny realm, the same aims—victory, aggrandizement, temptation—which hatred pursued by digging its roots ever deeper into all that was profound and evil. Jesus of Nazareth, the gospel of love made flesh, the "redeemer," who brought

blessing and victory to the poor, the sick, the sinners—what was he but temptation in its most sinister and irresistible form, bringing men by a roundabout way to precisely those Jewish values and renovations of the ideal? Has not Israel, precisely by the detour of this "redeemer," this seeming antagonist and destroyer of Israel, reached the final goal of its sublime vindictiveness? Was it not a necessary feature of a truly brilliant politics of vengeance, a far-sighted, subterranean, slowly and carefully planned vengeance, that Israel had to deny its true instrument publicly and nail him to the cross like a mortal enemy, so that "the whole world" (meaning all the enemies of Israel) might naïvely swallow the bait? And could one, by straining every resource, hit upon a bait more dangerous than this? What could equal in debilitating narcotic power the symbol of the "holy cross," the ghastly paradox of a crucified god, the unspeakably cruel mystery of God's self-crucifixion for the benefit of mankind? One thing is certain, that in this sign Israel has by now triumphed over all other, nobler values.

IX

—"But what is all this talk about nobler values? Let us face facts: the people have triumphed—or the slaves, the mob, the herd, whatever you wish to call them—and if the Jews brought it about, then no nation ever had a more universal mission on this earth. The lords are a thing of the past, and the ethics of the common man is completely triumphant. I don't deny that this triumph might be looked upon as a kind of blood poisoning, since it has resulted in a mingling of the races, but there can be no

doubt that the intoxication has succeeded. The 'redemption' of the human race (from the lords, that is) is well under way; everything is rapidly becoming Judaized, or Christianized, or mob-ized—the word makes no difference. The progress of this poison throughout the body of mankind cannot be stayed; as for its tempo, it can now afford to slow down, become finer, barely audible—there's all the time in the world. . . . Does the Church any longer have a necessary mission, or even a *raison d'être*? Or could it be done without? *Quaeritur*. It would almost seem that it retards rather than accelerates that progress. In which case we might consider it useful. But one thing is certain, it has gradually become something crude and lumpish, repugnant to a sensitive intelligence, a truly modern taste. Should it not, at least, be asked to refine itself a bit? . . . Who It alienates more people today than it seduces. . . . Who among us would be a freethinker, were it not for the Church? It is the Church which offends us, not its poison. . . . Apart from the Church we, too, like the poison. . . . This was a "freethinker's" reaction to my argument—an honest fellow, as he has abundantly proved, and a democrat to boot. He had been listening to me until that moment, and could not stand to hear my silence. For I have a great deal to be silent about in this matter.

X

The slave revolt in morals begins by rancor turning creative and giving birth to values—the rancor of beings who, deprived of the direct outlet of action, compensate by an imaginary vengeance. All truly noble morality grows out of triumphant self-affirmation. Slave ethics, on the other

hand, begins by saying *no* to an "outside," an "other," a non-self, and that *no* is its creative act. This reversal of direction of the evaluating look, this invariable looking outward instead of inward, is a fundamental feature of rancor. Slave ethics requires for its inception a sphere different from and hostile to its own. Physiologically speaking, it requires an outside stimulus in order to act at all; all its action is reaction. The opposite is true of aristocratic valuations: such values grow and act spontaneously, seeking out their contraries only in order to affirm themselves even more gratefully and delightedly. Here the negative concepts, *humble, base, bad*, are late, pallid counterparts of the positive, intense and passionate credo, "We noble, good, beautiful, happy ones." Aristocratic valuations may go amiss and do violence to reality, but this happens only with regard to spheres which they do not know well, or from the knowledge of which they austere guard themselves: the aristocrat will, on occasion, misjudge a sphere which he holds in contempt, the sphere of the common man, the people. On the other hand we should remember that the emotion of contempt, of looking down, provided that it falsifies at all, is as nothing compared with the falsification which suppressed hatred, impotent vindictiveness, effects upon its opponent, though only in effigy. There is in all contempt too much casualness and non-chalance, too much blinking of facts and impatience, and too much inborn gaiety for it ever to make of its object a downright caricature and monster. Hear the almost benevolent nuances the Greek aristocracy, for example, puts into all its terms for the commoner; how emotions of compassion, consideration, indulgence, sugar-coat these words until, in the end, almost all terms referring to the common man survive as expressions for "unhappy," "pitiable" (cf.

*deilos, deilaios, poneros, mochtheros*, the last two of which properly characterize the common man as a drudge and beast of burden); how, on the other hand, the words *bad, base, unhappy* have continued to strike a similar note for the Greek ear, with the timbre "unhappy" preponderating. The "wellborn" really felt that they were also the "happy." They did not have to construct their happiness factitiously by looking at their enemies, as all rancorous men are wont to do, and being fully active, energetic people they were incapable of divorcing happiness from action. They accounted activity a necessary part of happiness (which explains the origin of the phrase *eu prattein*).

All this stands in utter contrast to what is called happiness among the impotent and oppressed, who are full of bottled-up aggressions. Their happiness is purely passive and takes the form of drugged tranquillity, stretching and yawning, peace, "sabbath," emotional slackness. Whereas the noble lives before his own conscience with confidence and frankness (*gennaïos* "nobly bred" emphasizes the nuance "truthful" and perhaps also "ingenuous"), the rancorous person is neither truthful nor ingenuous nor honest and forthright with himself. His soul squints; his mind loves hide-outs, secret paths, and back doors; everything that is hidden seems to him his own world, his security, his comfort; he is expert in silence, in long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-depreciation, and in self-humiliation. A race of such men will, in the end, inevitably be cleverer than a race of aristocrats, and it will honor sharp-wittedness to a much greater degree, i.e., as an absolutely vital condition for its existence. Among the noble, mental acuteness always tends slightly to suggest luxury and overrefinement. The fact is that with them it is much less important than is the perfect functioning of

intelligence

the ruling, unconscious instincts or even a certain temerity to follow sudden impulses, court danger, or indulge spurts of violent rage, love, worship, gratitude, or vengeance. When a noble man feels resentment, it is absorbed in his instantaneous reaction and therefore does not poison him. Moreover, in countless cases where we might expect it, it never arises, while with weak and impotent people it occurs without fail. It is a sign of strong, rich temperaments that they cannot for long take seriously their enemies, their misfortunes, their misdeeds; for such characters have in them an excess of plastic curative power, and also a power of oblivion. (A good modern example of the latter is Mirabeau, who lacked all memory for insults and meannesses done him, and who was unable to forgive because he had forgotten). Such a man simply shakes off vermin which would get beneath another's skin—and only here, if anywhere on earth, is it possible to speak of "loving one's enemy." The noble person will respect his enemy, and respect is already a bridge to love. . . . Indeed he requires his enemy for himself, as his mark of distinction, nor could he tolerate any other enemy than one in whom he finds nothing to despise and much to esteem. Imagine, on the other hand, the "enemy" as conceived by the rancorous man! For this is his true creative achievement: he has conceived the "evil enemy," the Evil One, as a fundamental idea, and then as a pendant he has conceived a Good One—himself.

## XI

The exact opposite is true of the noble-minded, who spontaneously creates the notion good, and later derives from

it the conception of the *bad*. How ill-matched these two concepts look, placed side by side: the *bad* of noble origin, and the *evil* that has risen out of the cauldron of unquenched hatred! The first is a by-product, a complementary color, almost an afterthought; the second is the beginning, the original creative act of slave ethics. But neither is the conception of good the same in both cases, as we soon find out when we ask ourselves who it is that is really evil according to the code of rancor. The answer is: precisely the good one of the opposite code, that is the noble, the powerful—only colored, reinterpreted, re-envisaged by the poisonous eye of resentment. And we are the first to admit that anyone who knew these "good" ones only as enemies would find them evil enemies indeed. For these same men who, amongst themselves, are so strictly constrained by custom, worship, ritual, gratitude, and by mutual surveillance and jealousy, who are so resourceful in consideration, tenderness, loyalty, pride and friendship, when once they step outside their circle become little better than uncaged beasts of prey. Once abroad in the wilderness, they revel in the freedom from social constraint and compensate for their long confinement in the quietude of their own community. They revert to the innocence of wild animals: we can imagine them returning from an orgy of murder, arson, rape, and torture, jubilant and at peace with themselves as though they had committed a fraternity prank—convinced, moreover, that the poets for a long time to come will have something to sing about and to praise. Deep within all these noble races there lurks the beast of prey, bent on spoil and conquest. This hidden urge has to be satisfied from time to time, the beast let loose in the wilderness. This goes as well for the Roman, Arabian, German, Japanese nobility as for the

Homeric heroes and the Scandinavian vikings. The noble races have everywhere left in their wake the catchword "barbarian." And even their highest culture shows an awareness of this trait and a certain pride in it (as we see, for example, in Pericles' famous funeral oration, when he tells the Athenians: "Our boldness has gained us access to every land and sea, and erected monuments to itself for both good and evil.") This "boldness" of noble races, so headstrong, absurd, incalculable, sudden, improbable (Pericles commends the Athenians especially for their *rathumia*), their utter indifference to safety and comfort, their terrible pleasure in destruction, their taste for cruelty—all these traits are embodied by their victims in the image of the "barbarian," the "evil enemy," the Goth or the Vandal. The profound and icy suspicion which the German arouses as soon as he assumes power (we see it happening again today) harks back to the persistent horror with which Europe for many centuries witnessed the raging of the blond Teutonic beast (although all racial connection between the old Teutonic tribes and ourselves has been lost). I once drew attention to the embarrassment Hesiod must have felt when he tried to embody the cultural epochs of mankind in the gold, silver, and iron ages. He could cope with the contradictions inherent in Homer's world, so marvelous on the one hand, so ghastly and brutal on the other, only by making two ages out of one and presenting them in temporal sequence; first, the age of the heroes and demigods of Troy and Thebes, as that world was still remembered by the noble tribes who traced their ancestry to it; and second, the iron age, which presented the same world as seen by the descendants of those who had been crushed, despoiled, brutalized, sold into slavery. If it were true, as passes current nowadays,

that the real meaning of culture resides in its power to domesticate man's savage instincts, then we might be justified in viewing all those rancorous machinations by which the noble tribes, and their ideals, have been laid low as the true instruments of culture. But this would still not amount to saying that the ~~organizers~~ themselves represent culture. Rather, the exact opposite would be true, as is vividly shown by the current state of affairs. These carriers of the leveling and retributive instincts, these descendants of every European and extra-European slave-dom, and especially of the pre-Aryan populations, represent human retrogression most flagrantly. Such "instruments of culture" are a disgrace to man and might make one suspicious of culture altogether. One might be justified in fearing the wild beast lurking within all noble races and in being on one's guard against it, but who would not a thousand times prefer fear when it is accompanied with admiration to security accompanied by the loathsome sight of perversion, dwarfishness, degeneracy? And is not the latter our predicament today? What accounts for our repugnance to man—for there is no question that he makes us suffer? Certainly not our fear of him, rather the fact that there is no longer anything to be feared from him; that the vermin "man" occupies the entire stage; that, tame, hopelessly mediocre, and savorless, he considers himself the apex of historical evolution; and not entirely without justice, since he is still somewhat removed from the mass of sickly and effete creatures whom Europe is beginning to stink of today.

Here I want to give vent to a sigh and a last hope. Exactly what is it that I, especially, find intolerable; that I am unable to cope with; that asphyxiates me? A bad smell. The smell of failure, of a soul that has gone stale. God knows it is possible to endure all kinds of misery—vile weather, sickness, trouble, isolation. All this can be coped with, if one is born to a life of anonymity and battle. There will always be moments of re-emergence into the light, when one tastes the golden hour of victory and once again stands foursquare, unshakable, ready to face even harder things, like a bowstring drawn taut against new perils. But, you divine patronesses—if there are any such in the realm beyond good and evil—grant me now and again the sight of something perfect, wholly achieved, happy, magnificently triumphant, something still capable of inspiring fear! Of a man who will justify the existence of mankind, for whose sake one may continue to believe in mankind! . . . The leveling and diminution of European man is our greatest danger; because the sight of him makes us despond. . . . We no longer see anything these days that aspires to grow greater; instead, we have a suspicion that things will continue to go downhill, becoming ever thinner, more placid, smarter, cosier, more ordinary, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian—without doubt man is getting "better" all the time. . . . This is Europe's true predicament: together with the fear of man we have also lost the love of man, reverence for man, confidence in man, indeed the *will to man*. Now the sight

of man makes us despond. What is nihilism today if not that? *We are tired of man.*

## XIII

But to return to business: our inquiry into the origins of that other notion of goodness, as conceived by the resentful, demands to be completed. There is nothing very odd about lambs disliking birds of prey, but this is no reason for holding it against large birds of prey that they carry off lambs. And when the lambs whisper among themselves, "These birds of prey are evil, and does not this give us a right to say that whatever is the opposite of a bird of prey must be good?" there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such an argument—though the birds of prey will look somewhat quizzically and say, "We have nothing against these good lambs; in fact, we love them; nothing tastes better than a tender lamb."—To expect that strength will not manifest itself as strength, as the desire to overcome, to appropriate, to have enemies, obstacles, and triumphs, is every bit as absurd as to expect that weakness will manifest itself as strength. A quantum of strength is equivalent to a quantum of urge, will, activity, and it is only the snare of language (of the arch-fallacies of reason petrified in language), presenting all activity as conditioned by an agent—the "subject"—that blinds us to this fact. For, just as popular superstition divorces the lightning from its brilliance, viewing the latter as an activity whose subject is the lightning, so does popular morality divorce strength from its manifestations, as though there were behind the strong a neutral agent, free to manifest its strength or contain it. But no such agent exists; there is no "being" be-

hind the doing, acting, becoming; the "doer" has simply been added to the deed by the imagination—the doing is everything. The common man actually doubles the doing by making the lightning flash; he states the same event once as cause and then again as effect. The natural scientists are no better when they say that "energy moves," "energy causes." For all its detachment and freedom from emotion, our science is still the dupe of linguistic habits; it has never yet got rid of those changelings called "subjects." The atom is one such changeling, another is the Kantian "thing-in-itself." Small wonder, then, that the repressed and smoldering emotions of vengeance and hatred have taken advantage of this superstition and in fact espouse no belief more ardently than that it is within the discretion of the strong to be weak, of the bird of prey to be a lamb. Thus they assume the right of calling the bird of prey to account for being a bird of prey. We can hear the oppressed, downtrodden, violated whispering among themselves with the wily vengefulness of the impotent, "Let us be unlike those evil ones. Let us be good. And the good shall be he who does not do violence, does not attack or retaliate, who leaves vengeance to God, who, like us, lives hidden, who shuns all that is evil, and altogether asks very little of life—like us, the patient, the humble, the just ones." Read in cold blood, this means nothing more than "We weak ones are, in fact, weak. It is a good thing that we do nothing for which we are not strong enough." But this plain fact, this basic prudence, which even the insects have (who, in circumstances of great danger, sham death in order not to have to "do" too much) has tricked itself out in the garb of quiet, virtuous resignation, thanks to the duplicity of impotence—as though the weakness of the weak, which is after all his

essence, his natural way of being, his sole and inevitable reality, were a spontaneous act, a meritorious deed. This sort of person requires the belief in a "free subject" able to choose indifferently, out of that instinct of self-preservation which notoriously justifies every kind of lie. It may well be that to this day the subject, or in popular language the soul, has been the most viable of all articles of faith simply because it makes it possible for the majority of mankind—i.e., the weak and oppressed of every sort—to practice the sublime sleight of hand which gives weakness the appearance of free choice and one's natural disposition the distinction of merit.

XIV

Would anyone care to learn something about the way in which ideals are manufactured? Does anyone have the nerve? . . . Well then, go ahead! There's a chink through which you can peek into this murky shop. But wait just a moment, Mr. Foolhardy; your eyes must grow accustomed to the fickle light. . . . All right, tell me what's going on in there, audacious fellow; now I am the one who is listening.

"I can't see a thing, but I hear all the more. There's a low, cautious whispering in every nook and corner. I have a notion these people are lying. All the sounds are sugary and soft. No doubt you were right; they are transmuting weakness into merit."

"Go on."

"Impotence, which cannot retaliate, into kindness; pusillanimity into humility; submission before those one hates into obedience to One of whom they say that he has com-

manded this submission—they call him God. The inoffensiveness of the weak, his cowardice, his ineluctable standing and waiting at doors, are being given honorific titles such as patience; to be *unable* to avenge oneself is called to be *unwilling* to avenge oneself—even forgiveness ("for they know not what they do—we alone know what they do.") Also there's some talk of loving one's enemy—accompanied by much sweat."

"Go on."

"I'm sure they are quite miserable, all these whisperers and smalltime counterfeiters, even though they huddle close together for warmth. But they tell me that this very misery is the sign of their election by God, that one beats the dogs one loves best, that this misery is perhaps also a preparation, a test, a kind of training, perhaps even more than that: something for which eventually they will be compensated with tremendous interest—in gold? No, in happiness. They call this *bliss*."

"Go on."

"Now they tell me that not only are they better than the mighty of this earth, whose spittle they must lick (not from fear—by no means—but because God commands us to honor our superiors), but they are even better off, or at least they will be better off someday. But I've had all I can stand. The smell is too much for me. This shop where they manufacture ideals seems to me to stink of lies."

"But just a moment. You haven't told me anything about the greatest feat of these black magicians, who precipitate the white milk of loving-kindness out of every kind of blackness. Haven't you noticed their most consummate sleight of hand, their boldest, finest, most brilliant trick? Just watch! These vermin, full of vindictive hatred, what are they brewing out of their own poisons? Have you ever

heard vengeance and hatred mentioned? Would you ever guess, if you only listened to their words, that these are men bursting with hatred?" *of resentment.*

"I see what you mean. I'll open my ears again—and stop my nose. Now I can make out what they seem to have been saying all along: 'We, the good ones, are also the just ones.' They call the thing they seek not retribution but the triumph of justice; the thing they hate is not their enemy, by no means—they hate injustice, ungodliness; the thing they hope for and believe in is not vengeance, the sweet exultation of vengeance ('sweeter than honey' as Homer said) but 'the triumph of God, who is just, over the godless'; what remains to them to love on this earth is not their brothers in hatred, but what they call their 'brothers in love'—all who are good and just."

"And what do they call that which comforts them in all their sufferings—their phantasmagoria of future bliss?"

"Do I hear correctly? They call it Judgment Day, the coming of *their* kingdom, the 'Kingdom of God.' Meanwhile they live in 'faith,' in 'love,' in 'hope.'"

"Stop! I've heard enough."

## xv

Faith in what? Love for what? Hope of what? There can be no doubt that these weaklings, too, want a chance to be strong, to have *their* kingdom come. They call it simply the Kingdom of God—what admirable humility! But in order to have that experience one must live a very long time, beyond death; one must have eternal life to indemnify oneself for that terrestrial life of faith, love, and hope. Indemnify for what and by what means? . . . It seems

to me that Dante committed a grave blunder when, with disconcerting naïveté, he put over the gate of hell the inscription: "Me, too, eternal love created." At any rate, the inscription over the gate of the Christian paradise, with its "eternal bliss," would read more fittingly, "Me, too, eternal hate created"—provided that it is fitting to place a truth above the gateway to a lie. For in what, precisely, does the bliss of that paradise consist?

We may have guessed by now, but still it is well to have the thing certified for us by a competent authority in these matters, Thomas Aquinas, the great teacher and saint. *Beati in regno coelesti*, he says, meek as a lamb, *videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut beatitudo illis magis complacet.* Or, if the reader prefers, here is the same sentiment more forcefully expressed by a triumphant Father of the Church (Tertullian) who wishes to dissuade his Christians from the cruel debauch of public spectacles—on what grounds? "Our faith offers us so much more," he writes in *De spectaculis*, ch. 29 ff., "and something so much stronger. Having been redeemed, joys of quite a different kind are ours. We have martyrs instead of athletes. If we crave blood, we have the blood of Christ. . . . But think what awaits us on the day of his triumph!" And the rapt visionary continues: "Yes, and there are still to come other spectacles—that last, that eternal Day of Judgment, that Day which the Gentiles never believed would come, that Day they laughed at, when this old world and all its generations shall be consumed in one fire. How vast the spectacle that day, and how wide! What sight shall wake my wonder, what my laughter, my joy and exultation as I see all those kings, those great kings, welcomed (we are told) in heaven, along with Jove, along with those who told of their ascent, groaning in the depths of darkness!

no more sensitive characteristics of the  
"higher nature," the more spiritual nature  
than to be  
The Genealogy of Morals

into the heart of man (I Cor. 2:9)? Things of greater joy than circus, theater, or amphitheater, or any stadium, I believe."<sup>1</sup> *Per fidem*: so it is written.

XVI  
*opposite*

Let us conclude. The two sets of valuations, good/bad and good/evil, have waged a terrible battle on this earth, lasting many millennia; and just as surely as the second set has for a long time now been in the ascendant, so surely are there still places where the battle goes on and the issue remains in suspension. It might even be claimed that by being raised to a higher plane the battle has become much more profound. Perhaps there is today not a single intellectual worth his salt who is not divided on that issue, a battleground for those opposites. The watchwords of the battle, written in characters which have remained legible throughout human history, read: "Rome vs. Israel, Israel vs. Rome." No battle has ever been more momentous than this one. Rome viewed Israel as a monstrosity; the Romans regarded the Jews as *convicted* of hatred against the whole of mankind—and rightly so if one is justified in associating the welfare of the human species with absolute supremacy of aristocratic values. But how did the Jews, on their part, feel about Rome? A thousand indications point to the answer. It is enough to read once more the Revelations of St. John, the most rabid outburst of vindictiveness in all recorded history. (We ought to acknowledge the profound consistency of the Christian instinct in assigning this book of hatred and the most extravagantly dotting of the Gospels

Roman values

more spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Translated by T. R. Glover.

and  
 4th  
 5th  
 rank

to the same disciple. There is a piece of truth hidden here, no matter how much literary skulduggery may have gone on.) The Romans were the strongest and most noble people who ever lived. Every vestige of them, every least inscription, is a sheer delight, provided we are able to read the spirit behind the writing. The Jews, on the contrary, were the priestly, rancorous nation *par excellence*, though possessed of an unequalled ethical genius; we need only compare with them nations of comparable endowments, such as the Chinese or the Germans, to sense which occupies the first rank. Has the victory so far been gained by the Romans or by the Jews? But this is really an idle question. Remember who it is before whom one bows down, in Rome itself, as before the essence of all supreme values—and not only in Rome but over half the globe, wherever man has grown tame or desires to grow tame: before three Jews and one Jewess (Jesus of Nazareth, the fisherman Peter, the rug weaver Paul, and Maria, the mother of that Jesus). This is very curious: Rome, without a doubt, has capitulated. It is true that during the Renaissance men witnessed a strange and splendid awakening of the classical ideal; like one buried alive, Rome stirred under the weight of a new Judaic Rome that looked like an ecumenical synagogue and was called the Church. But presently Israel triumphed once again, thanks to the plebeian rancor of the German and English Reformation, together with its natural corollary, the restoration of the Church—which also meant the restoration of ancient Rome to the quiet of the tomb. In an even more decisive sense did Israel triumph over the classical ideal through the French Revolution. For then the last political nobleness Europe had known, that of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, collapsed under the weight of

vindictive popular instincts. A wilder enthusiasm was never seen. And yet, in the midst of it all, something tremendous, something wholly unexpected happened: the ancient classical ideal appeared incarnate and in unprecedented splendor before the eyes and conscience of mankind. Once again, stronger, simpler, more insistent than ever, over against the lying shibboleth of the rights of the majority, against the furious tendency toward leveling out and debasement, sounded the terrible yet exhilarating shibboleth of the "prerogative of the few." Like a last signpost to an alternative route Napoleon appeared, most isolated and anachronistic of men, the embodiment of the noble ideal. It might be well to ponder what exactly Napoleon, that synthesis of ~~the brutish~~ with the more than human, did represent. . . .

## XVII

Was it all over then? Had that greatest conflict of ideals been shelved for good? Or had it only been indefinitely adjourned? Might not the smoldering fire start up again one day, all the more terrible because longer and more secretly nourished? Moreover, should we not wish for this event with all our hearts, and even help to promote it? If the reader at this point begins to develop his own train of thought, he is not likely soon to come to the end of it. All the more reason why I should conclude, assuming that I have made sufficiently clear what I mean by the dangerous slogan on the title page of my last book, Beyond Good and Evil. At all events, I do not mean "beyond good and bad."

NOTE I want to take this opportunity to express publicly a wish which I have hitherto expressed only in occasional conversations with scholars: that the philosophy department of some leading university might offer a series of prizes for essays on the evolution of moral ideas. Perhaps my present book will help to encourage such a plan. I would propose the following question, which deserves the attention of philologists, historians, and philosophers alike, *What light does the science of linguistics, especially the study of etymology, throw on the evolution of moral ideas?* However, it would also be necessary for that purpose to enlist the assistance of physiologists and medical men. This can be most fittingly accomplished by the professional philosophers, who as a body have shown such remarkable skill in the past in bringing about amicable and productive relations between philosophy, on the one hand, and physiology and medicine, on the other. It should be stressed that all tables of values, all moral injunctions, with which history and anthropology concern themselves, require first and foremost a physiological investigation and interpretation and next a critique on the part of medical science. The question "What is this or that table of values really worth?" must be viewed under a variety of perspectives, for the question "valuable to what end?" is one of extraordinary complexity. For example, something obviously valuable in terms of the longest possible survival of a race (or of its best adaptation to a given climate, or of the preservation of its greatest numbers) would by no means have the same value if it were a question of developing a more powerful type. The welfare of the many and the welfare of the few are radically opposite ends. To consider the former *a priori* the higher value may be left to the naïveté of English biologists. All sciences are now under the obligation to prepare the ground for the future task of the philosopher, which is to solve the problem of value, to determine the true hierarchy of values.

heralds = binding man  
promises = man binding himself

Second Essay

"GUILT," "BAD CONSCIENCE,"  
AND RELATED MATTERS

I

To breed an animal with the right to make promises—is not this the paradoxical problem nature has set itself with regard to man? and is it not man's true problem? That the problem has in fact been solved to a remarkable degree will seem all the more surprising if we do full justice to the strong opposing force, the faculty of oblivion. Oblivion is not merely a *vis inertiae*, as is often claimed, but an active screening device, responsible for the fact that what we experience and digest psychologically does not, in the stage of digestion, emerge into consciousness any more than what we ingest physically does. The role of this active oblivion is that of a concierge: to shut temporarily the doors and windows of consciousness; to protect us from the noise and agitation with which our lower organs work for or against one another; to introduce a little quiet into our consciousness so as to make room for the nobler functions and functionaries of our organism which do the governing and planning. This concierge maintains order and etiquette in the household of the psyche; which immediately suggests that there can be no happiness, no serenity, no hope, no pride, no present, without oblivion. A man in whom this screen is damaged and inoperative is like a dyspeptic (and not merely like one): he can't be done with anything. . . . Now this naturally forgetful animal, for whom oblivion represents a power, a form of strong health, has created for itself an opposite power, that of remembering, by whose aid, in certain cases, obliv-

for our organism's oligarchic.

ion may be suspended—specifically in cases where it is a question of promises. By this I do not mean a purely passive succumbing to past impressions, the indigestion of being unable to be done with a pledge once made, but rather an active not wishing to be done with it, a continuing to will what has once been willed, a veritable “memory of the will”; so that, between the original determination and the actual performance of the thing willed, a whole world of new things, conditions, even volitional acts, can be interposed without snapping the long chain of the will. But how much all this presupposes! A man who wishes to dispose of his future in this manner must first have learned to separate necessary from accidental acts; to think causally; to see distant things as though they were near-at-hand; to distinguish means from ends. In short, he must have become not only calculating but himself calculable, regular even to his own perception, if he is to stand pledge for his own future as a guarantor does.

## II

This brings us to the long story of the origin or genesis of responsibility. The task of breeding an animal entitled to make promises involves, as we have already seen, the preparatory task of rendering man up to a certain point regular, uniform, equal among equals, calculable. The tremendous achievement which I have referred to in *Day-break* as “the custom character of morals,” that labor man accomplished upon himself over a vast period of time, receives its meaning and justification here—even despite the brutality, tyranny, and stupidity associated with the process. With the help of custom and the social strait-jacket,

man was, in fact, made calculable. However, if we place ourselves at the terminal point of this great process, where society and custom finally reveal their true aim, we shall find the ripest fruit of that tree to be the sovereign individual, equal only to himself, all moral custom left far behind. This autonomous, more than moral individual (the terms autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive) has developed his own, independent, long-range will, which dares to make promises; he has a proud and vigorous consciousness of what he has achieved, a sense of power and freedom, of absolute accomplishment. This fully emancipated man, master of his will, who dares make promises—how should he not be aware of his superiority over those who are unable to stand security for themselves? Think how much trust, fear, reverence he inspires (all three fully deserved), and how, having that sovereign rule over himself, he has mastery too over all weaker-willed and less reliable creatures! Being truly free and possessor of a long-range, pertinacious will, he also possesses a scale of values. Viewing others from the center of his own being, he either honors or disdains them. It is natural to him to honor his strong and reliable peers, all those who promise like sovereigns: rarely and reluctantly; who are chary of their trust; whose trust is a mark of distinction; whose promises are binding because they know that they will make them good in spite of all accidents, in spite of destiny itself. Yet he will inevitably reserve a kick for those paltry windbags who promise irresponsibly and a rod for those liars who break their word even in uttering it. His proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege responsibility confers has penetrated deeply and become a dominant instinct. What shall he call that dominant instinct, provided

he ever feels impelled to give it a name? Surely he will call it his conscience.

III

His conscience? It seems a foregone conclusion that this conscience, which we encounter here in its highest form, has behind it a long history of transformations. The right proudly to stand security for oneself, to approve oneself, is a ripe but also a late fruit; how long did that fruit have to hang green and tart on the tree! Over an even longer period there was not the slightest sign of such a fruit; no one had a right to predict it, although the tree was ready for it, organized in every part to the end of bringing it forth. "How does one create a memory for the human animal? How does one go about to impress anything on that partly dull, partly flighty human intelligence—that incarnation of forgetfulness—so as to make it stick?" As we might well imagine, the means used in solving this age-old problem have been far from delicate: in fact, there is perhaps nothing more terrible in man's earliest history than his mnemotechnics. "A thing is branded on the memory to make it stay there; only what goes on hurting will stick"—this is one of the oldest and, unfortunately, one of the most enduring psychological axioms. In fact, one might say that wherever on earth one still finds solemnity, gravity, secrecy, somber hues in the life of an individual or a nation, one also senses a residuum of that terror with which men must formerly have promised, pledged, vouched. It is the past—the longest, deepest, hardest of pasts—that seems to surge up whenever we turn serious." Whenever man has thought it necessary to create a mem-

ory for himself, his effort has been attended with torture, blood, sacrifice. The ghastliest sacrifices and pledges, including the sacrifice of the first-born; the most repulsive mutilations, such as castration; the cruelest rituals in every religious cult (and all religions are at bottom systems of cruelty)—all these have their origin in that instinct which divined pain to be the strongest aid to mnemonics. (All asceticism is really part of the same development: here too the object is to make a few ideas omnipresent, unforgettable, "fixed," to the end of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system; the ascetic procedures help to effect the dissociation of those ideas from all others.) The poorer the memory of mankind has been, the more terrible have been its customs. The severity of all primitive penal codes gives us some idea how difficult it must have been for man to overcome his forgetfulness and to drum into these slaves of momentary whims and desires a few basic requirements of communal living. Nobody can say that we Germans consider ourselves an especially cruel and brutal nation, much less a frivolous and thriftless one; but it needs only a glance at our ancient penal codes to impress on us what labor it takes to create a nation of thinkers. (I would even say that we are the one European nation among whom is still to be found a maximum of trust, seriousness, insipidity, and matter-of-factness, which should entitle us to breed a mandarin caste for all of Europe.) Germans have resorted to ghastly means in order to triumph over their plebeian instincts and brutal coarseness. We need only recount some of our ancient forms of punishment: stoning (even in earliest legend millstones are dropped on the heads of culprits); breaking on the wheel (Germany's own contribution to the techniques of punishment); piercing with stakes, drawing and quarter-

lack of taste

ing, trampling to death with horses, boiling in oil or wine (these were still in use in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), the popular flaying alive, cutting out of flesh from the chest, smearing the victim with honey and leaving him in the sun, a prey to flies. By such methods the individual was finally taught to remember five or six "I won'ts" which entitled him to participate in the benefits of society; and indeed, with the aid of this sort of memory, people eventually "came to their senses." What an enormous price man had to pay for reason, seriousness, control over his emotions—those grand human prerogatives and cultural showpieces! How much blood and horror lies behind all "good things"!

IV

But how about the origin of that other somber phenomenon, the consciousness of guilt, "bad conscience"? Would you turn to our genealogists of morals for illumination? Let me say once again, they are worthless. Completely absorbed in "modern" experience, with no real knowledge of the past, no desire even to understand it, no historical instinct whatever, they presume, all the same, to write the history of ethics! Such an undertaking must produce results which bear not the slightest relation to truth. Have these historians shown any awareness of the fact that the basic moral term *Schuld* (guilt) has its origin in the very material term *Schulden* (to be indebted)? Of the fact that punishment, being a *compensation*, has developed quite independently of any ideas about freedom of the will—indeed, that a very high level of humanization was necessary before even the much more primitive distinctions,

"with intent," "through negligence," "by accident," *compositis*, and their opposites could be made and allowed to weigh in the judgments of cases? The pat and seemingly natural notion (so natural that it has often been used to account for the origin of the notion of justice itself) that the criminal deserves to be punished because he could have acted otherwise, is in fact a very late and refined form of human reasoning; whoever thinks it can be found in archaic law grossly misconstrues the psychology of uncivilized man. For an unconscionably long time culprits were not punished because they were felt to be responsible for their actions; not, that is, on the assumption that only the guilty were to be punished; rather, they were punished the way parents still punish their children, out of rage at some damage suffered, which the doer must pay for. Yet this rage was both moderated and modified by the notion that for every damage there could somehow be found an equivalent, by which that damage might be compensated—if necessary in the pain of the doer. To the question how did that ancient, deep-rooted, still firmly established notion of an equivalency between damage and pain arise, the answer is, briefly: it arose in the contractual relation between creditor and debtor, which is as old as the notion of "legal subjects" itself and which in its turn points back to the basic practices of purchase, sale, barter, and trade.

V

As we contemplate these contractual relationships we may readily feel both suspicion and repugnance toward the older civilizations which either created or permitted them. Since it was here that promises were made, since it was

here that a memory had to be fashioned for the promiser, we must not be surprised to encounter every evidence of brutality, cruelty, pain. In order to inspire the creditor with confidence in his promise to repay, to give a guarantee for the stringency of his promise, but also to enjoin on his own conscience the duty of repayment, the debtor pledged by contract that in case of non-payment he would offer another of his possessions, such as his body, or his wife, or his freedom, or even his life (or, in certain theologically oriented cultures, even his salvation or the sanctity of his tomb; as in Egypt, where the debtor's corpse was not immune from his creditor even in the grave). The creditor, moreover, had the right to inflict all manner of indignity and pain on the body of the debtor. For example, he could cut out an amount of flesh proportionate to the amount of the debt, and we find, very early, quite detailed legal assessments of the value of individual parts of the body. I consider it already a progress, proof of a freer, more generous, more *Roman* conception of law, when the Twelve Tables decreed that it made no difference how much or little, in such a case, the creditor cut out—*si plus minusve secuerunt, ne fraude esto*. Let us try to understand the logic of this entire method of compensations; it is strange enough. An equivalence is provided by the creditor's receiving, in place of material compensation such as money, land, or other possessions, a kind of pleasure. That pleasure is induced by his being able to exercise his power freely upon one who is powerless, by the pleasure of *faire le mal pour le plaisir de le faire*, the pleasure of rape. That pleasure will be increased in proportion to the lowliness of the creditor's own station; it will appear to him as a delicious morsel, a foretaste of a higher rank. In "punishing" the debtor, the creditor shares a seigniorial right. For

once he is given a chance to bask in the glorious feeling of treating another human being as lower than himself—or, in case the actual punitive power has passed on to a legal "authority," of seeing him despised and mistreated. Thus compensation consists in a legal warrant entitling one man to exercise his cruelty on another.

VI

It is in the sphere of contracts and legal obligations that the moral universe of guilt, conscience, and duty, ("sacred" duty) took its inception. Those beginnings were liberally sprinkled with blood, as are the beginnings of everything great on earth. (And may we not say that ethics has never lost its reek of blood and torture—not even in Kant, whose categorical imperative smacks of cruelty?) It was then that the sinister knitting together of the two ideas *guilt* and *pain* first occurred, which by now have become quite inextricable. Let us ask once more: in what sense could pain constitute repayment of a debt? In the sense that to make someone suffer was a supreme pleasure. In exchange for the damage he had incurred, including his displeasure, the creditor received an extraordinary amount of pleasure; something which he prized the more highly the more it disaccorded with his social rank. I am merely throwing this out as a suggestion, for it is difficult, and embarrassing as well, to get to the bottom of such underground developments. To introduce crudely the concept of vengeance at this point would obscure matters rather than clarify them, since the idea of vengeance leads us straight back to our original problem: how can the infliction of pain provide satisfaction? The delicacy—even more,

the *tartufferie*—of domestic animals like ourselves shrinks from imagining clearly to what extent cruelty constituted the collective delight of older mankind, how much it was an ingredient of all their joys, or how naïvely they manifested their cruelty, how they considered disinterested malevolence (Spinoza's *sympathia malevolens*) a normal trait, something to which one's conscience could assent heartily. Close observation will spot numerous survivals of this oldest and most thorough human delight in our own culture. In both *Daybreak* and *Beyond Good and Evil* I have pointed to that progressive sublimation and apotheosis of cruelty which not only characterizes the whole history of higher culture, but in a sense constitutes it. Not so very long ago, a royal wedding or great public celebration would have been incomplete without executions, tortures, or *autos da fé*; a noble household without some person whose office it was to serve as a butt for everyone's malice and cruel teasing. (Perhaps the reader will recall Don Quixote's sojourn at the court of the Duchess. *Don Quixote* leaves a bitter taste in our mouths today; we almost quail in reading it. This would have seemed very strange to Cervantes and to his contemporaries, who read the work with the clearest conscience in the world, thought it the funniest of books, and almost died laughing over it.) To behold suffering gives pleasure, but to cause another to suffer affords an even greater pleasure. This severe statement expresses an old, powerful, human, all too human sentiment—though the monkeys too might endorse it, for it is reported that they heralded and precluded man in the devising of bizarre cruelties. There is no feast without cruelty, as man's entire history attests. Punishment, too, has its festive features.

## VII

These ideas, by the way, are not intended to add grist to the pessimist's mill of *taedium vitae*. On the contrary, it should be clearly understood that in the days when people were unashamed of their cruelty life was a great deal more enjoyable than it is now in the heyday of pessimism. The sky overhead has always grown darker in proportion as man has grown ashamed of his fellows. The tired, pessimistic look, discouragement in face of life's riddle, the icy *no* of the man who loathes life are none of them characteristic of mankind's vilest eras. These phenomena are like marsh plants; they presuppose a bog—the bog of morbid finickiness and moralistic drivel which has alienated man from his natural instincts. On his way to becoming an "angel" man has acquired that chronic indigestion and coated tongue which makes not only the naïve joy and innocence of the animal distasteful to him, but even life itself; so that at times he stops his nose against himself and recites with Pope Innocent III the catalogue of his unsavorinesses ("impure conception, loathsome feeding in the mother's womb, wretchedness of physical substance, vile stench, discharge of spittle, urine, and faeces"). Nowadays, when suffering is invariably quoted as the chief argument against existence, it might be well to recall the days when matters were judged from the opposite point of view; when people would not have missed for anything the pleasure of inflicting suffering, in which they saw a powerful agent, the principal inducement to living. By way of comfort to the milksops, I would also venture the suggestion that in those days pain did not

hurt as much as it does today; at all events, such is the opinion of a doctor who has treated Negroes for complicated internal inflammations which would have driven the most stoical European to distraction—the assumption here being that the negro represents an earlier phase of human development. (It appears, in fact, that the curve of human susceptibility to pain drops abruptly the moment we go below the top layer of culture comprising ten thousand or ten million individuals. For my part, I am convinced that, compared with one night's pain endured by a hysterical bluestocking, all the suffering of all the animals that have been used to date for scientific experiments is as nothing.) Perhaps it is even legitimate to allow the possibility that pleasure in cruelty is not really extinct today; only, given our greater delicacy, that pleasure has had to undergo a certain sublimation and subtilization, to be translated into imaginative and psychological terms in order to pass muster before even the tenderest hypocritical conscience. ("Tragic empathy" is one such term; another is *les nostalgies de la croix*.) What makes people rebel against suffering is not really suffering itself but the senselessness of suffering; and yet neither the Christian, who projected a whole secret machinery of salvation into suffering, nor the naïve primitive, who interpreted all suffering from the standpoint of the spectator or the dispenser of suffering, would have conceived of it as senseless. In order to negate and dispose of the possibility of any secret, unwitnessed suffering, early man had to invent gods and a whole apparatus of intermediate spirits, invisible beings who could also see in the dark, and who would not readily let pass unseen any interesting spectacle of suffering. Such were the inventions with which life, in those days, performed its perennial trick of justifying itself, its "evil";

nowadays a different set of inventions would be needed, e.g., life as a riddle or an epistemological problem. According to the primitive logic of feeling (but is our own so very different?) any evil was justified whose spectacle proved edifying to the gods. We need only study Calvin and Luther to realize how far the ancient conception of the gods as frequenters of cruel spectacles has penetrated into our European humanism. But one thing is certain: the Greeks could offer their gods no more pleasant condition than the joys of cruelty. With what eyes did Homer's gods regard the destinies of men? What, in the last analysis, was the meaning of the Trojan War and similar tragic atrocities? There can be no doubt that they were intended as festivals for the gods, and, insofar as poets in this respect are more "divine" than other men, as festivals for the poets. In much the same manner the moral philosophers of Greece, at a later date, let the eyes of God dwell on the moral struggles, the heroism, and the self-mortification of the virtuous man. The "Heracles" of stern virtue was on stage and was fully aware of it; to that nation of actors, unwitnessed virtue was inconceivable. Might not the audacious invention, by philosophers of that era, of man's free will, his absolute spontaneity in the doing of good or ill, have been made for the express purpose of insuring that the interest of the gods in the spectacle of human virtue could never be exhausted? This earthly stage must never be bare of truly novel, truly unprecedented suspense, complications, catastrophes. A truly deterministic world, whose movements the gods might readily foresee, must soon pall on them: reason enough why those friends of the gods, the philosophers, would not foist such a world on them. Ancient humanity, an essentially public and visual world, unable to conceive of happiness without

all pragmatic purposes are simply symbols of the fact that a will to power has implanted its own sense of function in those less powerful. Thus the whole history of a thing, an organ, a custom, becomes a continuous *chain* of reinterpretations and rearrangements, which need not be causally connected among themselves, which may simply follow one another. The "evolution" of a thing, a custom, an organ is not its *progressus* towards a goal, let alone the most logical and shortest *progressus*, requiring the least energy and expenditure. Rather, it is a sequence of more or less profound, more or less independent processes of appropriation, including the resistances used in each instance, the attempted transformations for purposes of defense or reaction, as well as the results of successful counterattacks. While forms are fluid, their "meaning" is even more so. The same process takes place in every individual organism. As the whole organism develops in essential ways, the meaning of the individual organs too is altered. In some cases their partial atrophy or numerical diminution spells the increased strength and perfection of the whole. This amounts to saying that partial desuetude, atrophy and degeneration, the loss of meaning and purpose—in short, death—must be numbered among the conditions of any true *progressus*, which latter appears always in the form of the will and means to greater power and is achieved at the expense of numerous lesser powers. The scope of any "progress" is measured by all that must be sacrificed for its sake. To sacrifice humanity as mass to the welfare of a single stronger human species would indeed constitute progress. . . .

I have emphasized this point of historical method all the more strongly because it runs counter to our current instincts and fashions, which would rather come to terms

with the absolute haphazardness or the mechanistic meaninglessness of event than with the theory of a will to power mirrored in all process. The democratic bias against anything that dominates or wishes to dominate, our modern *misarchism* (to coin a bad word for a bad thing) has gradually so sublimated and disguised itself that nowadays it can invade the strictest, most objective sciences without anyone's raising a word of protest. In fact it seems to me that this prejudice now dominates all of physiology and the other life sciences, to their detriment, naturally, since it has conjured away one of their most fundamental concepts, that of *activity*, and put in its place the concept of *adaptation*—a kind of second-rate activity, mere reactivity. Quite in keeping with that bias, Herbert Spencer has defined life itself as an ever more purposeful inner adaptation to external circumstances. But such a view misjudges the very essence of life; it overlooks the intrinsic superiority of the spontaneous, aggressive, overreaching, reinterpreting and re-establishing forces, on whose action adaptation gradually supervenes. It denies, even in the organism itself, the dominant role of the higher functions in which the vital will appears active and shaping. The reader will recall that Huxley strongly objected to Spencer's "administrative nihilism." But here it is a question of much more than simply "administration."

*its will to power*

## XIII

To return to the issue of punishment, we must distinguish in it two separate aspects: first its relatively permanent features: custom, the act, the *drama*, a certain strict sequence of procedures; and second, all that is fluid in it:

spectacles and feasts, was full of tender regard for the "spectator." And, as we have said before, punishment too has its festive features.

VIII

We have observed that the feeling of guilt and personal obligation had its inception in the oldest and most primitive relationship between human beings, that of buyer and seller, creditor and debtor. Here, for the first time, individual stood and measured himself against individual. No phase of civilization, no matter how primitive, has been discovered in which that relation did not to some extent exist. The mind of early man was preoccupied to such an extent with price making, assessment of values, the devising and exchange of equivalents, that, in a certain sense, this may be said to have constituted his thinking. Here we find the oldest variety of human acuteness, as well as the first indication of human pride, of a superiority over other animals. Perhaps our word *man* (*manas*) still expresses something of that pride: man saw himself as the being that measures values, the "assaying" animal. Purchase and sale, together with their psychological trappings, antedate even the rudiments of social organization and covenants. From its rudimentary manifestation in interpersonal law, the incipient sense of barter, contract, guilt, right, obligation, compensation was projected into the crudest communal complexes (and their relations to other such complexes) together with the habit of measuring power against power. The eye had been entirely conditioned to that mode of vision; and with the awkward consistency of primitive thought, which moves with diffi-

culty but, when it does move, moves inexorably in one direction, early mankind soon reached the grand generalization that everything has its price, everything can be paid for. Here we have the oldest and naivest moral canon of justice, of all "fair play," "good will," and "objectivity." Justice, at this level, is good will operating among men of roughly equal power, their readiness to come to terms with one another, to strike a compromise—or, in the case of others less powerful, to *force* them to accept such a compromise.

*is always present or potentially so*

IX

Keeping within the primeval frame of reference (which, after all, is not so very different from our own) we may say that the commonwealth stood to its members in the relation of creditor to debtor. People lived in a commonwealth, enjoying its privileges (which we are, perhaps, inclined to underestimate). They lived sheltered, protected, in peace and confidence, immune from injuries and hostilities to which the man "outside" was continually exposed, since they had pledged themselves to the community in respect of such injury and hostility. But supposing that pledge is violated? The disappointed creditor—the community—will get his money back as best he can, you may be sure. It is not so much a question of the actual damage done; primarily, the offender has broken his contract, his pledge to the group, thus forfeiting all the benefits and amenities of the community which he has hitherto enjoyed. The criminal is a debtor who not only refuses to repay the advantages and advances he has received but who even dares lay hands on his

*criminal*

clarity the development of penal law. Whenever a community gains in power and pride, its penal code becomes more lenient, while the moment it is weakened or endangered the harsher methods of the past are revived. The humanity of creditors has always increased with their wealth; until finally the degree to which a creditor can tolerate impairment becomes the measure of his wealth. It is possible to imagine a society flushed with such a sense of power that it could afford to let its offenders go unpunished. What greater luxury is there for a society to indulge in? "Why should I bother about these parasites of mine?" such a society might ask. "Let them take all they want. I have plenty." Justice, which began by setting a price on everything and making everyone strictly accountable, ends by blinking at the defaulter and letting him go scot free. Like every good thing on earth, justice ends by suspending itself. The fine name this self-canceling justice has given itself is mercy. But mercy remains, as goes without saying, the prerogative of the strongest, his province beyond the law.

XI

A word should be said here against certain recent attempts to trace the notion of justice to a different source, namely rancor. But first of all, let me whisper something in the ear of psychologists, on the chance that they might want to study rancor at close range: that flower now blooms most profusely among anarchists and anti-Semites—unseen, like the violet, though with a different odor. And as the like spirit begets the like result, we must not be surprised if we see these recent attempts hark back to certain

shady efforts, discussed earlier, to dignify vengeance by the name of justice (as though justice were simply an outgrowth of the sense of injury) and to honor the whole gamut of *reactive* emotions. I am the last person to object to the latter notion: in view of the long neglected relationship between our biological needs and our emotional reactions, it is a consideration of the utmost importance. Yet I want to draw attention to the fact that precisely out of the spirit of rancor has this new nuance of scientific "equity" sprung to the service of hatred, envy, malevolence, and distrust. For "scientific equity" ceases immediately, giving way to accents of mortal enmity and the crassest bias, the moment another group of emotions comes into play whose biological value seems to me even greater and for that reason even more deserving of scientific appraisal and esteem. I am speaking of the truly *active* emotions, such as thirst for power, avarice, and the like (*vide* E. Dühring, *The Value of Existence, A Course in Philosophy*, and elsewhere). So much for the general tendency. Against Dühring's specific proposition that the native soil of justice is in the reactive emotions, it must be urged that the exact opposite is the case: the soil of the reactive emotions is the very last to be conquered by the spirit of justice. Should it actually come to pass that the just man remains just even toward his despoiler (and not simply cool, moderate, distant, indifferent: to be just is a positive attitude), and that even under the stress of hurt, contumely, denigration the noble, penetrating yet mild objectivity of the just (the *judging*) eye does not become clouded, then we have before us an instance of the rarest accomplishment, something that, if we are wise, we will neither expect nor be too easily convinced of. It is generally true of even the most decent people that a small dose of insult, malice,

insinuation is enough to send the blood to their eyes and equity out the window. The active man, the attacker and overreacher, is still a hundred steps closer to justice than the reactive one, and the reason is that he has no need to appraise his object falsely and prejudicially as the other must. It is an historical fact that the aggressive man, being stronger, bolder, and nobler, has at all times had the better view, the clearer conscience on his side. Conversely, one can readily guess who has the invention of "bad conscience" on his conscience: the vindictive man. Simply glance through history: in what sphere, thus far, has all legislation and, indeed, all true desire for laws, developed? In the sphere of "reactive" man? Not at all. Exclusively in the sphere of the active, strong, spontaneous, and aggressive. Historically speaking, all law—be it said to the dismay of that agitator (Dühring) who once confessed: "The doctrine of vengeance is the red thread that runs through my entire investigation of justice"—is a battle waged against the reactive emotions by the active and aggressive, who have employed part of their strength to curb the excesses of reactive pathos and bring about a compromise. Wherever justice is practiced and maintained, we see a stronger power intent on finding means to regulate the senseless raging of rancor among its weaker subordinates. This is accomplished by wresting the object of rancor from vengeful hands, or by substituting for vengeance the struggle against the enemies of peace and order, or by devising, proposing, and if necessary *enforcing* compromises, or by setting up a normative scale of equivalents for damages to which all future complaints may be referred. But above all, by the establishment of a code of laws which the superior power imposes upon the forces of hostility and resentment whenever it is strong enough

to do so; by a categorical declaration of what it considers to be legitimate and right, or else forbidden and wrong. Once such a body of law has been established, all acts of highhandedness on the part of individuals or groups are seen as infractions of the law, as rebellion against the supreme power. Thus the rulers deflect the attention of their subjects from the particular injury and, in the long run, achieve the opposite end from that sought by vengeance, which tries to make the viewpoint of the injured person prevail exclusively. Henceforth the eye is trained to view the deed ever more impersonally—even the eye of the offended person, though this, as we have said, is the last to be affected. It follows that only after a corpus of laws has been established can there be any talk of "right" and "wrong" (and not, as Dühring maintains, after the act of injury). To speak of right and wrong *per se* makes no sense at all. No act of violence, rape, exploitation, destruction, is intrinsically "unjust," since life itself is violent, rapacious, exploitative, and destructive and cannot be conceived otherwise. Even more disturbingly, we have to admit that from the biological point of view legal conditions are necessarily exceptional conditions, since they limit the radical life-will bent on power and must finally subserve, as means, life's collective purpose, which is to create greater power constellations. To accept any legal system as sovereign and universal—to accept it, not merely as an instrument in the struggle of power complexes, but as a *weapon against struggle* (in the sense of Dühring's communist cliché that every will must regard every other will as its equal)—is an anti-vital principle which can only bring about man's utter demoralization and, indirectly, a reign of nothingness.

One word should be added here about the *origin* and the *purpose* of punishment, two considerations radically distinct and yet too frequently confounded. How have our genealogists of morals treated these questions? Naïvely, as always. They would discover some kind of "purpose" in punishment, such as to avenge, or to deter, and would then naïvely place this purpose at the origin of punishment as its *causa fiendi*. And this is all. Yet the criterion of purpose is the last that should ever be applied to a study of legal evolution. There is no set of maxims more important for an historian than this: that the actual causes of a thing's origin and its eventual uses, the manner of its incorporation into a system of purposes, are worlds apart; that everything that exists, no matter what its origin, is periodically reinterpreted by those in power in terms of fresh intentions; that all processes in the organic world are processes of outstripping and overcoming, and that, in turn, all outstripping and overcoming means reinterpretation, rearrangement, in the course of which the earlier meaning and purpose are necessarily either obscured or lost. No matter how well we understand the utility of a certain physiological organ (or of a legal institution, a custom, a political convention, an artistic genre, a cultic trait) we do not thereby understand anything of its origin. I realize that this truth must distress the traditionalist, for, from time immemorial, the demonstrable purpose of a thing has been considered its *causa fiendi*—the eye is made for seeing, the hand for grasping. So likewise, punishment has been viewed as an invention for the purpose of punishing. But

its meaning, its purpose, the expectations attending on the execution of such procedures. In keeping with the views I have stated earlier, I presuppose here that the procedure itself antedates its use for purposes of punishment and that the latter has only been projected into the procedure, which had existed all along, though in a different framework. In short, I absolutely part company with the naïve view which would see the procedure as having been invented for punitive purposes, as earlier the hand for prehensile purposes. Concerning that other, fluid, "meaning" aspect of punishment, I would say that in a very late culture such as our present-day European culture the notion "punishment" has not one but a great many meanings. The whole history of punishment and of its adaptation to the most various uses has finally crystallized into a kind of complex which it is difficult to break down and quite impossible to define. (It is impossible to say with certainty today why people are punished. All terms which semiotically condense a whole process elude definition; only that which has no history ~~can~~ be defined.) However, at an earlier stage that synthesis of "meanings" must have been more easily soluble, its components more easily disassociated. We can still see how, from one situation to the next, the elements of the synthesis changed their valence and reorganized themselves in such a way that now this element, now that predominated at the expense of the others. It might even happen that in certain situations a single element (the purpose of *detering*, for example) absorbed the rest. To give the reader some idea how uncertain, secondary, and accidental the "meaning" of punishment really is, and how one and the same procedure may be used for totally different ends, I shall furnish him with a schema ab-

stracted from the relatively small and random body of material at my disposal.

1. Punishment administered with the view of rendering the offender harmless and preventing his doing further damage.
2. Punishment consisting of the payment of damages to the injured party, including affect compensation.
3. Punishment as the isolation of a disequilibrating agent, in order to keep the disturbance from spreading further.
4. Punishment as a means of inspiring fear of those who determine and execute it.
5. Punishment as cancellation of the advantages the culprit has hitherto enjoyed (as when he is put to work in the mines).
6. Punishment as the elimination of a degenerate element (or, as in Chinese law, a whole stock; a means of keeping the race pure, or of maintaining a social type).
7. Punishment as a "triumph," the violating and deriding of an enemy finally subdued.
8. Punishment as a means of creating memory either for the one who suffers it—so-called "improvement"—or for the witnesses.
9. Punishment as the payment of a fee, exacted by the authority which protects the evil-doer from the excesses of vengeance.
10. Punishment as a compromise with the tradition of vendetta, to the extent that this is still maintained and invoked as a privilege by powerful clans.
11. Punishment as a declaration of war, a warlike measure, against an enemy of peace, order and authority.

*This is what he started from*

## XIV

However incomplete, this list will serve to show that punishment is rife with utilitarian purposes of every kind. All the more reason why we should delete from it a fictitious usefulness which looms very large in popular thought these days, and which reckless writers are using freely to buttress our tottering belief in punishment. Punishment, these men claim, is valuable because it awakens a sense of guilt in the culprit; we should therefore view it as the true instrument of the psychological reaction called "remorse," "pangs of conscience." But this is a blunder, even as far as modern man and his psychology are concerned; applied to early man the notion becomes wholly absurd. True remorse is rarest among criminals and convicts: prisons and penitentiaries are not the breeding places of this gnawer. All conscientious observers are agreed here, though the fact may disappoint their innermost hopes and wishes. By and large, punishment hardens and freezes; it concentrates; it sharpens the sense of alienation; it strengthens resistance. If it should happen that now and again it breaks the will and brings about a miserable prostration and self-abasement, we find that psychological effect even less gratifying than the one which is most common, i.e., a dry, self-absorbed gloom. But if we stop to consider the millennia of prehistory, we may say with some assurance that it is precisely punishment that has most effectively retarded the development of guilt feeling, at any rate in the hearts of the victims of punitive authority. For we must not underestimate the extent to which the criminal is prevented, by the very witnessing of the legal process, from regarding

his deed as intrinsically evil. He sees the very same actions performed in the service of justice with perfectly clear conscience and general approbation: spying, setting traps, outsmarting, bribing, the whole tricky, cunning system which chiefs of police, prosecutors, and informers have developed among themselves; not to mention the cold-blooded legal practices of despoiling, insulting, torturing, murdering the victim. Obviously none of these practices is rejected and condemned per se by his judges, but only under certain conditions. "Bad conscience," that most uncanny and interesting plant of our vegetation, has definitely not sprung from this soil, indeed for a very long time the notion that he was punishing a "culprit" never entered a judge's mind. He thought he had to do with a mischief-maker, an unaccountable piece of misfortune. And in his turn the man whose lot it was to be punished considered his punishment a misfortune. He no more felt a moral pang than if some terrible unforeseen disaster had occurred, if a rock had fallen and crushed him.

## XV

Spinoza once, with some embarrassment, perceived this fact (to the annoyance of some of his commentators, like Kuno Fischer, who have gone out of their way to misconstrue his meaning). Teased one afternoon by heaven knows what memory, he was pondering the question of what really remained to him of that famous *morsus conscientiae*. Had he not relegated both good and evil to the realm of figments and grimly defended the honor of his "free" God against those blasphemers who would have God invariably act *sub ratione boni* ("But this would

mean subordinating God to fate, and result in the worst absurdity")? The world for Spinoza had returned to that state of innocence which it had known before the invention of bad conscience—but what, in the process, had become of the sting of conscience? "It is the opposite of joy," he says finally, "a sadness attended by the memory of some past event which disappointed our expectations," (*Ethics* III, Propos. 18, Schol. 1. 2.). In much the same way for thousands of years, all evil-doers overtaken by punishment would think, "Something has unexpectedly gone wrong here," and not, "I should never have done that." They would undergo punishment as one undergoes sickness or misfortune or death, with that stout, unrebelling fatalism which still gives the Russians an advantage over us Westerners in the management of their lives. If actions were "judged" at all in those days, it was solely from the prudential point of view. There can be no doubt that we must look for the real effect of punishment in a sharpening of man's wits, an extension of his memory, a determination to proceed henceforth more prudently, suspiciously, secretly, a realization that the individual is simply too weak to accomplish certain things; in brief, an increase of self-knowledge. What punishment is able to achieve, both for man and beast, is increase of fear, circumspection, control over the instincts. Thus man is *tamed* by punishment, but by no means *improved*; rather the opposite. (It is said that misfortune sharpens our wits, but to the extent that it sharpens our wits it makes us worse; fortunately it often simply ~~dulls them.~~)

*makes us stupid.*

*Moralism*

## XVI

I can no longer postpone giving tentative expression to my own hypothesis concerning the origin of bad conscience. It is one that may fall rather strangely on our ears and that requires close meditation. I take bad conscience to be a deep-seated malady to which man succumbed under the pressure of the most profound transformation he ever underwent—the one that made him once and for all a sociable and pacific creature. Just as happened in the case of those sea creatures who were forced to become land animals in order to survive, these semi-animals, happily adapted to the wilderness, to war, free roaming, and adventure, were forced to change their nature. Of a sudden they found all their instincts devalued, unhinged. They must walk on legs and carry themselves, where before the water had carried them: a terrible heaviness weighed upon them. They felt inapt for the simplest manipulations, for in this new, unknown world they could no longer count on the guidance of their unconscious drives. They were forced to think, deduce, calculate, weigh cause and effect—unhappy people, reduced to their weakest, most fallible organ, their consciousness! I doubt that there has ever been on earth such a feeling of misery, such a leaden discomfort. It was not that those old instincts had abruptly ceased making their demands; but now their satisfaction was rare and difficult. For the most part they had to depend on new, covert satisfactions. All instincts that are not allowed free play turn inward. This is what I call man's interiorization; it alone provides the soil for the growth of what is later called man's soul. Man's in-

terior world, originally meager and tenuous, was expanding in every dimension, in proportion as the outward discharge of his feelings was curtailed. The formidable bulwarks by means of which the polity protected itself against the ancient instincts of freedom (punishment was one of the strongest of these bulwarks) caused those wild, extravagant instincts to turn in upon man. Hostility, cruelty, the delight in persecution, raids, excitement, destruction all turned against their begetter. Lacking external enemies and resistances, and confined within an oppressive narrowness and regularity, man began rending, persecuting, terrifying himself, like a wild beast hurling itself against the bars of its cage. This languisher, devoured by nostalgia for the desert, who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an insecure and dangerous wilderness—this fool, this pining and desperate prisoner, became the inventor of "bad conscience." Also the generator of the greatest and most disastrous of maladies, of which humanity has not to this day been cured: his sickness of himself, brought on by the violent severance from his animal past, by his sudden leap and fall into new layers and conditions of existence, by his declaration of war against the old instincts that had hitherto been the foundation of his power, his joy, and his awesomeness. Let me hasten to add that the phenomenon of an animal soul turning in upon itself, taking arms against itself, was so novel, profound, mysterious, contradictory, and pregnant with possibility, that the whole complexion of the universe was changed thereby. This spectacle (and the end of it is not yet in sight) required a divine audience to do it justice. It was a spectacle too sublime and paradoxical to pass unnoticed on some trivial planet. Henceforth man was to figure among the most unexpected and breathtaking

throws in the game of dice played by Heracleitus' great "child," be he called Zeus or Chance. Man now aroused an interest, a suspense, a hope, almost a conviction—as though in him something were heralded, as though he were not a goal but a way, an interlude, a bridge, a great promise. . . .

XVII

My hypothesis concerning the origin of bad conscience presupposes that this change was neither gradual nor voluntary, that it was not an organic growing into new conditions but rather an abrupt break, a leap, a thing compelled, an ineluctable disaster, which could neither be struggled against nor even resented. It further presupposes that the fitting of a hitherto unrestrained and shapeless populace into a tight mold, as it had begun with an act of violence, had to be brought to conclusion by a series of violent acts; that the earliest commonwealth constituted a terrible despotism, a ruthless, oppressive machinery for not only kneading and suppling a brutish populace but actually shaping it. I have used the word "commonwealth," but it should be clearly understood what I mean; a pack of savages, a race of conquerors, themselves organized for war and able to organize others, fiercely dominating a population perhaps vastly superior in numbers yet amorphous and nomadic. Such was the beginning of the human polity; I take it we have got over that sentimentalism that would have it begin with a contract. What do men who can command, who are born rulers, who evince power in act and deportment, have to do with contracts? Such beings are unaccountable; they come like destiny, without

rhyme or reason, ruthlessly, bare of pretext. Suddenly they are here, like a stroke of lightning, too terrible, convincing, and "different" for hatred even. Their work is an instinctive imposing of forms. They are the most spontaneous, most unconscious artists that exist. They appear, and presently something entirely new has arisen, a live dominion whose parts and functions are delimited and interrelated, in which there is room for nothing that has not previously received its meaning from the whole. Being natural organizers, these men know nothing of guilt, responsibility, consideration. They are actuated by the terrible egotism of the artist, which is justified by the work he must do, as the mother by the child she will bear. Bad conscience certainly did not originate with these men, yet, on the other hand, that unseemly growth could not have developed *without* them, without their hammer blows, their artist's violence, which drove a great quantity of freedom out of sight and made it latent. In its earliest phase bad conscience is nothing other than the instinct of freedom forced to become latent, driven underground, and forced to vent its energy upon itself.

*instinct of freedom (i.e.)  
what of all*

XVIII

We should guard against taking too dim a view of this phenomenon simply because it is both ugly and painful. After all, the same will to power which in those violent artists and organizers created politics, in the "labyrinth of the heart"—more pettily, to be sure, and in inverse direction—created negative ideals and humanity's bad conscience. Except that now the material upon which this great natural force was employed was man himself, his old animal

self—and not, as in that grander and more spectacular phenomenon—his fellow man. This secret violation of the self, this artist's cruelty, this urge to impose on recalcitrant matter a form, a will, a distinction, a feeling of contradiction and contempt, this sinister task of a soul divided against itself, which makes itself suffer for the pleasure of suffering, this most energetic "bad conscience"—has it not given birth to a wealth of strange beauty and affirmation? Has it not given birth to beauty itself? Would beauty exist if ugliness had not first taken cognizance of itself, not said to itself, "I am ugly"? This hint will serve, at any rate, to solve the riddle of why contradictory terms such as *selflessness*, *self-denial*, *self-sacrifice* may intimate an ideal, a beauty. Nor will the reader doubt henceforth that the joy felt by the self-denying, self-sacrificing, selfless person was from the very start a *cruel* joy. —So much for the origin of altruism as a moral value. Bad conscience, the desire for self-mortification, is the wellspring of all altruistic values.

XIX

There can be no doubt that bad conscience is a sickness, but so, in a sense, is pregnancy. We shall presently describe the conditions which carried that "sickness" to its highest and most terrible peak. But first let us return for a moment to an earlier consideration. The civil-law relationship of debtor to creditor has been projected into yet another context, where we find it even more difficult to understand today, namely into the relationship between living men and their forebears. Among primitive tribes, each new generation feels toward the preceding ones, and especially toward the original founders of the tribe, a *juridical* obliga-

tion (rather than an *emotional* obligation, which seems to be of relatively recent origin). Early societies were convinced that their continuance was guaranteed solely by the sacrifices and achievements of their ancestors and that these sacrifices and achievements required to be paid back. Thus a debt was acknowledged which continued to increase, since the ancestors, surviving as powerful spirits, did not cease to provide the tribe with new benefits out of their store. Gratuitously? But nothing was gratuitous in those crude and "insensitive" times. Then how could they be repaid? By burnt offerings (to provide them with food), by rituals, shrines, customs, but above all, by obedience—for all rites, having been established by the forebears, were also permanently enjoined by them. But could they ever be *fully* repaid? An anxious doubt remained and grew steadily, and every so often there occurred some major act of "redemption," some gigantic repayment of the creditor (the famous sacrifice of the first-born, for example; in any case blood, human blood). Given this primitive logic, the fear of the ancestor and his power and the consciousness of indebtedness increase in direct proportion as the power of the tribe itself increases, as it becomes more successful in battle, independent, respected and feared. Never the other way round. Every step leading to the degeneration of the tribe, every setback, every sign of imminent dissolution, tends to diminish the fear of the ancestral spirits, to make them seem of less account, less wise, less provident, less powerful. Following this kind of logic to its natural term, we arrive at a situation in which the ancestors of the most powerful tribes have become so fearful to the imagination that they have receded at last into a numinous shadow: the ancestor becomes a god. Perhaps this is the way all gods have arisen, out of *fear*. . . . And

if anyone should find it necessary to add, "But also out of piety," his claim would scarcely be justified for the longest and earliest period of the human race. But it would certainly hold true for that intermediate period during which the noble clans emerged, of whom it may justly be said that they paid back their ancestors (heroes or gods) with interest all those noble properties which had since come to reside abundantly in themselves. We shall have an opportunity later on of dealing with this "ennoblement" of the ancestral spirits (which is not the same thing as their "consecration"), but first, let us bring to a conclusion the story of man's consciousness of guilt.

xx

Man's firm belief that he was indebted to the gods did not cease with the decline of tribal organization. Just as man has inherited from the blood aristocracies the concepts *good* and *bad*, together with the psychological penchant for hierarchies, so he has inherited from the tribes, together with the tribal gods, a burden of outstanding debt and the desire to make final restitution. (The bridge is provided by those large populations of slaves and serfs, who, either perforce or through servile mimicry, had adopted the cults of their overlords. The heritage spreads out from them in all directions.) The sense of indebtedness to the gods continued to grow through the centuries, keeping pace with the evolution of man's concept of the deity. (The endless tale of ethnic struggle, triumph, reconciliation, and fusion, in short, whatever precedes the final hierarchy of racial strains in some great synthesis, is mirrored in the welter of divine genealogies and legends

dealing with divine battles, victories, and reconciliations. Every progress toward universal empire has also been a progress toward a universal pantheon. Despotism, by overcoming the independent nobles, always prepares the way for some form of monotheism.) The advent of the Christian god, the "highest potency" god yet conceived by man, has been accompanied by the widest dissemination of the sense of indebtedness, guilt. If we are right in assuming that we have now entered upon the inverse development, it stands to reason that the steady decline of belief in a Christian god should entail a commensurate decline in man's guilt consciousness. It also stands to reason—doesn't it?—that a complete and definitive victory of atheism might deliver mankind altogether from its feeling of being indebted to its beginnings, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of "second innocence" go together.

XXI

So much, for the moment, about the connection of "guilt" and "duty" with religious presuppositions. I have deliberately left on one side the "moralization" of these terms (their pushing back into conscience, the association of the notion of bad conscience with a deity), and even wrote at the end of the last paragraph as though such a moralization had never taken place; as though with the notion of a divine creditor falling into disuse those notions too were doomed. Unfortunately this is far from being the case. The modern moralization of the ideas of guilt and duty—their relegation to a purely subjective "bad conscience"—represents a determined attempt to invert the normal order of development, or at least to stop it in its

tracks. The object now is to close the prospect of final deliverance and make man's gaze rebound from an iron barrier; to force the ideas of guilt and duty to face about and fiercely turn on—whom? Obviously on the "debtor," first of all, who, infested and eaten away by bad conscience, which spreads like a polyp, comes to view his debt as unredeemable by any act of atonement (the notion of "eternal penance"). But eventually the "creditor" too is turned on in the same fashion. Now the curse falls upon man's *causa prima* ("Adam," "original sin," the "bondage of the will"); or upon nature, which gave birth to man and which is now made the repository of the evil principle (nature as the instrument of the devil); or upon universal existence, which now appears as absolute non-value (nihilistic turning away from life, a longing for nothingness or for life's "opposite," for a different sort of "being"—Buddhism, etc.). Then suddenly we come face to face with that paradoxical and ghastly expedient which brought temporary relief to tortured humanity, that most brilliant stroke of Christianity: God's sacrifice of himself for man. God makes himself the ransom for what could not otherwise be ransomed; God alone has power to absolve us of a debt we can no longer discharge; the creditor offers himself as a sacrifice for his debtor out of sheer love (can you believe it?), out of love for his debtor. . . .

XXII

By now the reader will have guessed what has really been happening behind all these façades. Man, with his need for self-torture, his sublimated cruelty resulting from the cooping up of his animal nature within a polity, invented

bad conscience in order to hurt himself, after the blocking of the more natural outlet of his cruelty. Then this guilt-ridden man seized upon religion in order to exacerbate his self-torture to the utmost. The thought of being in God's debt became his new instrument of torture. He focused in God the last of the opposites he could find to his true and inveterate animal instincts, making these a sin against God (hostility, rebellion against the "Lord," the "Father," the "Creator"). He stretched himself upon the contradiction "God" and "Devil" as on a rack. He projected all his denials of self, nature, naturalness out of himself as affirmations, as true being, embodiment, reality, as God (the divine Judge and Executioner), as transcendence, as eternity, as endless torture, as hell, as the infinitude of guilt and punishment. In such psychological cruelty we see an insanity of the will that is without parallel: man's will to find himself guilty, and unredeemably so; his will to believe that he might be punished to all eternity without ever expunging his guilt; his will to poison the very foundation of things with the problem of guilt and punishment and thus to cut off once and for all his escape from this labyrinth of obsession; his will to erect an ideal (God's holiness) in order to assure himself of his own absolute unworthiness. What a mad, unhappy animal is man! What strange notions occur to him; what perversities, what paroxysms of nonsense, what bestialities of idea burst from him, the moment he is prevented ever so little from being a beast of action! . . . All this is exceedingly curious and interesting, but dyed with such a dark, somber, enervating sadness that one must resolutely tear away one's gaze. Here, no doubt, is sickness, the most terrible sickness that has wasted man thus far. And if one is still able to hear—but how few these days have ears to hear it!—in this night of

torture and absurdity the cry *love* ring out, the cry of rapt longing, of redemption in love, he must turn away with a shudder of invincible horror. . . . Man harbors too much horror; the earth has been a lunatic asylum for too long.

XXIII

This should take care, once for all, of the origin of "Our Holy Lord."—A single look at the Greek gods will convince us that a belief in gods need not result in morbid imaginations, that there are nobler ways of creating divine figments—ways which do not lead to the kind of self-crucifixion and self-punishment in which Europe, for millennia now, has excelled. The Hellenic gods reflected a race of noble and proud beings, in whom man's animal self had divine status and hence no need to lacerate and rage against itself. For a very long time the Greeks used their gods precisely to keep bad conscience at a distance, in order to enjoy their inner freedom undisturbed; in other words, they made the opposite use of them that Christianity has made of its god. They went very far in that direction, these splendid and lionhearted children, and no less an authority than the Homeric Zeus gives them to understand, now and again, that they make things a little too easy for themselves. "How strange," he says once (the case is that of Aegisthus, a very bad case indeed): "How strange that the mortals complain so loudly of us gods! They claim that we are responsible for all their evils. But they are the ones who create their own misery, by their folly, even in the teeth of fate." Yet the reader notices at once that even this Olympian spectator and judge is far from holding a grudge against them or thinking ill of them therefore.

"How foolish they are!" he thinks as he watches the misdeeds of mortals; and the Greeks, even during the heyday of their prosperity and strength, allowed that foolishness, lack of discretion, slight mental aberrations might be the source of much evil and disaster. Foolishness, not sin. . . . But even those mental aberrations were a problem. "How can such a thing happen to people like us, nobly bred, happy, virtuous, well educated?" For many centuries noble Greeks would ask themselves this question whenever one of their number had defiled himself by one of those incomprehensible crimes. "Well, he must have been deluded by a god," they would finally say, shaking their heads. This was a typically Greek solution. It was the office of the gods to justify, up to a certain point, the ill ways of man, to serve as "sources" of evil. In those days they were not agents of punishment but, what is nobler, repositories of guilt.

XXIV

It is clear that I am concluding this essay with three unanswered questions. It may occur to some reader to ask me, "Are you constructing an ideal or destroying one?" I would ask him, in turn, whether he ever reflected upon the price that had to be paid for the introduction of every new ideal on earth? On how much of reality, in each instance, had to be slandered and misconceived, how much of falsehood ennobled, how many consciences disturbed, how many gods sacrificed? For the raising of an altar requires the breaking of an altar: this is a law—let anyone who can prove me wrong. We moderns have a millennial heritage of conscience-vivisection and cruelty to the animals in our-

on, a dwelling in reality—so that when he comes forth into the light he may bring with him the redemption of that reality from the curse placed upon it by a lapsed ideal. This man of the future, who will deliver us both from a lapsed ideal and from all that this ideal has spawned—violent loathing, the will to extinction, nihilism—this great and decisive stroke of midday, who will make the will free once more and restore to the earth its aim, and to man his hope; this anti-Christ and anti-nihilist, conqueror of both God and Unbeing—one day he must come. . . .

*void*

xxv

But why go on? I've reached the term of my speech; to continue here would be to usurp the right of one younger, stronger, more pregnant with future than I am—the right of Zarathustra, *impious* Zarathustra. . . .

*guiltless*

Third Essay

WHAT DO ASCETIC IDEALS MEAN?

"Wisdom likes men who are reckless, scornful and violent; being a woman, her heart goes out to a soldier."

Zarathustra

I

What do ascetic ideals betoken?—In artists, nothing or too many things; in scholars and philosophers, something like a flair for the conditions most favorable to intellectual distinction; in women, at best, one more seductive charm, a touch of *morbidezza* added to fair flesh, the angelic look of a plump, pretty animal; in men who are physiologically maladjusted or unstrung (the vast majority), an attempt to see themselves as "too good" for this world, a pious debauchery, their strongest weapon against slow pain and tedium; in priests, the basic priestly creed, the main instrument of priestcraft, the supreme guarantee of their power; in saints, an excuse to hibernate, their *novissima gloriae cupido*, their repose in nothingness ("God"), their own brand of madness. The fact that the ascetic ideal can mean so many things to man is indicative of a basic trait of the human will, its fear of the void. Our will requires an aim; it would sooner have the void for its purpose than be void of purpose. Have I made myself clear? . . . "Not at all, my dear sir!" Well, then, let us start again from the beginning.

II

What do ascetic ideals betoken?—Or, to take a special case which I have often been asked about: what, for instance, does it mean when an artist like Richard Wagner pays homage to chastity in his later years? Or perhaps it would be truer to say that he has done this all along, but only latterly in a spirit of asceticism. What does this violent ascetic revulsion signify? For Wagner has actually made a complete about-face. What does it mean when an artist faces about completely? . . . Here we are forcibly reminded of what was probably the best, happiest, most reckless period of Wagner's life, the period when his mind was profoundly exercised by the story of Luther's wedding. Who knows what chance events brought it about that we have, today, in place of this wedding music, *Die Meistersinger*? And who knows how much of the former still echoes in the latter? At all events there can be no doubt that *Luther's Wedding* too would have been a praise of chastity. But at the same time a praise of the life of the senses; and it would have seemed right to me that way, and Wagnerian as well. There is no inherent contradiction between chastity and sensual pleasure: every good marriage, every real love affair transcends these opposites. It seems to me that Wagner would have done well to impress this pleasant fact on his Germans once more, through the vehicle of a comedy on Luther, at once bold and lovely. Detractors of the flesh have always abounded among the Germans, and perhaps Luther's greatest merit was to have had the courage of his sensuality (in those days one spoke, delicately enough, of "evangelical freedom"). But even in

cases where a real conflict exists between the sexual urge and chastity, the issue, fortunately, need not be tragic. At least this holds for all those happy, soundly constituted mortals who are far from regarding their precarious balance between beast and angel as an argument against existence. The finest and most luminous among them, such as Goethe and Hafiz, have even seen in this conflict one more enticement to life. . . . On the other hand, it is obvious that, once those pigs who have failed as pigs (and there are such) come round to the worship of chastity, they will view it simply as their own opposite and will worship it with the most tragic grunting zeal. It was that embarrassing and quite gratuitous conflict which the aging Wagner meant to set to music and present on the stage. Why? we may fairly ask. What were pigs to him? What are they to us?

III

This brings us directly to another question: what could that country simpleton, that poor devil and child of nature, Parsifal, have meant to him? Parsifal, converted in the end to Catholicism by such shady means—was he really meant seriously? One might be tempted to think, or wish, that the opposite were true, that Wagner's Parsifal was meant as a jest, as the satyr play with which the tragedian Wagner took leave of us, of himself, and especially of tragedy, in a manner befitting his greatness. That he wished to take leave of us with the most extravagant parody of the tragic spirit itself, of the whole grisly sadness and somberness of his earlier work, of the ascetic ideal in its crassest form. Such an act would have befitted a master tragedian, for

the great artist reaches the peak of his greatness only when he has learned to see himself and his art beneath him, when he is able to laugh about them. Is Wagner's *Parsifal* such a secret, exultant laugh, signaling the artist's final freedom? One would certainly wish that it were, for what becomes of *Parsifal* if we take him seriously? Must we really see him, as someone once put it to me, as "the product of an insane hatred of knowledge, spirit, and sensuality"? A curse pronounced in the same breath on the mind and the senses? An apostasy and return to Christian morbidity and obscurantism? In the last analysis, a denial and cancellation of himself by an artist who all his life had worked for the opposite end, to create an art combining the greatest spiritual and sensual power? Who, furthermore, had applied the same principles in his life as in his art? We need only remember how enthusiastically the young Wagner followed the footsteps of the philosopher Feuerbach. Feuerbach's war-cry of "healthy sensuality," sounded during the thirties and forties, seemed to Wagner as to so many other Germans (they called themselves "Young Germany") to be the new gospel. Did he finally come to think otherwise in these matters? At least it seems that toward the end he was determined to preach otherwise. And not only from the stage, in the trumpets of *Parsifal*. The murky writings of his last years are full of passages betraying a secret desire, timid, unsure, unacknowledged, to preach quite literally conversion, self-mortification, Christianity, medievalism, and to tell his disciples, "There is nothing here: you must seek salvation elsewhere." In one place he even invokes the blood of the Redeemer. . . .

## IV

Since a case of this sort—a very typical case, by the way—is attended with so much embarrassment, let me say one thing at the start: it is always well to divorce an artist from his work, and to take him less seriously than it. He is, after all, only a condition of the work, the soil from which it grows, perhaps only the manure on that soil. Thus he is, in most cases, something that must be forgotten if one wants to enter into the full enjoyment of the work. To investigate the origins of a work belongs to the physiologists and vivisectionists of the mind, never to men endowed with esthetic sensibility. The creator of *Parsifal* could not avoid identification or at least deep familiarity with medieval psychological conflicts—a domain obnoxious to all that is lofty or disciplined, a kind of intellectual perversity—any more than a pregnant woman can avoid the queasy details of pregnancy, which must be forgotten in order to enjoy the child. An artist must resist the temptation to "analogy by contiguity," which would persuade him that he, himself, is what he imagines and expresses. The truth of the matter is that if he were that thing, he would be unable to imagine or express it: Homer would not have created Achilles, nor Goethe Faust, if Homer had been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust. An artist worth his salt is permanently separated from ordinary reality. On the other hand, we all know that the constant unrealness of his innermost being will sometimes fill him with despair, and that he will then attempt what is strictly forbidden him, to trespass upon actuality, to be like other men. With what success? The reader can easily guess. . . . Here we have

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even *nude* female statues "disinterestedly" we may be allowed to laugh a little at their expense. The experiences of artists in this delicate matter are rather more "interesting"; certainly Pygmalion was not entirely devoid of esthetic feeling. Let us honor our estheticians all the more for the innocence reflected in such arguments—Kant, for example, when he descants on the peculiar character of the sense of touch with the ingenuousness of a country parson! To come back to Schopenhauer, who was so much closer to the arts than Kant but who yet could not escape from the spell of Kant's definition—how are we to account for his view?

Schopenhauer interpreted the term "disinterested" in a wholly personal way, basing it on an experience which he must have had quite regularly. There are few things about which he speaks with such assurance as the effect of esthetic contemplation. He claims that it counteracts the sexual "interest" (like lupulin and camphor), and he never tires of glorifying this release from the will as the great boon of the esthetic condition. One might even be tempted to ask whether he did not derive his basic conception of Will vs. Idea (the notion that only the Idea can deliver us from the Will) from a generalization of that sexual interest. (In all questions pertaining to Schopenhauer's philosophy we must never leave out of account that it was conceived by a young man of twenty-six; so that it partakes not only of the specific character of Schopenhauer but of the specific traits of that period of life.) Listen, for instance, to one of the most explicit of all the countless passages he has written extolling the esthetic condition (*The World as Will and Idea, I*), and you will hear the suffering, the happiness, the gratitude behind the words. "This is the painless condition which Epicurus

praised as the highest good and the condition of the gods. For a moment we are delivered from the wretched urgency of the will; we celebrate the day of rest in the treadmill of volition; the wheel of Ixion stands still. . . ." What vehemence in these words, what images of pain and endless disgust! What an almost pathological time confrontation in the terms, "the moment" as against the "wheel of Ixion," the "treadmill of volition," the "wretched urgency of the will"! But assuming that Schopenhauer was one hundred per cent right in his own case, we might still ask what has really been gained for our understanding of the nature of beauty? Schopenhauer has described one effect of beauty, that it acts as a sedative of the will, but can it even be claimed that this is a regular effect? As I have pointed out, Stendhal, no less sensual a man than Schopenhauer but more happily constituted, stresses a very different effect of beauty: "it promises happiness." For him it is precisely the excitement of the will, of "interest," through beauty that matters. And might one not urge against Schopenhauer himself that he was quite wrong in seeing himself as a Kantian, that he had failed to understand Kant's definition as its author intended it? That he too responded to beauty from an interested motive, even out of the strongest, most personal interest, that of the tortured man seeking release from his torment? If we now return to our original question, "What does it mean when a philosopher pays homage to the ascetic ideal?" we receive our first clue: he craves release from a torture.

## VII

Let us not immediately pull a long face at the word *torture*; there is plenty to offset it, to mitigate it—there will even be something left over to laugh about. We must take account of the fact that Schopenhauer, who treated sexuality (including woman, that *instrumentum diaboli*) as a personal enemy, absolutely required enemies to keep him in good spirits; that he loved atrabilious words, that he fulminated for the sake of fulminating, out of passion; that he would have sickened, become a *pessimist* (which he was not, much as he would have liked to be) had he been deprived of his enemies, of Hegel, of woman, of sensuality, of the human will to survival. You may be certain that without these Schopenhauer would not have stayed, he would have run away. It was his enemies who kept him alive. Just as with the ancient Cynics, his rage was his balm, his recreation, his compensation, his specific against tedium, in short, his happiness. This much in regard to what is most personal in the case of Schopenhauer; but there is, on the other hand, something typical about it too, and this brings us back to our main issue. Wherever there have been philosophers, from India to England (to indicate the opposite extremes of speculative orientation), there has prevailed a special philosopher's resentment against sensuality; Schopenhauer is only the most eloquent, and, for him who has ears to hear, the most delightful exponent of that resentment. There likewise exists a properly philosophical prejudice in favor of the ascetic ideal, let us make no mistake about it. Both dispositions, as I have said, are *typical*; if a philosopher lacks them, we may be sure

that he is spurious. What does that *mean*? For it is our duty to interpret such a state of affairs, which in itself simply stands there stupidly to all eternity, like every thing-in-itself. Every animal, including *la bête philosophe*, strives instinctively for the optimum conditions under which it may release its powers. Every animal, instinctively and with a subtle flair that leaves reason far behind, abhors all interference that might conceivably block its path to that optimum. (The path I am speaking of does not lead to "happiness" but to power, to the most energetic activity, and in a majority of cases to actual unhappiness.) Thus the philosopher abhors marriage and all that would persuade him to marriage, for he sees the married state as an obstacle to fulfillment. What great philosopher has ever been married? Heracleitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer—not one of them was married; moreover, it is impossible to imagine any of them married. I maintain that a married philosopher belongs in comedy, and as for that great exception, Socrates, it would almost seem that the malicious Socrates got married in a spirit of irony, precisely in order to prove that contention. Every philosopher would speak as Buddha spoke when he was told that a son had been born to him: "Rāhula has been born to me; a fetter has been forged for me" (Rāhula means "little daemon"). Every free spirit would be set thinking, provided he had ever stopped thinking, just as it once happened to Buddha: "'Close and oppressive is life in a house, a place of impurity; to leave the house is freedom' and, thus meditating, he left the house." The ascetic ideal suggests so many bridges to independence that a philosopher cannot help rejoicing as he listens to the story of all those resolute men who one day made up their minds to say "no" to every form of servitude and went

forth into a desert—even if they were really only strong mules, and as far as possible from being strong spirits. What, then, does the ascetic ideal betoken in a philosopher? The reader will have guessed my answer before now. Asceticism provides him with the condition most favorable to the exercise of his intelligence. Far from denying "existence," he affirms his existence, and his alone, perhaps even to the point of *hubris*: *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!*

## VIII

It is clear: these philosophers are by no means unprejudiced witnesses and judges of the value of the ascetic ideal. They think only of themselves; what are saints to them? They think of the things they cannot do without: freedom from constraint, interference, noise, business, duties, worries; a clear head, the free, joyous play of the mind; a bracing air, thin, clear, free, dry as mountain air, in which all animal being becomes sublimated and takes wing; peace in all the basements; all the dogs well chained, no baying of enmity and bushy rancor; no pangs of frustrated ambition; modest and submissive bowels, industrious as mill wheels, but remote; a heart estranged, distant, turned to the future, posthumous. In short, theirs is the serene asceticism of a divinely winged animal that soars above life but does not alight on it. We all know the three mighty slogans of the ascetic ideal: poverty, humility, chastity, and when we examine the lives of the great productive spirits closely, we are bound to find all three present in some degree. Not, to be sure, as their "virtues"—what have such men to do with virtue?—but as the most

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natural conditions of their optimum existence, their strongest productivity. It might very well be that their dominant intellectual discipline had first to curb a boundless and sensitive pride, or a reckless sensuality, or that they found it difficult at first to maintain their will to seclusion in the face of a taste for luxury and refinement, or a prodigality of heart and hand. But, being their dominant instinct, that sense of discipline will always prevail in the end and succeed in controlling all other instincts. There is nothing "virtuous" about all this. By the way, that "desert" into which strong, independent minds like to withdraw is very different from the image our pseudo-intellectuals have of it; in fact, often enough our pseudo-intellectuals *are* themselves that desert. And it is a foregone conclusion that mere mimes of the intellect could not endure it for a moment, for it is not romantic or Syrian enough for them, not sufficiently stagey. (Though there is no lack of camels in it, to be sure.) A deliberate obscurity; a side-stepping of fame; a backing away from noise, adulation, accolades, influence; a modest position, a quotidian existence, something which hides more than it reveals; occasional intercourse with harmless and gay birds and beasts, the sight of which refreshes; a mountainside for company, not a blind one but one with lakes for eyes; sometimes even a room at a crowded inn where one is sure of being mistaken for somebody else and may securely speak to anyone: such is our desert, and believe me, it is lonely enough. I admit that when Heracleitus retired into the courtyards and colonnades of the vast Temple of Artemis he dwelt in a nobler kind of desert—why don't we have such temples? (But perhaps we do not lack them altogether; I just happen to remember the handsomest study I ever had, on the Piazza di San Marco, given spring and the time of day

between ten o'clock and noon.) Yet the things which Heracleitus fled from were the very same things we are still anxious to avoid: the democratic chatter of the Ephesians, their politics, the latest news of the "empire" (Persia, mind you), their up-to-date penny-arcade trumpery. For philosophers need peace above all, today more than ever. We reverence all that is quiet, cold, distinguished, distant and past, whatever does not, as we look at it, make us taut and put us on the defensive, whatever we can converse with without having to shout. It is only necessary to listen to the tone of a mind as it speaks; every mind has its special timbre, and is fond of that timbre. The man over there, for example, must be an agitator, that is to say a nincompoop: whatever enters his head comes out dull and thick, fraught with the echo of great hollow spaces. That other one always sounds hoarse; is it possible that he has *thought* himself hoarse? It is indeed possible—ask the physiologists. But whoever thinks *words* is an orator, not a thinker; he betrays that he does not think *things* but only in respect of things; he really thinks only of himself and his listeners. And there is a third one who speaks impudently, buttonholes us, breathes on us (we automatically shut our mouths, even though he addresses us through a book: the timbre of his style gives him away) telling us that he is pressed for time, that he finds it difficult to believe in himself, that he must speak now or never. Yet a mind sure of itself speaks quietly, seeks out hidden places, is in no hurry. It is easy to tell a philosopher: he avoids three shiny, loud things—fame, princes, and women; which is not to say that they won't seek him out. He avoids glare, and for this reason he avoids his own time and the "light" of his day. In this he is like a shadow: the more the sun goes down, the larger he grows. As regards his "humility,"

he can tolerate a certain dependency and eclipse as he can tolerate darkness. What is more, he is fearful of being disturbed by lightning: he shies at the condition of a tree that is too isolated and unprotected, on which every storm can vent its caprice, and every caprice its storm. His "maternal" instinct, that secret love for what is growing in him, recommends to the philosopher conditions that dispense him from thinking about himself, much as woman's maternal instinct has fostered her dependent condition. He really asks for very little. His motto is "We are owned by the things we own"—again, not from virtue, from a meritorious sense of frugality and simplicity, but rather because the power that rules him wisely and inexorably demands it. That power is concerned with only one thing, and it dedicates its time, energy, love, interest to that one sole end. The philosopher hates to be disturbed by either enmities or friendships; he easily forgets or despises. He considers martyrdom in bad taste; to "suffer for the truth" he leaves to ambitious and histrionic persons or to any others who have time on their hands (he is obliged to *do something* for the truth). Big words he uses sparingly, and it is said that even the word "truth" goes against his grain: it has a vainglorious ring. . . . Finally, regarding the "chastity" of the philosopher, it should be clear that his fruitfulness does not lie in begetting children. The perpetuation of his name, his small immortality, must come through other means. (The philosophers of ancient India expressed it rather more haughtily: "Why should he have progeny, whose soul is the world?") All this has nothing to do with chastity, in the sense of ascetic scruple or hatred of the flesh, any more than it is chastity when an athlete or jockey practices sexual continence. It is simply the mandate of his dominant instinct, at least during the great

a certain fondness. Careful historical analysis will show an even closer tie between the ascetic ideal and philosophy. It might be claimed that philosophy took its first steps with the help of the leading strings of that ideal—awkwardly indeed, and reluctantly, always on the verge of losing its balance and falling on its face. It was the case with the first philosophers, as with all good things at their inception, that they were continually looking around for someone to help them and at the same time were afraid of all onlookers. It is enough to rehearse the traditional motivations and virtues of the philosopher: his bent toward scepticism, toward negation, toward suspension of judgment, toward analysis, toward neutrality and objectivity. Has it ever been fully realized that for the longest time all these tendencies ran counter to the requirements of accepted ethics (not to mention *reason* in this connection, which even Luther in his day called “Madame Sophistry, the clever whore”)? That if a philosopher had taken cognizance of himself, he would have had to recognize himself as a trespasser on forbidden ground, and that in consequence he was at the greatest pains to avoid such cognizance? But the same has been true of all the good things upon which we pride ourselves these days. Even measured by the Greek standard, our whole modern existence, insofar as it is not weakness but power and the consciousness of power, looks like sheer *hubris* and impiety: things exactly contrary to the ones we reverence today had for the longest time conscience on their side and God for their guardian. Our whole attitude toward nature, our violation of nature with the help of machines and the heedless ingenuity of technicians and engineers, is *hubris*; so is our attitude to God as some putative spider weaving purposes and ethics behind a vast web of causation (we

might say what Charles the Bold said of his fight with Louis XI, “*Je combats l’universelle araignée*”); so is our attitude toward ourselves, upon whom we perform experiments which we would never perform on any animal, cheerfully and curiously splitting open the soul, while the body still breathes. What do we care any longer for the “salvation” of the soul? And afterwards we cure ourselves. We have no doubt today that sickness is instructive, much more instructive than health, and seem to require “contaminators” even more than we do medicine men or saviours. We violate ourselves, nutcrackers of the soul, questionable questioners, as though life were nothing but a cracking of nuts. Does this not make us every day more questionable but also more worth questioning, perhaps more worthy to be alive? All good things have at one time been considered evil; every original sin has, at some point, turned into an original virtue. Marriage, for example, was looked upon for a long time as an infraction of the rights of the community: a man so presumptuous as to want a wife to himself had to atone for his presumption by paying a penalty. (Another example of the same development is the *jus primae noctis*, which in Cambodia is still the prerogative of the priests, those guardians of the “old tradition.”) The gentle, benevolent, indulgent, compassionate feelings, whose value has latterly risen so high that they have almost become absolutes, for centuries brought self-contempt in their train: men were ashamed of their meekness, even as today they are ashamed of their severity (cf. my remarks on that subject in *Beyond Good and Evil*). As for man’s submission to the *law*, we all know how men’s consciences all over the world rebelled against a law that would wrest from them the right of vendetta. For a long time the “law” continued to be a *vetitum*, a

heinous and radical innovation, a force in submitting to which one felt shamed before one's own conscience. Every step taken on this earth by our ancestors has been paid for with the greatest torments of body and mind. In *Daybreak* I wrote: "Not progress alone but simple change, simple movement, has had its countless martyrs." Nothing could be more alien to us today than this point of view. "Nothing was ever bought more dearly than the small portion of human reason and freedom that is now our pride. And it is that pride which makes it almost impossible for us today to imagine the vast tracts of ritual ethics which, as the truly determining history, precede our world history; those times when suffering, cruelty, dissimulation, vengeance, irrationality were all seen as virtues; well-being, intellectual curiosity, peace, and compassion as dangers; to be pitied and to labor as disgraces; madness as something divine, and change as immoral and a herald of disaster."

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In that same book I have explained under what pressures the earliest inquirers had to live; how, when they were not feared, they were despised. Speculation made its first appearance on this earth under disguise, with an ambiguous look, an evil heart, and often a frightened head. There was something inactive, brooding, unaggressive about these sages which inspired profound distrust. They had no other resource against this distrust than to inspire fear themselves. (The old Brahmans excelled at this as much as any.) Our ancient philosophers knew how to endow their existence with a solidity and depth of meaning which made them feared; but on closer inspection we dis-

cover that they were concerned with something even more fundamental, with inspiring an awe of themselves in their own hearts. As men of a heroic age, they did this by heroic means. Self-inflicted cruelty, ingenious self-castigation, was the principal instrument of these power-hungry anchorites and innovators, who had first of all to subdue tradition and the gods in themselves in order to be able to *believe* in their new departure. I wish to refer the reader here to the famous story of King Vishvamitra, who, after millennia of self-torture, acquired such a sense of power and confidence in himself that he undertook to build a new heaven. Here we have a majestic parable of the most ancient as well as the most modern philosopher's development. Whoever, at any time, has undertaken to build a new heaven has found the strength for it in his own hell. . . . To formulate this whole state of affairs briefly, we may say that, in order to be able to function at all, philosophers have always had to present themselves in the guise of some accepted type of sage, preferably religious—as priest, warlock, soothsayer, and the like. For a very long time the ascetic ideal served the philosopher as the sole phenomenal guise under which he could exist *qua* philosopher: he had to *represent* that ideal in order to assert himself as philosopher; but in order to represent it he had to believe in it. The peculiarly withdrawn, anti-sensual, austere attitude of philosophers, which has persisted to this day and has actually come to be seen as the philosophical attitude *par excellence*, is really the product of the emergency in which philosophy found itself at its inception. That is to say, for an unconscionably long time philosophy would not have been possible without an ascetic disguise, an ascetic misinterpretation of motive. Until quite recent times the ascetic priesthood continued to furnish the larval form,

repulsive and somber, under which alone philosophy could survive and crawl about. Have things really changed? Has the glittering and dangerous insect hidden in the larva really been released from its prison, thanks to a sunnier, warmer, brighter ambience? Is there really enough pride, courage, self-assurance, intellectual energy, responsibility, *freedom of the will*, to make philosophy possible in our world today?

XI

Only now that we have focused on the role of the ascetic priest can we really come to grips with our original problem. Only now that we are face to face with the classical representative of "seriousness" can we talk seriously. "What does seriousness really mean?" we may be tempted to ask at this point. This is a question properly within the province of the moral physiologist, but we must pass it over for the time being. The ascetic priest derived from his ideal not only his faith but also his determination, his power, his interest. His *raison d'être* stands or falls with the ascetic ideal. Should it surprise us, then, that those of us who oppose that ideal come up against a powerful enemy, an enemy willing to fight to the bitter end against all who would discount it? On the other hand, it does not seem likely that such a prejudiced view of our problem will give us much help toward solving it. The ascetic priest will scarcely succeed even in vindicating his ideal, for the same reason that a woman is not likely to succeed in vindicating femininity; much less can we expect to find in him an objective judge of the question mooted here. Rather than having to fear that he will brilliantly controvert us, we

will probably need to furnish him with arguments against us. . . . The moot point is the value which the ascetic priest places on existence. He confronts existence (comprising all of "nature," our whole transitory terrestrial world) with a differently constituted kind of Being, which it must oppose and exclude—unless it wishes to turn against itself; in which case our earthly existence may be viewed as a bridge to transcendence. The ascetic treats life as a maze in which we must retrace our steps to the point at which we entered or as an error which only a resolute act can correct, and he further *insists* that we conduct our lives conformably to his ideal. This appalling code of ethics is by no means a curious, isolated incident in the history of mankind; rather it is one of its broadest and longest traditions. An observer viewing our terrestrial existence from another planet might easily be persuaded that this earth is strictly an ascetic star, the habitation of disgruntled, proud, repulsive creatures, unable to rid themselves of self-loathing, hatred of the earth and of all living things, who inflict as much pain as possible on themselves, solely out of pleasure in giving pain—perhaps the only kind of pleasure they know. Simply consider how world-wide and regular is the occurrence of the ascetic priest. The type is not confined to a single race: he thrives everywhere; all classes of society produce him. Not that he propagates his code of ethics through biological reproduction—quite the contrary, a profound instinct deters him from reproducing his kind. Surely it must be a necessity of the first rank that makes this anti-biological species emerge and thrive again and again; if such a contradiction in terms does not die out, it must surely be in the interest of life itself. For an ascetic life is indeed a contradiction in terms. Here we find rancor without parallel, the rancor of

hostile to life

an insatiable power-drive which would dominate, not a single aspect of life, but life itself, its deepest and strongest foundations. Here we witness an attempt to use energy to block the very sources of energy. Here the eye looks enviously and malevolently on all biological growth and on its principal expressions, beauty and joy, while it gazes with delight on all that is misshapen or stunted, on pain, disaster, ugliness, on gratuitous sacrifice, on unselfing and self-castigation. All this is paradoxical to the highest degree. We are face to face with a deliberate split, which gloats on its own discomfiture and grows more self-assured and triumphant the more its biological energy decreases. The ascetic ideal has always fought under a banner bearing the motto, "triumph in agony." This tempting riddle, this image of rapturous pain, has always been its source of illumination, its pledge of final victory. *Crux, nux, lux*—for the ascetic these three invariably go together.

XII

What will such perversity vent itself on, once it begins to philosophize? Obviously on whatever is generally felt to be most sure and most real. It will look for error precisely in those places where the normal life instinct has proclaimed truth most authoritatively. For example, like the ascetics of the *Vedas*, it will declare that body, pain, multiplicity, the subject/object dichotomy, are illusions. What a triumph to be able to deny reality to the ego—what a triumph over the senses, over appearance, what a great and cruel triumph when finally even reason is humbled! The height of sadistic pleasure is reached when reason in its self-contempt and self-mockery decrees that the realm of

to eliminate the will, to suspend the emotions altogether, provided it could be done—surely this would be to castrate the intellect, would it not?

XIII

But let us return to our argument. The kind of inner split we have found in the ascetic, who pits "life against life," is nonsense, not only in psychological terms, but also physiologically speaking. Such a split can only be *apparent*; it must be a kind of provisional expression, a formula, an adaptation, a psychological misunderstanding of something for which terms have been lacking to designate its true nature. A mere stopgap to fill a hiatus in human understanding. Let me state what I consider to be the actual situation. The ascetic ideal arises from the protective and curative instinct of a life that is degenerating and yet fighting tooth and nail for its preservation. It points to a partial physiological blocking and exhaustion, against which the deepest vital instincts, still intact, are battling doggedly and resourcefully. The ascetic ideal is one of their weapons. The situation, then, is exactly the opposite from what the worshipers of that ideal believe it to be. Life employs asceticism in its desperate struggle against death; the ascetic ideal is a dodge for the preservation of life. The ubiquitousness and power of that ideal, especially wherever men have adopted civilized forms of life, should impress upon us one great, palpable fact: the persistent morbidity of civilized man, his biological struggle against death, or to put it more exactly, against *taedium vitae*, exhaustion, the longing for "the end." The ascetic priest is an incarnation of the wish to be different, to be

elsewhere; he is that wish, raised to its highest power, its most passionate intensity. And it is precisely the intensity of his wishing that forges the fetter binding him to this earth. At the same time he becomes an instrument for bettering the human condition, since by this intensity he is enabled to maintain in life the vast flock of defeated, disgruntled sufferers and self-tormentors, whom he leads instinctively like a shepherd. In other words, the ascetic priest, seemingly life's enemy and great negator, is in truth one of the major conserving and affirmative forces. . . . But what about the sources of man's morbidity? For certainly man is sicker, less secure, less stable, less firmly anchored than any other animal; he is the *sick* animal. But has he not also been more daring, more defiant, more inventive than all the other animals together?—man, the great experimenter on himself, eternally unsatisfied, vying with the gods, the beasts, and with nature for final supremacy; man, unconquered to this day, still unrealized, so agitated by his own teeming energy that his future digs like spurs into the flesh of every present moment. . . . How could such a brave and resourceful animal but be the most precarious, the most profoundly sick of all the sick beasts of the earth? There have been many times when man has clearly had enough; there have been whole epidemics of "fed-upness" (for example, around 1348, the time of the Dance of Death) but even this tedium, this weariness, this satiety breaks from him with such vehemence that at once it forges a new fetter to existence. As if by magic, his negations produce a wealth of tenderer affirmations. When this master of destruction, of self-destruction, wounds himself, it is that very wound that forces him to live.

The more regular morbidity becomes among the members of the human race, the more grateful we should be for the rare "windfalls"—men fortunate enough to combine a sound physical organization with intellectual authority. We should do our best to protect such men from the noxious air of the sickroom. It is the sick who are the greatest threat to the well; it is the weaklings, and not their own peers, who visit disaster upon the strong. But who, today, knows this, who acts on it? We try constantly to diminish man's fear of man; forgetting that it is the fear they inspire which forces the strong to be strong and, if need be, terrible. We should encourage that fear in every possible way, for it alone fosters a sound breed of men. The real danger lies in our loathing of man and our pity of him. If these two emotions should one day join forces, they would beget the most sinister thing ever witnessed on earth: man's ultimate will, his will to nothingness, nihilism. And indeed, preparations for that event are already well under way. One who smells not only with his nose but also with his eyes and ears will notice everywhere these days an air as of a lunatic asylum or sanatorium. (I am thinking of all the current cultural enterprises of man, of every kind of Europe now existing.) It is the diseased who imperil mankind, and not the "beasts of prey." It is the predestined failures and victims who undermine the social structure, who poison our faith in life and our fellow men. Is there anyone who has not encountered the veiled, shuttered gaze of the born misfit, that introverted gaze which saddens us and makes us

imagine how such a man must speak to himself? "If only I could be someone else," the look seems to sigh, "but there's no hope of that. I am what I am; how could I get rid of myself? Nevertheless, I'm fed up." In the marshy soil of such self-contempt every poisonous plant will grow, yet all of it so paltry, so stealthy, so dishonest, so sickly-sweet! Here the worms of vindictiveness and *arrière-pensée* teem, the air stinks of secretiveness and pent-up emotion; here a perennial net of malicious conspiracy is woven—the conspiracy of the sufferers against the happy and successful; here victory is held in abomination. And what dissimulation, in order not to betray that this is hatred! What a display of grand attitudes and grandiose words! what an art of "honest calumny!" What noble eloquence flows from the lips of these ill-begotten creatures! What sugary, slimy, humble submissiveness swims in their eyes! What are they after, really? The ambition of these most abject invalids is to at least *mime* justice, love, wisdom, superiority. And how clever such an ambition makes them! For we cannot withhold a certain admiration for the counterfeiter's skill with which they imitate the coinage of virtue, even its golden ring. They have by now entirely monopolized virtue; "We alone," they say, "are the good, the just, we alone the Men of Good Will." They walk among us as warnings and reprimands incarnate, as though to say that health, soundness, strength, and pride are vicious things for which we shall one day pay dearly; and how eager they are, at bottom, to be the ones to make us pay! How they long to be the executioners! Among them are vindictive characters aplenty, disguised as judges, who carry the word *justice* in their mouths like a poisonous spittle and go always with pursed lips, ready to spit on all who do not look discontent, on all who go cheer-

If the reader has thoroughly grasped—and I demand that here especially he dig down deeply—that it cannot be the task of the healthy to wait on the sick, or to make them well, he will also have grasped another important thing: that for physicians and medical attendants we require men who are themselves sick. I believe that we have here the key to the meaning of the ascetic priest. We must look upon the ascetic priest as the predestined advocate and savior of a sick flock if we are to comprehend his tremendous historical mission. His dominion is over sufferers; he is instinctively propelled toward this empire, in which he can display his own peculiar gifts and even find a kind of happiness. He must be sick himself, he must be deeply akin to all the shipwrecked and diseased, if he is to understand them and be understood by them; yet he must also be strong, master over himself even more than over others, with a will to power that is intact, if he is to be their support, overlord, disciplinarian, tyrant, god. They are his flock, and he must defend them—against whom? Against the healthy, obviously, but also against their envy of the healthy; he must be the natural antagonist and *contemner* of all rude, violent, savage health and power. The priest is the earliest version of that delicate animal which contemns more readily than it hates. He would not be spared the task of warring with the beasts of prey, but his war will be a war of cunning (“intellect”) rather than of brute force, as goes without saying. He might even be obliged to develop out of himself a new type of savage animal, or at least to adumbrate a new kind of ferocity in which the

polar bear, the smooth, cold, patient tiger, and the fox would combine to form a new species, at once attractive and awe-inspiring. If the occasion should arise he might even step, with ursine dignity and calculated superiority, among the other wild animal species: herald and mouth-piece of even more mysterious powers, determined to sow in their midst pain, inner division, self-contradiction—confident of his rule over all sufferers. To be sure, he carries with him balms and ointments, but in order to cure he must first create patients. And even as he alleviates the pain of his patients he pours poison into their wounds. Such, then, is the supreme accomplishment of this magician and animal tamer, in whose orbit all that is sound becomes sick and all that is sick, tame. This strange shepherd actually succeeds very well in defending his sick flock. He defends them even against themselves, against all the wickedness and malice smoldering within the herd and whatever other troubles are bred among the sick. He fights a clever, hard, secret battle against anarchy and disintegration, always aware of the piling-up of rancor, that most dangerous of dynamites. His essential task is to set off the dynamite in such a way that the blast will injure neither himself nor the herd. In other words, it is up to the priest to redirect resentment toward a new object. For is it not true that every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more specifically, an agent, a “guilty” agent who is susceptible to pain—in short some living being or other on whom he can vent his feelings directly or in effigy, under some pretext or other? The release of aggression is the best palliative for any kind of affliction. The wish to alleviate pain through strong emotional excitation is, to my mind, the true physiological motive behind all manifestations of resentment. I strongly disagree with

those who would see here a mere defensive or prophylactic reaction to sudden injury or jeopardy, a mere reflex, such as a headless frog makes to throw off an acid. There is a fundamental difference between the two processes: in the one case the effort is simply to prevent further injury, in the other to *dull* by means of some violent emotion a secret, tormenting pain that is gradually becoming intolerable—to banish it momentarily from consciousness. For that purpose an emotion of maximum violence is required, and any pretext that comes to hand will serve. "Somebody must be responsible for my discomfort." This sort of reasoning is universal among sick people and holds all the more sway over them the more obscure the real physiological cause of their discomfort is to them. (That cause may lie in an affection of the sympathetic nerve, or an excessive secretion of bile, or a deficiency of alkaline sulphates and phosphates in the blood, or an abdominal obstruction which impedes the circulation of the blood, or a disorder of the ovaries, etc.) All sufferers alike excel in finding imaginary pretexts for their suffering. They revel in suspicion and gloat over imaginary injuries and slights; they ransack the bowels of their past and present for obscure and dubious incidents which give free rein to their torturous suspicions; they intoxicate themselves with the poison of their own minds. They tear open the most ancient wounds, fasten the guilt on friend, wife, child—whatever is closest to them. Every suffering sheep says to himself, "I suffer; it must be somebody's fault." But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, says to him, "You are quite right, my sheep, somebody must be at fault here, but that somebody is yourself. You alone are to blame—you alone are to blame for yourself." This is not only very bold but also abundantly false.

But one thing, at least, has been accomplished: resentment has found a new target.

XVI

By now the reader should perceive what life's curative instinct, through the agency of the ascetic priest, has at least *tried* to accomplish, and what end is served by the temporary tyranny of such paradoxical and sophistical concepts as *guilt, sin or sinfulness, perdition, damnation*. The end is always to render the sick, up to a certain point, harmless, to make the incurable destroy themselves and to introvert the resentment of the less severely afflicted. In other words, the goal is to utilize the evil instincts of all sufferers for the purposes of self-discipline, self-surveillance, self-conquest. It goes without saying that a "medication" of this sort can never result in a physiologically effective cure, nor can it even be claimed that the vital instinct has really been tapped for the rehabilitation of the personality. All that this method achieved for a long time was the organization and concentration of the sick on one side (the word *church* is the popular term for this grouping), and a kind of provisional sequestration of the sounder and more fully "achieved" on the other; in short, the opening up of a chasm between sickness and health. And yet this was a great deal. (I proceed in this essay on an assumption which, addressing the kind of reader I do, I need not laboriously justify. I assume that sinfulness is not a basic human condition but merely the ethico-religious interpretation of physiological distemper.—The fact that a person thinks himself "guilty" or "sinful" is no proof that he is so, any more than the fact that a person feels healthy is a

proof of his health. Take, for example, the famous witch trials. In those days even the most acute and humane judges had not the faintest doubt that the witches were guilty. The "witches" themselves had no doubt, and yet there was no guilt.—To state my assumption somewhat more broadly: "psychological pain" is not a fact but merely a causal interpretation of a set of facts which so far have eluded exact formulation—really no more than a fat word taking the place of a vague question mark. If anyone is unable to get rid of a psychological pain, the fault lies not in his "psyche" but, more likely, in his belly [to put it crudely, which does not mean that it should be understood crudely]. . . . The strong, healthy person digests his experiences [including every deed and misdeed] as he does his meals, even though he may have swallowed a tough morsel. If he can't get rid of an experience, then this kind of indigestion is every bit as physical as the other, and often, in fact, merely one of the consequences of the other. Let me add that one may hold such notions and yet be an enemy of all materialism.)

XVII

But is our ascetic priest really a physician?—We have already seen that it is scarcely correct to call him a physician, much as he likes to see himself venerated as a savior. What he combats is only the discomfort of the sufferer, not the cause of his suffering, not even the condition of illness itself. This must always be our principal objection to priestly cures. But once we place ourselves in the position of the priest and adopt his perspective, we cannot fail to admire the great variety of things he has discovered and

thought about. His genius will then be found to reside in his endless ability to alleviate and comfort. How resourcefully he has conceived his solacing task, how bold and unscrupulous he has been in his choice of methods! Christianity has been the richest treasure house of ingenious nostrums. Never have so many restoratives, palliatives, narcotics been gathered together in one place, never has so much been risked for that end, never has so much subtlety been employed in guessing what stimulants will relieve the deep depression, the leaden fatigue, the black melancholy of the physiologically incapacitated. For, to put it quite generally, the main object of all great religions has been to counteract a certain epidemic malaise due to unreleased tension. It may safely be assumed that large masses of the earth's population periodically suffer from physiological anxiety which, however, from lack of adequate physiological knowledge is not understood as such; whereupon religion steps in with its staple of psychological and moral remedies. This anxiety or distemper may be due to a variety of causes. It may result from a crossing of races too dissimilar (or of classes too dissimilar. Class distinctions are always indicative of genetic and racial differences: the European *Weltschmerz* and the pessimism of the nineteenth century were both essentially the results of an abrupt and senseless mixing of classes); or from an unsuccessful emigration, from a race finding itself in a climate to which it is not entirely adapted (the case of the Hindu in India); or from the senescence of a race (the Parisian brand of pessimism from 1850 onward); or from faulty diet (the alcoholism of the middle ages, or the vegetarian absurdity); or from bad blood, malaria, syphilis (the great depression after the Thirty Years' War, which infected one half of Germany with disease and thus pre-

pared the ground for German servility and pusillanimity). In each of these cases a battle had to be waged against anxiety.—Let us now briefly review the main forms and practices of that battle. (I shall leave on one side here, as is only fair, the traditional philosophers' battle against anxiety, which is always synchronous with that other. This battle, though by no means devoid of interest, is too abstruse, too remote from practical life, too tangential and finespun—as when, for example, philosophers try to prove that pain is an error, under the illusion that the pain will vanish once the error is recognized; yet lo and behold! it refuses to vanish. . . .) The first of the means used is to reduce the vital energy to its lowest point. If possible, there should be no willing, no wishing at all; nothing that would excite the blood (no salt, the hygiene of the fakir); no love; no hate; equanimity; no retaliation; no acquisition of riches; no work; mendicancy; preferably no woman, or as little woman as possible; in intellectual matters, Pascal's maxim, "We must stultify ourselves." The result, in psychological and moral terms, is self-abrogation, sanctification. In physiological terms, it is hypnosis—the attempt to achieve for man something approximating the hibernation of certain animal species or the estivation of many plants in tropical climates; a minimum of energetic processes, a state in which the vital functions persist without, however, emerging into consciousness. To this end an extraordinary amount of human resourcefulness has been employed—and not altogether in vain. There can be no doubt that those "sportsmen" of sanctity, in whom all nations and cultures have abounded, have in fact found true deliverance from the thing they combatted with such rigorous training. Their cabinet of hypnotic drugs has actually helped them, in countless instances, to overcome their

profound physiological depression, and for this reason their methods cannot be discounted by the anthropologist. Nor are we justified in viewing any intention to starve the body and emotions as a symptom of madness, as some beef-eating freethinkers and Christopher Slys would have us do. Yet it is certainly true that a regimen of this kind may lead to all kinds of mental disorders, to the "mystic and ethereal light" of the Hesychasts on Mount Athos, to visual and auditory hallucinations, to voluptuous inundations and ecstasies (St. Theresa). Though it goes without saying that the subjects' own explanations of these phenomena have always been extravagantly false, we cannot fail to notice the sincere gratitude that makes them *want* to give explanations of this kind. Redemption itself, that final, complete hypnosis and tranquillity, appears as the supreme mystery in all such accounts, which even the highest symbols cannot fully express. It is viewed as a return to the ground of being, a deliverance from all illusion, as "knowledge," "truth," as a release from all objects, desires and acts, a state beyond good and evil. "Good and evil," says the Buddhist, "are both fetters; the Awakened One has triumphed over both." "Neither the done nor the undone," says the Vedic Brahmin, "gives him (the sage) pain; his dominion is no longer marred by any action; he has left both good and evil behind." Clearly the notion is common to Buddhism and Brahmanism. Neither the Hindu nor the Christian believes that such redemption can be reached by the path of virtue, of moral improvement, no matter how highly both regard the hypnotic value of virtue. The fact that they have been staunchly realistic in this regard is much to the credit of the three greatest religions, otherwise so thoroughly riddled with moralizing. "There is no such thing as duty for him who

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has knowledge. . . . Redemption is not achieved through the adding of virtues, for it consists in union with Brahma, to whose perfection nothing can be added; nor yet through the discarding of faults, for Brahma, with whom to be united spells redemption, is pure forever." (Both these passages are taken from Shankara's *Commentaries*, cited by the first European expert on Indian philosophy, my friend Paul Deussen.) Let us then give due honor to the concept of redemption in the great religions. On the other hand we might find it difficult to suppress a smile when we see how extravagantly these weary souls, too weary even for dreaming, prize deep sleep—deep sleep standing for the entry of the soul into Brahma, the accomplished mystical union. "When he is fast asleep," the oldest and most venerable scripture tells us, "and so completely at rest that he no longer sees any dream image, then, O my Beloved, he is at one with Him Who Is, he has returned to himself. Enwrapped by the cognitive self, he no longer has any consciousness of what is inner and what is outer. Over this bridge neither day nor night comes, neither age nor death, neither suffering nor good or ill deed." "In profound sleep the soul is lifted out of the body, enters the highest sphere of light, and thus puts on its true identity. It becomes the Supreme Spirit, who walks about, dallies, plays and amuses himself, whether with women, or chariots, or friends. The soul no longer thinks of its appendage, the body, to which the *prāna* (the breath of life) is harnessed like a draught animal to a cart." Yet we must not forget that we find here, under the sumptuous robe of oriental extravagance, the same kind of appraisal as in Epicurus, that classically cool, limpid, but suffering Greek. No person who suffers deeply and is deeply out of tune can help viewing the hypnotic nirvana, the peace of pro-

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found sleep, as the greatest of goods, as the positive value *par excellence*. (Following the same emotional logic, all pessimistic religions bestow upon nothingness the title of God.)

## XVIII

Such hypnotic damping of the sensibilities, of the sense of pain, presupposes rather exceptional aptitudes, notably courage, contempt for public opinion, intellectual stoicism. Much more common, because much easier, is another regimen for combatting depression: mechanical activity. There is no doubt that such activity can appreciably alleviate man's suffering. Nowadays it is spoken of rather dishonestly as "the blessing of labor." It brings relief by turning the attention of the sufferer away from his suffering. Since he is constantly preoccupied with doing, there is little room left in his mind for suffering—the chamber of man's consciousness is pretty narrow, after all. Mechanical activity, with its numerous implications (regular performance, punctual and automatic obedience, unvarying routine, a sanctioning, even an enjoining of impersonality, self-oblivion)—how thoroughly and subtly has the ascetic priest made use of it in his battle against pain! All he has had to do, especially when dealing with sufferers of the lower classes, slaves or prisoners (or women, who as a rule are both things), has been to exercise a little art of name changing in order to make them see as blessings things which hitherto they had abominated. The dissatisfaction of the slave with his lot has not, at any rate, been an invention of the priest.—An even more highly prized specific against depression has been the ministration of

small pleasures, which are readily accessible and can be made routine. This form of medication is frequently associated with the preceding one. The most common form of curative pleasure is the pleasure of "giving pleasure" (i.e. charity, the alleviation of stress, comforting, praise, friendly advice). In prescribing love of one's neighbor, the ascetic priest really prescribes an excitation of the strongest, most affirmative urge there is (the will to power), albeit in most cautious doses. The satisfaction of "minimum superiority," which is provided by all charitable, helpful, encouraging acts, is the best tonic for the physiologically incapacitated, so long as it be well administered; otherwise the same fundamental instinct causes them to hurt one another. In the documents of early Christianity we find mention of mutual-aid societies, organizations to assist the poor and the sick and for the burial of the dead, all sprung from the lowest social stratum, and all using, advisedly, the small pleasure, the doing of mutual good, as a specific against depression. Perhaps in those days it was something new, a real discovery? Inevitably such a will to mutual aid, such a movement to form organizations and congregations, must gradually develop the will to power far beyond its original narrow scope; the creation of <sup>gangs</sup> masses is an important step in the battle against depression. With the development of the congregation, the individual too is given a new interest, which often lifts him beyond his private ill-humor, his distaste for himself (Geulincx's *despectio sui*). All sick and morbid persons instinctively long to be organized, out of a desire to shake off their feeling of weakness and tedium. The ascetic priest divines that instinct and promotes it. Wherever mass congregations arise we may be sure that they have been demanded by the instinct of

weakness and organized by the shrewdness of priests. For there is one thing we must not leave out of account: it is every bit as natural for the strong to disaggregate as for the weak to congregate. Whenever the former join forces, it is done solely in view of some concerted aggressive action, some gratification of the will to power, and invariably against the resistance of individual consciences. The latter, on the other hand, derive delight from the very fact of organization. Their gregarious instinct is deeply gratified thereby, just as the instinct of the born ruler is profoundly disturbed and irritated by any demand for organization. The entire course of history bears out the fact that every oligarchy conceals a desire for tyranny. Every oligarchy vibrates with the tension which each individual member must maintain in order to master that desire. (So it was in Greece, for example, as Plato bears witness in a hundred places, Plato who knew his own kind, as well as himself. . . .)

## XIX

The ascetic specifics which we have dealt with so far (the damping of the vital spirits; mechanical activity; the "small pleasure" and especially the "love of one's fellow"; mass organization; the dawn of power in the congregation, which enabled the individual to forget his troubles in the joy he felt at the success of the group) seem all, by modern standards, quite harmless remedies for corporate doldrums. Let us now turn our attention to the more interesting deleterious drugs. They all have one characteristic in common: extravagance of feeling, the strongest anodyne for a long, dull, enervating pain. Endless priestly ingenuity

has been exercised on the question, "How can we produce extravagance of feeling?" This may sound rather severe; it would obviously sound pleasanter if I said, for instance: "The ascetic priest has at all times tried to make use of the element of *enthusiasm* present in any strong emotion." But why should I caress further the ears of our modern milk-sops, who are already effeminate enough? Why should we give an inch to their verbal hypocrisy? For a psychologist this would amount to a flagrant *act* of hypocrisy, quite apart from the fact that it would sicken us. For the "good taste" of a psychologist—others may call it his integrity—resides today in his determination to resist the wretched moralizing jargon which has covered all modern judgments of men and affairs with its slime. Let us not deceive ourselves; the essential characteristic of modern minds and modern books is not that they lie, but rather that they show a dogged innocence in their moralistic hypocrisy. To have to unearth everywhere this kind of innocence is perhaps the most distasteful of all the present-day psychologist's painful labors, for precisely here lies one of our own great perils: the source of a vast loathing. . . . I have no doubt what use posterity will make of all modern books and other cultural products (provided they last, of which there is however no danger, and further provided that a generation will arise one day whose taste is stricter, harder, sounder): it will use them as emetics, because of their mawkishness, their deep-dyed feminism under the mask of "idealism." Our educated men and women are "too good" to lie; that much is true, but it is certainly not a point in their favor. The honest-to-goodness "lie" (whose value is fully discussed in Plato) would be something far too strict and strong for them; it would demand of them something that must not be demanded, namely that they

take a good look at their own egos, that they try to distinguish between the true and false in themselves. Their province is the "dishonest" lie. The "good" of today are, to a man, determined to treat every issue in a spirit of profound hypocrisy—innocent, straightforward, true-blue hypocrisy. These "good" people are so totally bemoralized and lost to all honesty that none of them could withstand a truth concerning man. Or, to put it more palpably, not one of them could face a true biography. Here are a few proofs: Lord Byron noted down a very few personal things about himself, but Thomas Moore was too "good" for them; he burned his friend's papers. The same has been said of Dr. Gwinner, for Schopenhauer too had jotted down something about himself, possibly against himself. Beethoven's biographer, the solid American Thayer, abruptly stopped in the middle of his work; having arrived at a certain point in this noble and naïve life, he couldn't take it any longer. Should we be surprised, then, that no intelligent person today cares to say an honest word about himself, unless he is bent on asking for trouble? There has been some talk of a forthcoming autobiography of Richard Wagner: who can doubt that it will be a very *cautious* autobiography? Finally, let us remember the ridiculous outcry which the Catholic priest Jansenius aroused throughout Protestant Germany with his incredibly simplistic and innocuous account of the Reformation. What would people say if someone suddenly decided to treat that whole movement in a different spirit? If one day an authentic psychologist decided to tell the story of the real Luther, no longer with the moralistic simplicity of a country parson, nor with the mawkishness and excessive discretion of our Protestant historians, but with the in-  
trepidity of a Taine: in the spirit of strength, and not in

the cautious and opportunistic spirit of connivance? (Incidentally, it is the Germans who have produced the perfect exemplar of the latter—indeed a thing to be proud of—Leopold Ranke, that classical advocate of every “stronger cause,” that smartest of all the smart *Realpolitiker*.)

xx

Does not all this suggest good reasons why we psychologists should keep an alert and suspicious eye on ourselves? The chances are that we are much too “good” for our trade, that we too are *infected*, the victims of a fashionable moralistic taste, no matter how much contempt we may feel for such a taste. I am reminded of the diplomat who said to his colleagues, “Gentlemen, let us distrust our first reactions, they are invariably much too favorable. . . .” This is how a psychologist today should address his colleagues, for the issue we are dealing with demands, in fact, a great strictness toward ourselves, a considerable distrust of immediate reactions. The issue, as the reader of the preceding essay will remember, is the use of the ascetic ideal as a safety valve for pent-up emotion. The object is to pry the human soul loose from its joints, to sink it deep in terror, frost, fire, and transports until it suddenly rids itself of all its dullness, anxiety, gloom. What are the roads leading to this goal? What are the most infallible roads? . . . Any strong emotion will do—rage, fear, lust, vengeance, hope, triumph, despair, cruelty—provided it has sudden release. And the ascetic priest has, in fact, employed the whole pack of hounds that reside in man, releasing now one, now another, always to the end of awakening him from his dull melancholy, of putting his lingering misery to flight,

at least temporarily. And he has always done it under the aegis of some religious interpretation and “justification.” Every such emotional debauch has to be paid for in the end, so much goes without saying. That is why, by modern standards, remedies of this kind are highly objectionable. Yet, in fairness, we must allow that they have been employed in good faith, that in prescribing them the ascetic priest was deeply convinced that they were useful, even indispensable (the priest himself, in many instances, being shattered by the misery he had to inflict); and, further, that the physiological ravages (including serious mental disturbances) attendant upon such excess are consonant with the spirit of the medication, which does not aim to cure but simply to relieve depression, to palliate, to drug. Certainly that aim may be accomplished in this way. In order to make a ravishing music sound in the human soul, the ascetic priest has to play upon the sense of guilt. In the preceding essay I have briefly touched on the origin of that sense, treating it as an aspect of animal psychology; guilt was viewed there in its raw state. I may now add that to take shape it needed the hands of the ascetic priest, that virtuoso of guilt. “Sin,” the priestly version of that animal “bad conscience” (characterized earlier as introverted cruelty) constituted the greatest event in the entire history of the sick soul, the most dangerous sleight of hand of religious interpretation. At odds with himself for one physiological reason or another, rather like a caged animal, unable to comprehend his plight, avid for reasons (reasons are always comforting) and for narcotics, man must finally have recourse to one who knows the hidden causes. Behold, he is given a hint by his magician, the very *first* hint as to the cause of his suffering: he is told to look at himself, to search his own soul for a guilt, a piece of his

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frivolous  
etc

personal past; to view his suffering as a penance. . . . The sufferer takes the hint, he has *understood*, and from now on he is like a hen about whom a circle has been drawn. Now he will never escape from that confining circle; the patient has been transformed into a "sinner." This new "sinner" aspect of the patient has been with us for millennia; who knows whether we will ever expunge it from our consciousness? Wherever we look we meet the hypnotic stare of the sinner, fixed on the same identical thing—his "guilt," the sole cause of his suffering. Everywhere guilty conscience, Luther's "gruesome beast"; everywhere the hashing over of the past, the distortion of fact, the jaundiced look; everywhere a deliberate misinterpretation of suffering as guilt, terror, and punishment; everywhere the flagellant's lash, the hair shirt, the sinner stretching himself on the rack of his sadistic conscience; everywhere dumb torment, agonizing fear, the spasms of an unknown bliss, the cry for redemption. No doubt such a system of procedures, once instituted, made short work of the ancient depression and tedium. Life became once again a highly interesting business. Initiated into these mysteries, the sinner became wide-awake, eternally wide-awake, aglow yet burned out, exhausted yet far from weary. The ascetic priest, that grand old magician and warrior against depression, had conquered at last; his kingdom had come. People no longer complained of pain but were insatiable for it. Every hurtful debauch of feeling, all that shatters, bowls over, crushes, and transports, every secret of the torture chamber, the ingenuity of hell itself, had finally been discovered and exploited. All was at the service of the magician, at the service of the ascetic ideal. He continued to repeat, as he had done all along, "My kingdom is not of this earth." But had he still a right to say this?

Just as the ascetic priest has corrupted man's mental health wherever he has held sway, so he has corrupted his esthetic taste. And he continues to corrupt it. "Ergo?" I hope the reader will simply grant me that *ergo*, as I am in no mood to explain it. A single hint may suffice: it has to do with the central document of Christian literature, the book *par excellence*, the paradigm of all the rest. In the very heart of Graeco-Roman splendor, which was also a splendor of books, in the heart of a literature not yet atrophied and dispersed, when it was still possible to read a few books for which we would now trade half of all that is printed, the simple-minded presumption of the Christian agitators known as the Fathers of the Church dared to decree: "We have our own classical literature. We don't need that of the Greeks." And they pointed proudly to certain collections of legends, apostolic epistles, and apologetic penny tracts—the same kind of literature with which the English Salvation Army wages its war against Shakespeare and other pagans. The reader may have guessed already that I have no fondness for the New Testament. I admit that I am somewhat ill at ease to stand so entirely alone in my judgment of this most esteemed, overesteemed, document (the taste of two millennia is against me), but what can I do? This is the way I am, and I have the courage to stand up for my faulty taste. The Old Testament is another story. I have the highest respect for that book. I find in it great men, a heroic landscape, and one of the rarest things on earth, the naïveté of a strong heart. What is more, I find a *people*. In the New Testament, on the other

hand, I find nothing but petty sectarianism, a rococo of the spirit, abounding in curious scrollwork and intricate geometries and breathing the air of the conventicle; to say nothing of that occasional whiff of bucolic mawkishness which is characteristic of the epoch (and the locale) and which is not so much Jewish as Hellenistic. Here humility and braggadocio are bedfellows; here we find a stupendous volubility of feeling; the trappings of passion without real passion; an embarrassing amount of gesturing: obviously there is a lack of good breeding all the way through. Think of the tremendous fuss these pious little people make over their little trespasses! Who cares? Certainly God least of all. In the end all these petty provincials even demand the crown of eternal life—on the strength of what? and what do they want with it? Can presumption be carried farther? Just imagine an immortal Peter! . . . These little men are fired with the most ridiculous of ambitions: chewing the cud of their private grievances and misfortunes, they try to attract the attention of the Great Demiurge, to force him to care! And then, the horrible chumminess with which they address their Maker! That Jewish (but by no means exclusively Jewish) nuzzling and pawing of God! . . . In eastern Asia are found small, inconsequential pagan tribes which might have taught these early Christians a lesson or two in tact; those tribes, as Christian missionaries have told us, do not permit themselves to use the name of God at all. Such conduct, it seems to me, shows a great deal of delicacy; but it is altogether too delicate, not for the primitive Christians only, but for many who came after. To get a clear sense of the contrast, think of Luther, the most eloquent and presumptuous of German peasants; think of his manner of speaking, especially when he held converse with God! Luther's militant attitude to-

ward the mediating saints of the church (especially "that Devil's sow, the Pope") was, in the last analysis, the truculence of a lout toward the Church's etiquette, that reverent etiquette of a hieratic taste, which would admit only the discreet and consecrated into the holy of holies, and would exclude the louts. The latter must never be allowed to speak there. But the peasant Luther would have it otherwise; the traditional practice was not German enough for him. He wanted to be able to speak directly, in his own voice, "informally" with his God. . . . Well, that's what he did.—Obviously the ascetic ideal was at no time a school of good taste, much less of good manners. At best it has been a school of hieratic manners. The reason is that there is something about it which is the deadly enemy of good manners: a lack of restraint, dislike for restraint. It wants to be, and always will be, a *ne plus ultra*.

## XXIII

The ascetic ideal has corrupted not only health and taste, but a good many things besides—if I were to try to enumerate them all there would never be an end. But my purpose here is not to show what the ideal has effected but only what it signifies, suggests, what lies behind it, beneath it, and hidden within it; the things it has expressed, however vaguely and provisionally. It was only with this purpose in view that I afforded my reader a rapid view of its tremendous consequences, some of which have been disastrous. I wanted to prepare him for the last and, to me, most terrible aspect of the question "What does the ascetic ideal signify? What is the meaning of its incredible power? Why have people yielded to it to such an extent?"

Why have they not resisted it more firmly?" The ascetic ideal expresses a will: where do we find a contrary ideal expressing a contrary will? The goal of the ascetic ideal is so universal that, compared with it, all other human interests appear narrow and petty. It orients epochs, nations, individuals inexorably toward that one goal, permitting no alternative interpretation or goal. It rejects, denies, affirms, confirms exclusively in terms of its own interpretation—and has there ever been a system of interpretations more consistently reasoned out? It submits to no other power but believes in its absolute superiority, convinced that no power exists on earth but receives meaning and value from it. . . . Where do we find the antithesis to this closed system? Why are we unable to find it? . . . People say to me that such a counterideal exists, that not only has it waged a long, successful battle against asceticism but to all intents and purposes triumphed over it. The whole body of modern scholarship is cited in support of this—that modern scholarship which, as a truly realistic philosophy, clearly believes only in itself, has the courage of its convictions, and has managed splendidly thus far to get along without God, transcendence and restrictive virtues. But such noisy propaganda talk quite fails to impress me. These trumpeters of the "real" are poor musicians. Their voices do not arise out of any authentic depths, the depths of a scholarly conscience—for the scholarly conscience today is an abyss. In the mouths of such trumpeters the word *scholarship* is impudence, indeed blasphemy. The case is exactly the opposite of what is claimed here: scholarship today has neither faith in itself nor an ideal beyond itself, and wherever it is still passion, love, ardor, suffering, it represents not the opposite of the ascetic ideal but, in fact, its noblest and latest form. Does

this sound strange to you? There are plenty of decent, modest, hard-working scholars amongst us, who seem perfectly content with their little niche and for this reason proclaim, rather immodestly, that everyone should be content with things as they are these days—especially in the humanities and in science, where so much that is useful remains to be done. I quite agree. I would be the last to want to spoil the pleasure these honest workers take in their work, for I like what they are doing. And yet the fact that people work very hard at their disciplines and are content in their work in no way proves that learning as a whole today has an aim, an ideal, a passionate belief. As I have just said, the reverse is true. Wherever it is not simply the most recent manifestation of the ascetic ideal (and those are rare, noble, special cases, much too special to affect the general verdict), learning today is a hiding place for all manner of maladjustment, lukewarmness, self-depreciation, guilty conscience. Its restless activity thinly veils a lack of ideals, the want of a great love, dissatisfaction with a continence imposed on it from without. How much does learning hide these days, or, at least, how much does it wish to hide! The solidity of our best scholars, their automatic industry, their heads smoking night and day, their very skill and competence: all these qualities betoken more often than not a desire to hide and suppress something. Haven't we all grown familiar with learning as a drug? Scholars are naturally pained by such a view, as everyone knows to his cost who has had close contact with them. A chance remark will hurt them to the quick. We exasperate our learned friends at the very moment we try to honor them; we unleash their fury merely because we are too insensitive to guess that we have before us sufferers unwilling to admit their suffering to

themselves, stupefied and unconscious men, mortally afraid of regaining their consciousness. . . .

XXIV

Let us now look at those special cases I mentioned a moment ago, those few idealists still surviving among the philosophers, scholars, and scientists of today. Is it perhaps among them that we must look for the effective antagonists of the ascetic ideal? This is, in fact, what these "unbelievers" (for they are agnostics, all of them) believe themselves to be. Such faith as remains to them is invested in their conviction that they oppose the ascetic ideal. Whenever that issue arises they turn solemn, and their words and gestures become impassioned. But does that prove that what they believe is true? We whose business it is to *inquire* have gradually grown suspicious of all believers. Our mistrust has trained us to reason in a way diametrically opposed to the traditional one: wherever we find strength of faith too prominent, we are led to infer a lack of demonstrability, even something improbable, in the matter to be believed. We have no intention of denying that man is saved by faith, but for this very reason we deny that faith proves anything. A strong, saving faith casts suspicion on the object of that faith; so far from establishing its "truth," it establishes a certain probability—of deception. How does all this apply to our case?—These proud solitaires, absolutely intransigent in their insistence on intellectual precision, these hard, strict, continent, heroic minds, all these wan atheists, Antichrists, immoralists, nihilists, sceptics, suspenders of judgment, embodying whatever remains of intellectual conscience

today—are they really as free from the ascetic ideal as they imagine themselves to be? I would tell them something which they cannot see because they are too close to themselves: it is they, precisely, who today represent the ascetic ideal; it is they who are its most subtle exponents, its scouts and advance guard, its most dangerous and elusive *temptation*. If I have ever solved a riddle aright, I would wager that this is a sound guess! These men are a long way from being *free* spirits, because they still believe in truth. . . . When the Christian crusaders in the East happened upon the invincible Society of Assassins, that order of *free spirits par excellence*, whose lower ranks observed an obedience stricter than that of any monastic order, they must have got some hint of the slogan reserved for the highest ranks, which ran, "Nothing is true; everything is permitted." Here we have real freedom, for the notion of truth itself has been disposed of. Has any Christian freethinker ever dared to follow out the labyrinthine consequences of this slogan? Has any of them ever truly experienced the Minotaur inhabiting that maze? I have my doubts. In fact I know none has. Nothing could be more foreign to our intransigents than true freedom and detachment; they are securely tied to their belief in truth—more securely than anyone else. I know all these things only too well: the venerable "philosopher's continence" which such a faith imposes, the intellectual stoicism which in the end renounces denial quite as strictly as it does affirmation, the desire to stop short at the brute fact, the fatalism of *petits faits* (with which French scholarship nowadays tries to gain an advantage over German), the renunciation of all exegesis (that is to say of all those violations, adjustments, abridgments, omissions, substitutions, which among them constitute the business of interpretation). These things,

taken together, spell asceticism every bit as much as does the renunciation of sensuality; they are, in fact, but a special mode of such renunciation. As for the absolute will to truth which begets such abstinence, it is nothing other than a belief in the ascetic ideal in its most radical form, though an unconscious one. It is the belief in a metaphysical value, in that absolute value of "the true" which stems from the ascetic ideal and stands or falls with it. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a science without assumptions; the very notion of such a science is unthinkable, absurd. A philosophy, a "faith" is always needed to give science a direction, a meaning, a limit, a *raison d'être*. (Whoever wants to invert the procedure, that is, put philosophy on a "strictly scientific basis" must first stand not only philosophy but truth itself on its head: the worst breach of etiquette imaginable in the case of two such venerable females.) To quote from a book of my own, *The Gay Science*: "The truthful man (using "truth" in that audacious sense science presupposes) is led to assume a world which is totally other than that of life, nature and history. Does this not mean that he is forced to deny this world of ours? . . . The faith on which our belief in science rests is still a metaphysical faith. Even we students of today, who are atheists and anti-metaphysicians, light our torches at the flame of a millennial faith: the Christian faith, which was also the faith of Plato, that God is truth, and truth divine. . . . But what if this equation becomes less and less credible, if the only things that may still be viewed as divine are error, blindness, and lies; if God himself turns out to be our longest lie?" Here let us pause and take thought. It appears that today inquiry itself stands in need of justification (by which I do not mean to say that such justification can be found). In this

connection let us glance at both the oldest and the most recent philosophers: to a man they lack all awareness that the will to truth itself needs to be justified. There is a gap here in every philosophy—how are we to explain it? By the fact that the ascetic ideal has so far governed all philosophy; that truth was premised as Being, as God, as supreme sanction; that truth was not allowed to be called in question. But once we withhold our faith from the God of the ascetic ideal a new problem poses itself, the problem of the value of truth. The will to truth must be scrutinized; our business now is tentatively to question the will to truth. (If any reader thinks I have treated the subject too summarily, I refer him to the section entitled "To What Extent Do We Still Believe?" in my book *The Gay Science*. The whole fifth chapter of that book might be consulted with profit, as well as the preface of *Daybreak*.)

No, let no one cite the scientist or scholar when I ask for the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal, when I ask, "Where do we find an antithetical will enforcing an antithetical ideal?" Science is far too dependent for that, it always requires a normative value outside itself in order to operate securely. Learning and inquiry are far from antagonistic to the ascetic ideal; indeed we may say that this ideal is their motive force. Whenever they oppose it, their opposition is not really to the ideal itself but only to certain external aspects of it, to some temporary deadness or dogmatism. By denying its exoteric features, they bring the ideal to life once more. As I have already indicated, inquiry and the ascetic ideal have grown from the same

soil; they are at one in their overestimation of truth, in their belief that truth is incommensurate and not susceptible of criticism. This shared belief makes them inevitably allies, so that whoever opposes or questions one must oppose or question the other. Any depreciation of the ascetic ideal entails as a necessary consequence a depreciation of scientific research—and it is high time we woke up to this fact. (As for art, which I hope to discuss more fully at another time, it is far more radically opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science. In art the lie becomes consecrated, the will to deception has good conscience at its back. Plato felt this instinctively—the greatest enemy of art Europe has thus far produced. Plato vs. Homer: here we have the whole, authentic antagonism; on the one hand the deliberate transcendentalist and detractor of life, on the other, life's instinctive panegyrist. An artist who enlists under the banner of the ascetic ideal corrupts his artistic conscience. And yet we see this happen quite regularly: there is no creature on earth more corruptible than the artist.) In the physiological sense, too, science is closely allied with the ascetic ideal: a certain biological impoverishment is necessary to both. It is necessary that the emotions be cooled, the tempo slowed down, that dialectic be put in place of instinct, that seriousness set its stamp on face and gesture—seriousness, which always bespeaks a system working under great physiological strain. Simply examine all those epochs in a nation's history when the scholar assumes a prominent position: those are always the crepuscular times of fatigue and decline; the times of reckless health, instinctual security, confidence in the future, are over. It does not augur well for a culture when the mandarins are in the saddle, any more than does the advent of democracy, of arbitration courts in place of wars, of equal rights for

women, of a religion of pity—to mention but a few of the symptoms of declining vitality. (Inquiry seen as a problem; what does inquiry signify: cf. my preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*.) Let us honestly face the fact that inquiry is the best ally of the ascetic ideal, precisely because it is the least conscious, least spontaneous, most secret of allies. All through history the "poor in spirit" and the scholarly antagonists of the ideal have played the same game (one must beware of viewing the latter as the "spiritually rich." This they are not, rather they are the hectic consumptives of the spirit.) As for their famous victories, there have doubtless been such—but victories over what? The ascetic ideal has always emerged unscathed. The only thing inquiry has accomplished has been to raze wall after wall of outer fortifications which the ascetic ideal had succeeded in building around itself, to the detriment of its looks. Or does anyone seriously believe that the defeat of, say, theological astronomy spelled the defeat of the ideal? Does anyone believe that man has grown less hungry for a transcendental solution to life's riddle simply because life has become more casual, peripheral, expendable, in the visible order of things? *argi-*  
*hung* Has not man's determination to belittle himself developed apace precisely since Copernicus? Alas, his belief that he was unique and irreplaceable in the hierarchy of beings had been shattered for good: he had become an animal, quite literally and without reservations; he who, according to his earlier belief, had been almost God ("child of God," "God's own image"). Ever since Copernicus man has been rolling down an incline, faster and faster, away from the center—whither? Into the void? Into the "piercing sense of his emptiness"? But has not this been precisely the most direct route to his old ideal? All science (and by no means astronomy alone, con-

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cerning whose humiliating and discrediting effect Kant has left us a remarkable confession—"It destroys my importance") all science, natural as well as *unnatural* (by which I mean the self-scrutiny of the "knower") is now determined to talk man out of his former respect for himself, as though that respect had been nothing but a bizarre presumption. We might even say that man's hard-won self-contempt has brought with it its own special brand of pride, an austere form of stoic *ataraxia*, his last and most serious claim to a sense of respect (for in disrespecting we show that we still maintain a *sense* of respect). Can this really be called opposition to the ascetic ideal? Does anyone seriously maintain today (as theologians did for a while) that Kant's "victory" over the conceptual apparatus of dogmatic theology (God, soul, freedom, immortality) has hurt that ideal? (I leave out of account the question whether Kant himself intended anything of the sort.) But it is certainly true that, since Kant, transcendentalists of every persuasion have had *carte blanche*; they have become emancipated from theology; Kant has indicated to them the secret path whereon, without interference and in keeping with scholarly decorum, they may gratify their hearts' desires. Similarly, does anybody now hold it against the agnostics, those admirers of mystery and the unknown, that they worship the question mark itself as their god? (Xaver Doudan once wrote of the ravages worked by "*l'habitude d'admirer l'inintelligible au lieu de rester tout simplement dans l'inconnu.*" He thought that the ancients were innocent of that habit.) Assuming that whatever man apprehends not only fails to satisfy his wishes but, indeed, contradicts and confounds them, what a divine expedient to make our intellect, rather than our appetites, responsible for this state of affairs! "There is no true intellection; con-

sequently there must be a God"—what a newfangled syllogistic refinement! what a triumph of the ascetic ideal!

XXVI

Do, perhaps, our modern writers on history reflect a sounder attitude, and one that inspires greater confidence? Their major claim is to be a mirror of events; they reject teleology; they no longer want to "prove" anything; they disdain to act the part of judges (and in this they show a measure of good taste); they neither affirm nor deny, they simply ascertain, describe. . . . All this is very ascetic but even more nihilistic, let us be frank about it! The modern historian has a sad, hard, but determined stare, a stare that looks *beyond*, like that of a lonely arctic explorer (so as not to have to look into the matter, perhaps, or not to have to look back?) There is nothing here but snow; all life is hushed. The last crows whose voices are still heard are "What for?", "In vain," and "*nada.*" Nothing thrives any longer except, perhaps, Czarist metapolitics and Tolstoian *pity*. But there is another kind of historian today, perhaps even more modern—an epicurean, philandering kind, who ogles life as much as he does the ascetic ideal, who wears the word "artist" like a kid glove, and who has entirely engrossed the praise of contemplation. How we regret even ascetics and wintry landscapes once these clever fops come in view! No thank you! The devil take that whole contemplative tribe! I would much rather roam with the historical nihilists through their cold, gloomy fogs. In fact, if I were put to the choice, I might even prefer to listen to an entirely a-historical, anti-historical fellow, like that Dühring, whose music now intoxicates a newly emerging

much laughter as they do chagrin. Our particular issue can dispense with them; what does the significance of the ascetic ideal have to do with yesterday and today? I intend to treat those other matters more thoroughly and exactly in another book (*The Will to Power: a Study in the Transvaluation of All Values*) under the chapter heading, "Concerning the History of European Nihilism." The one thing I hope I have made clear here is that even at the highest intellectual level the ascetic ideal is still being subverted. Great is the number of those who travesty or counterfeit it—let us be on our guard against them; whilst in all places where a strict, potent, scrupulous spirit still survives every trace of idealism seems to have vanished. The popular term for such abstinence is *atheism*—but the term does scant justice to the will to truth which motivates its votaries. Yet that will, that residual ideal, constitutes, believe me, the ideal itself in its strictest and most sublimated form, absolutely esoteric, divested of all trappings: the essence, not the residue. Honest and intransigent atheism (the only air breathed today by the elite of this world) is thus not opposed to asceticism, all appearances to the contrary. Rather it is one of the last evolutionary phases of that ideal, one of its natural and logical consequences. It is the catastrophe, inspiring of respect, of a discipline in truth that has lasted for two millennia and which now prohibits the lie implicit in monotheistic belief. (The same evolution has gone on in India, quite independently of our own, thus affording substantiating proof. There the identical ideal has compelled the identical conclusion. The decisive phase was reached five centuries before the Christian era, with Buddha or, more accurately, with the Sankhya philosophy, later popularized by the Buddha and codified into a religion.) What is it,

in truth, that has triumphed over the Christian god? The answer may be found in my *Gay Science*: "The Christian ethics with its key notion, ever more strictly applied, of truthfulness; the casuistic finesse of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into the scholarly conscience, into intellectual integrity to be maintained at all costs; the interpretation of nature as a proof of God's beneficent care; the interpretation of history to the glory of divine providence, as perpetual testimony of a moral order and moral ends; the interpretation of individual experience as preordained, purposely arranged for the salvation of the soul—all these are now things of the past: they revolt our consciences as being indecent, dishonest, cowardly, effeminate. It is this rigor, if anything, that makes us good Europeans and the heirs of Europe's longest, most courageous self-conquest." All great things perish of their own accord, by an act of self-cancellation: so the law of life decrees. In the end it is always the legislator himself who must heed the command *patere legem, quam ipse tulisti*. Thus Christianity as dogma perished by its own ethics, and in the same way Christianity as ethics must perish; we are standing on the threshold of this event. After drawing a whole series of conclusions, Christian truthfulness must now draw its strongest conclusion, the one by which it shall do away with itself. This will be accomplished by Christianity's asking itself, "What does all will to truth signify?" Here I touch once more on my problem, on our problem, my unknown friends (for I do not yet know whether I have any friends among you): what would our existence amount to were it not for this, that the will to truth has been forced to examine itself? It is by this dawning self-consciousness of the will to truth that ethics must now perish. This is the great spectacle

of a hundred acts that will occupy Europe for the next two centuries, the most terrible and problematical but also the most hopeful of spectacles. . . .

## XXVIII

Until the advent of the ascetic ideal, man, the animal *man*, had no meaning at all on this earth. His existence was aimless; the question, "Why is there such a thing as man?" could not have been answered; man willed neither himself nor the world. Behind every great human destiny there rang, like a refrain, an even greater "In vain!" Man knew that something was lacking; a great vacuum surrounded him. He did not know how to justify, to explain, to affirm himself. His own meaning was an unsolved problem and made him suffer. He also suffered in other respects, being altogether an ailing animal, yet what bothered him was not his suffering but his inability to answer the question "What is the meaning of my trouble?" Man, the most courageous animal, and the most inured to trouble, does not deny suffering per se: he wants it, he seeks it out, provided that it can be given a meaning. Finally the ascetic ideal arose to give it meaning—its only meaning, so far. But any meaning is better than none and, in fact, the ascetic ideal has been the best stopgap that ever existed. Suffering had been interpreted, the door to all suicidal nihilism slammed shut. No doubt that interpretation brought new suffering in its wake, deeper, more inward, more poisonous suffering: it placed all suffering under the perspective of *guilt*. . . . All the same, man had saved himself, he had achieved a meaning, he was no longer a leaf in the wind, a plaything of circumstance, of "crass

casualty": he was now able to will something—no matter the object or the instrument of his willing; the will itself had been saved. We can no longer conceal from ourselves what exactly it is that this whole process of willing, inspired by the ascetic ideal, signifies—this hatred of humanity, of animality, of inert matter; this loathing of the senses, of reason even; this fear of beauty and happiness; this longing to escape from illusion, change, becoming, death, and from longing itself. It signifies, let us have the courage to face it, a will to nothingness, a revulsion from life, a rebellion against the principal conditions of living. And yet, despite everything, it is and remains a *will*. Let me repeat, now that I have reached the end, what I said at the beginning: man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose. . . .