

Nietzsche

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Nietzsche's Literary Output

- Nietzsche was trained in classical philology, or what we would now call “classics.”
- His first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), attempted to explain Greek art, and more generally, Greek culture in a way that gives insight into the state of German culture.
- His 1878 book *Human, All-Too-Human* initiated a steady stream of books that were at once philosophical, psychological, historical, and cultural in their content.
- These works were written in several literary forms, including essays, aphorisms, and poetry.
- In 1901, his sister published as *The Will to Power*, a collection of his notes from 1883 to 1888.
- She published in 1908 his autobiography *Ecce Homo*.

Nietzsche and Christianity

- Like Marx and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche rejected Christianity.
- Although his views on Christianity appear here and there throughout his philosophical works, they are systematically developed in *The Anti-Christ*, which was published in 1895, after he had become insane.
- Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity were not directed at Jesus, but rather at the religion created by his followers.
 - “In truth there was only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross” (*The Anti-Christ*, Section 39).
- Nietzsche viewed Christianity as a socio-cultural phenomenon.
- His chief criticism was that it has a debilitating effect on the people who are under its sway.

The Good and the Bad

- The opening sections of *The Anti-Christ* develop Nietzsche's own point of view, from which he criticized Christianity.
- The main thesis is that the central ethical categories of "good" and "bad" must be understood in terms of their relation to "power" (a central Nietzschean category).
- The good for man is what heightens his powers.
- The bad for man is what has its origin in weakness.
- Happiness is directly tied to goodness.
 - Happiness is the feeling that power is growing, is overcoming resistance.
- Thus, happiness is not to be found in contentedness, peace, or "moraline" virtue.
- The central problem with Christianity is that it promotes the bad through its pity for failures and for the weak.

The Higher Type and the Sick Human Animal

- One of the most characteristic of Nietzsche's doctrines is that some humans are "higher types," while nearly everyone is a member of "the herd."
- The goal of humans ought to be to create conditions which promote the appearance of higher types.
- The higher type would be "worthier of life and more certain of a future."
- In the past, instances of the higher type have appeared often on the scene, but only accidentally and not as the result of conditions promoting their appearance.
- These higher types have been dreaded by the masses.
- The product of this dread was the promotion of a lower type, the sick human animal.
- This domesticated beast is the Christian.

The "Overman"

- The higher type that sometimes accidentally appears is, in relation to the whole of humanity, an "overman" (*übermensch*).
- The appearance of the overman is possible in all ages.
- In some cases, there have been groups of overmen: "whole families, tribes, or people."
- But modern society does not promote the development of these stronger groups.

- The modern notion of “progress” is a false idea, in that it leads away from what should be the goal, which is to create conditions favorable to the overman.
- Indeed, Europeans of the Renaissance 300 years earlier was vastly greater in value than the Europeans of the late nineteenth century.

The Strong Spirit as “Evil”

- Christianity has waged a deadly war against the overman.
- The villified “moral” quality “evil” is precisely the quality of the overman.
- The basic instincts of those strong in spirit are regarded as reprehensible, and the spirited person himself is called a “reprobate.”
- Conversely, whatever opposes the instinct of the overman is made into an ideal of moral virtue.
- Thus, the strong spirits are fooled into thinking that their instincts are sinful and erroneous.
- “The most pitiful example” is Blaise Pascal, who believed his reason was corrupted by original sin, when it was really corrupted by his Christianity.

Christian Corruption as Decadence

- The classification of the influence of Christianity as “corruption” is not intended to be a moral condemnation.
- Nietzsche claims that his description of the corruption of humanity is “moraline free.”
- Indeed, he has his strongest experience of this corruption in those who most aspire to be “virtuous” or “godly.”
- The corruption by Christianity is a tendency to decay: decadence.
- It occurs when people lose their instincts toward growth and power, to their own disadvantage.
 - “Where the will to power is lacking there is decline.”
- The values of Christianity are thus values of decadence, which are nihilistic.

The Christian “Virtue” of Pity

- The alleged “source of all virtues” in Christianity is pity.
- Rather than enhancing our instincts toward power, pity depresses them.
- Pity is directed at those who suffer, but instead of alleviating suffering, pity spreads it further.
- A more important consideration is that pity “crosses the law of development, which is the law of *selection*.”
- It gives life a gloomy aspect by preserving the weak, who are really ripe for destruction.
- Pity is a nihilistic value because it turns against the life-affirming will to power.
- It hides the fact that it is directed at nothingness by calling it “the beyond,” “God,” “Nirvana,” etc.

How to Overcome Pity

- Schopenhauer was hostile to life, and so he quite consistently made pity a virtue.
- The modern literary and artistic trends throughout Europe, from Wagner to Tolstoy, are symptomatic of “a pathological and dangerous accumulation of pity.”
- Aristotle, on the other hand, took pity to be dangerous, something to be purged through tragedy.
- The remedy is to look at pity like a sore that must be punctured and made to burst.
- It is up to the philosophers to wield the knife and become physicians to the unhealthy modern society, whose most unhealthy component is Christian pity.

Christ and Christianity

- The intervening sections of *The Anti-Christ* develop the criticism of Christianity.
- Much of it involves a theory of Nietzsche’s that the message of the historical Jesus was distorted by his followers, led by Saint Paul, after his death.
- The true message of Jesus was to find happiness in one’s own heart.
- But his death led his followers to seek revenge by making him into a God and making themselves into God’s agents.
- They succeeded in destroying the noble Greco-Roman culture, as well as the Islamic and Renaissance cultures.
- In each case, the noble value of life-affirmation was turned into “evil” and replaced by a cult of weakness.

The Case Against Christianity

- The final section of *The Anti-Christ* contains a condemnation of Christianity, as being the greatest conceivable corruption.
- It has inverted all values, turning everything that is life-affirming into something to be reviled.
- Christianity claims to be “humanitarian” and to alleviate the distress of life.
- But instead it perpetuates distress.
 - It convinces everyone that they are sinners.
 - It promotes *ressentiment* through the falsehood that everyone is equal in the eyes of God.
- Far from being “humanitarian,” Christianity violates humanity by opposing its best instincts.
- Christianity is parasitic, in that its only aim is to drain the life out of humanity.
- The only way to overcome it is to reevaluate all values.

Twilight of the Idols

- The posthumously-published *Twilight of the Idols* consists of a number of sections which are arranged in no apparent order.
- Its name is a pun on the name of Wagner’s opera “Twilight of the Gods.”
- A section entitled “Maxims and Arrows” consists of forty-four aphorisms—very short and often witty comments, themselves very loosely connected with one another.
- Other sections are in the form of short essays.
- Another section recounts the “history of an error” in six steps, the final one being the truth that Nietzsche thought he had discovered.
- Together, they give as a fairly comprehensive picture of Nietzsche’s mature thought.

Nietzsche’s Portrait of Himself

- In “Maxims and Arrows,” we get some insight as to how Nietzsche viewed himself and his work.
- He described himself as a “posthumous” man, someone who is not understood in his own time, and in fact never understood.
 - His failure to be understood is the basis of his authority.

- The formula of his happiness is said to be “A Yes, a No, a straight line, a *goal*.”
- Given that he has his own *why* of life, it does not matter *how* he lives.
- He describes himself at times as a “psychologist” and states that to be successful as a psychologist, he must turn his eyes away from himself.
- He professes mistrust for anyone who would build a philosophical system, stating that anyone with the will to create a system is lacking in integrity.

“The Problem of Socrates”

- In “The Problem of Socrates,” Nietzsche advances the thesis that the import of the teaching of Socrates has been misunderstood through the ages.
- Socrates advanced the cause of morality and rationality.
- His “wisdom” has been accepted through the ages by other “sages.”
- This consensus has been taken to be a sign of the truth of Socrates’s teachings.
- But Nietzsche argues that the consensus has a quite different meaning.
- It is accounted for by the fact that the “sages” share a common psychological type with Socrates.
- The type is that of being sick and therefore hostile toward life, against which they wield morality and rationality as weapons.

Placing a Value on Life

- The judgment of the “sages” that life is no good was a necessary product of their psychological and physiological condition.
- Through his study of Greek tragedy, Nietzsche had come to the conclusion that Socrates and Plato were symptoms of the degeneration of Greek culture, “types of decline.”
- He generalized this observation to the later “sages” who were in agreement with them.
- His own view is that the value of life cannot be estimated.
 - Not by living people who have a stake in the outcome.
 - Not by the dead, for they make no estimations.
- The fact that the “sages” considered the value of life to be a problem constitutes an objection to them.
- It shows that the very people who are revered for their wisdom are in fact not wise at all.

The Decadence of Socrates

- Greek culture placed great value on beauty, and Socrates was an ugly person.
- As such, Socrates was already in opposition to Greek values.
- Indeed, Socrates's ugliness suggests he was a criminal type, which is consistent with his admission that he harbors the worst of vices.
- There are other indications of Socrates's decadence.
 - His over-developed logical faculty.
 - His sarcasm in debate.
 - His hallucinations of a god who was giving him instructions.
- Socrates's anti-Greek decadence led to his equation: reason = virtue = happiness.
- This equation opposes all the instincts of the Greeks who had come before him, especially the distance between the nobility and the base.

The Practice of Dialectic

- Socrates was a practitioner of dialectic, critically demanding reasons to justify any claim that was put forward.
- In pre-Socratic Greek culture, the giving of reasons was considered bad manners because it implies dishonesty in what is said.
- The noble person gives commands and does not take seriously anyone who asks him for reason.
- It must be explained why Socrates was taken seriously.
- He resorted to dialectic, which gives rise to mistrust and has only a temporary effect, because that was the only weapon with which he could get revenge.
- He was able to turn the tables on the nobility he questioned, leaving it to them to prove that they are not fools.

Why Socrates Was Taken Seriously

- Since Socrates's practice of dialectic was repellant to his victims, it remains to be explained why they allowed themselves to be rendered powerless by it.
- One reason is that he had invented a new kind of contest that appealed to the Greek taste for tests of skill.
- The deeper reason is that Greek culture was becoming degenerate like him, with instincts running wild.

- Socrates offered a means of controlling those instincts—a way that allowed for self-mastery.
- In this way, he offered a cure for the sickness: the only way to avoid perishing was to become absurdly rational.
- Thus rationality was made a virtue which brings happiness by suppressing “the dark appetites with a permanent daylight.”
- But rationality is no cure, being instead another form of decadence, of disease.

“‘Reason’ in Philosophy”

- The section entitled “‘Reason’ in Philosophy” contains an attack on the rationalism that characterizes most of Western philosophy.
- This rationalism traffics in lifeless concepts and forever seeks the “being” that excludes becoming.
- Unable to find “being,” it blames the senses for presenting a world of mere “appearances.”
- It also attempts to begin its investigations with the most abstract concepts, which are considered “higher” and are more highly valued.
- This tendency shows up in the philosophy of the Greeks, the Indians, and the Christians.
- Nietzsche criticizes these rationalist methods and advocates the primacy of appearances over “being.”

Concept-Mummies

- Philosophers are idiosyncratic in that they are opposed to anything temporal that involves becoming.
- They believe that they are showing respect for a subject when they treat it as something eternal.
- But in reality, they are only draining the life out of whatever they de-historicize, turning living concepts into “concept-mummies.”
- They search for “being,” which they oppose absolutely to becoming, but it eludes their grasp.
- Desperate for something to blame, they charge the senses with being deceptive and hiding the “true” world.
- They particularly despise the the body, that whose end the senses serve, and which behaves as if it were real.

The “Apparent” and “True” Worlds

- A philosopher who embraced the senses and becoming in the face of the tendency of rationalism is Heraclitus.
- He did think that the senses are deceptive, but only because they present objects as being relatively permanent, while all things in reality are in flux.
- Nietzsche claims against Heraclitus and the Eleatic defenders of “being” that the senses are not deceptive at all.
- Any claim to permanence, substance, thinghood, etc. in the world is based on an interpretation of what the senses present.
- The senses present the “apparent” world as it is, with its becoming, passing away, and in general change.
- Nietzsche contends that real product of the deception of reason is the “true” world of which the “apparent” world is supposed to be a distortion.

Real Science and Pseudo-Science

- The senses are magnificent instruments of observation.
 - The nose is more sensitive than a spectroscope, yet it has not been taken seriously by philosophers.
- Science is fruitful only to the extent that it accepts the testimony of the senses, extend their reach, and think through them.
- Would-be sciences that disregard the senses falsify the world.
 - Metaphysics.
 - Theology.
 - Psychology.
 - Epistemology.
- The “formal sciences” of logic and mathematics do not deal with reality at all.
 - Logic is merely a system of conventions for using signs.
 - Mathematics is merely applied logic.

How the Philosophers Invented “God”

- A second idiosyncrasy of philosophers confuses the last with the first.
- The rationalist philosophers begin with the “highest” concepts, when they would be at the end if they could be reached at all.
 - The good.
 - The true.
 - The perfect.
- Since being is static for these philosophers, the “highest” concepts could not have emerged from the “lower” ones.
- Because they cannot come to be, they must be treated as causes in themselves.
- Since these “highest” concepts must conform perfectly with one another, they are all located in a single being, the “most real being,” “God.”
- The human race has paid dearly for this web-spinning by the philosophers.

The Influence of Language on Our Thinking

- Nietzsche diagnoses the cause of the rationalist bias in favor of “thinghood” to the origins of language.
- Language originated when psychology was in its most rudimentary form.
 - There is everywhere a *doer* and a *doing*.
 - The doer is the *Ego*, and the cause is *will*.
- This initial notion of an ego is generalized to that of *substance*, which is the origin of the concept “thing.”
- Philosophers later found that the categories of “thinghood” can be handled with security, and so they made them *a priori*, since experience contradicts them.
- The final result of the error was the claim that because we have reasons, humans must belong in the divine realm of “being.”
- “I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.”

Summary of the Case Against Rationalism

- The reasons that “this” world has been called “apparent” are in fact the reasons why that world is real, while the existence of any other world cannot be demonstrated.
- The so-called “true” world is merely a “moral-optical illusion,” and the criteria for its existence are in fact criteria for not-being.

- The only reason for favoring an other-worldly “better” life is as revenge against real life.
- The distinction between an “apparent” world and a “true” world is only a symbol of the decline of life.
- It may be thought that the artist’s esteem for appearance over reality makes him decadent.
- But the “appearance” of the artist is just a selective and corrected duplication of the real world.
- The tragic artist in particular is Dionysian and says “Yes” to even the terrible in life.

The Origin and Demise of the “True” World

- Nietzsche describes six steps from the embrace of the “true” world to its total rejection.
- The oldest form is the Platonic, holding that the “true” world is his own world: that of the “virtuous” man.
- The more subtle Christian form makes the “true” world only a promise for the “virtuous.”
- The Kantian twist was to make the true world unattainable, but the thought of such a world a consolation.
- The positivist takes the “true” world to be unknown and therefore unconsoling.
- In its fifth phase, the concept of the “true” world is seen to be worthless and hence is rejected.
- The end of the error comes when the very distinction between a “true” and an “apparent” world is seen to be unsustainable.
 - “With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.”

“Morality as Anti-Nature”

- The section “Morality as Anti-Nature” summarizes Nietzsche’s main positions regarding morality.
- He claims that morality is negative valuation of life in reaction to its decline.
- Originally, morality is an attempt to suppress the passions, due to detrimental effects of being influenced by them.
- Christianity turns this into hatred of the passions, as epitomized by the ascetics whose lives are devoted to dispassionate living.

- Morality directed against the passions is anti-natural, because in the passions are found the natural instinct of life.
- Nietzsche calls himself an “immoralist” and describes a “spiritualization of passions” that would replace the established “morality.”

The War Against the Passions

- The passions can be disastrous when they “drag down their victim with the weight of stupidity.”
- This led to a war against the passions themselves, particularly within Christianity.
 - “If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out” (Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount).
- But an attack on the passions, which are the “roots of life,” is a manifestation of hostility to life.
- This attack is needed only when the will is weak, which is in turn a form of degeneracy.
- The most extreme forms of hostility are not found in the impotent or even in the ascetics.
- It is found in “the impossible ascetics,” those who are in dire need of becoming ascetics but are unable to do so.

The Spiritualization of Passion

- At a time very much later than when they are disastrous, the passions may become “spiritualized.”
- Two kinds of spiritualizations are described.
 - Love, which is the spiritualization of sensuality.
 - Hostility, which is “a profound appreciation of the value of having enemies.”
- Nietzsche does not describe the spiritualized passion of love, but he does claim that “it represents a great triumph over Christianity.”
- He does describe in some detail hostility, which is a value condemned by the moralists.
 - Every political institution needs enemies in order to build its own strength.
 - Internally, conflict is positive and spurs one toward a great life and away from the Christian “peace of the soul.”

“Peace of the Soul”

- Although Nietzsche rejects the Christian ideal of “peace of the soul” as debilitating, he allows it comes in many forms.
- He presents the list “without further ado or prejudice,” but clearly some would be consistent with “spiritualized passions” as he understands them.
- Some apparently negative forms manifest defects in the passions.
 - “The senile weakness of our will, our cravings, our vices.”
 - “Laziness, persuaded by vanity to give itself moral airs.”
- Others seem to describe “spiritualized passions” in their highest forms.
 - “The state which follows a thorough satisfaction of our dominant passion, the well-being of a rare repletion.”
 - “The expression of maturity and mastery in the midst of doing, creating, working and willing.”

Natural and Anti-Natural Morality

- Naturalistic morality (which is the only healthy kind) prescribes actions that remove impediments to the fulfillment of the instincts of life.
- Anti-natural morality condemns all instincts of life, whether overt or covert.
 - Nearly all moralities that have heretofore existed are anti-natural.
- God is supposed to inspect the heart of every human being.
- Since the affirmation of the instincts of life are condemned, God is the enemy of life.
- The kind of saint who would most delight God would be someone devoid of any life-instinct altogether.
- “Life has come to an end where the ‘kingdom of God’ begins.”

The Value of Life

- The condemnation of life by the living is a futile endeavor and is only symptomatic of the life of the one who condemns.
- It is impossible for a living person to place an absolute value on life, since this would require knowing life from within yet evaluating it from outside life.
- Nietzsche values life, which means for him only that life itself inspires him to value life.

- The anti-natural moralist also evaluates life from the standpoint of life.
- But his standpoint is one of decadence, which inspires him to devalue life.
- Schopenhauer correctly understood morality as “the negation of the will to life.”
- This is the instinct of decadence, which is “a condemnation pronounced by the condemned.”

Prescribing How to Live

- The natural world contains a rich variety of ways of living.
- The anti-natural moralists give a prescription of how one ought to live one’s life.
- Even the most insignificant person tells others that they ought to be different.
- Such a person is nothing more than a product of a causal chain, and for him to command that others change their way of living is ridiculous.
- In fact, for anyone to change themselves would require that everything be changed, since all things are connected.
- The most consistent moralists would simply negate the world, since this is what changing its course would entail.
- The immoralist is not negative, but will understand, comprehend, and approve of the many ways of life.
- Even the moralists have their use—they prepare the ground for the immoralists.

“The Four Great Errors”

- The section entitled “The Four Great Errors,” Nietzsche debunks four traditional doctrines regarding causality.
 - Confusing the effect for the cause.
 - Positing the mental as a cause.
 - Positing causes where there are none.
 - Positing the will as a “free cause.”
- He tries to show that these four errors lie at the basis of morality and religion.
- The essay ends with a short account of “*our* doctrine,” the doctrine of “we immoralists.”
- This doctrine seeks to redeem the world by denying the existence of God.

The Error of Confusing Cause and Effect

- The first error is what Nietzsche calls “the real corruption of reason.”
- The error is that of “mistaking the effect for the cause.”
 - An example is a popular dietary regimen with little food intake that is supposed to cause long life.
 - The proponent of the diet was predisposed to a long life because of his slow metabolism, which caused him to eat little.
- Nietzsche states that there is no error more dangerous than this one.
- It is widespread, both in ancient and modern times.
- It was originated by “priests and originators of moral codes,” and is the basis of all religion and morality.
 - Behaving “virtuously” according to “God’s law” is supposed to cause happiness.
 - But those who are happy are predisposed to happiness because of their constitution, which causes them to behave virtuously.

The True Nature of Moral Rules

- The “great original sin of reason” is the injunction that one will be rewarded with happiness if and only if one obeys the rules of religion and/or morality.
- An instance of Nietzsche’s “revaluation of all values” is the reversal of this formula.
- The “well-turned-out human being” is naturally happy and by necessity acts in the (truly) virtuous way that he does.
- The “license and luxury” that are condemned by religious and moral rules follow from the decadence of the people for whom the rules are made by the priests and moralists.
- The mistake made by the purveyors of morality is to condemn the decadent for being what they are.
- The bad is the outcome of degeneration, while the good is the consequence of instinct.
- That morality is supposed to be difficult is an objection to it.

The Error of a False Causality

- The second error lies in the invention of a non-existent “inner” causality.
- According to this error, there are various candidates for the role of cause.
 - The will.
 - Motives.
 - Consciousness or the ego.
- People have always thought that they know what a cause is, based on their alleged observation of their acts of willing as causes.
 - The causality of the will is taken to be given “empirically.”
- The antecedents of these acts of willing were said to be “motives,” for which people are held to be responsible.
- The thoughts that make up the motives were held to be caused by the consciousness (“spirit”), or ego (“subject”).
 - This kind of cause is arrived at last, and only as an “afterbirth” of the first.

From False Causes to a Fabricated World

- None of the three alleged “inner” causes is a cause.
 - The will merely accompanies our actions.
 - Motives are also mere accompaniments of actions, which more often hide their true cause than reveal them.
 - The “ego” has been exposed as being a mere fiction.
- Since none of the three candidates for mental cause is in fact a cause, there is no mental causality.
- In the creation of these false causes, a false “world of will” or “world of spirits” has been created.
- For every deed, a “doer” was invented to explain it.
- From the concept of “ego” is derived the concept of a “thing,” which is also a fabrication.
 - So we can find in “things” what we have put into them.
- From the concept of a “thing” we get the concepts of “atom,” “thing in itself,” and “God.”

The Error of Imaginary Causes

- It is often the case that in dreaming, when a sensation occurs, we invent a motive as a cause of that occurrence after the fact.
 - A far-off cannon-shot is heard, and we then fill in the time before it with a “meaning” to explain why the sensation occurred.
- When awake, we often invent imaginary causes to explain our feelings, such as pressures, tensions, etc.
- We only admit that we have had these feelings after we have invented a motive to explain them.
- Memory aids in this process by recalling similar states and the causal interpretations placed on them.
- We habitually come to accept the association between the states and their invented causes.
- This fact tends to hinder or even preclude the investigation of the real cause.

Why We Invent Imaginary Causes

- Nietzsche offers a psychological explanation for the invention of imaginary causes of our feelings.
- Causal explanation eliminates any strangeness of the feeling by associating it with a familiar pattern.
- The derivation from something known of a feeling of unknown origin relieves, comforts, and satisfies us.
- The feeling of pleasure we get from eliminating strangeness is taken to be a sign of the truth of the explanation.
- This mode of explanation also allows us to block off the possibility of an unsettling, strange cause of any unusual feeling.
- After repeatedly giving a certain kind of cause, one develops an explanatory system that becomes dominant, in the sense that it precludes any other kind of cause.

Morality and Religion Are Based on Imaginary Causes

- Disagreeable feelings are explained through what is hostile to us.
 - Beings such as “evil spirits” or “witches.”
 - Aspects of ourselves of which we disapprove, such as “sinfulness.”

- These feelings are explained as being deserved punishment for things we should not have done.
 - Schopenhauer exposes the hostility to life of morality in generalizing this explanation: every pain is just punishment for the fact that we are living human beings.
- Agreeable feelings are explained as effects of what is favorable to us.
 - Trust in God.
 - Consciousness of good deeds.
- But once again, these explanations take the cause, the feeling, for the effect.

The Error of Free Will

- We now know that “free will” is a foul artifice of the theologians.
 - Its aim is to impart “responsibility” for one’s actions which can only be atoned through the priest.
- The search for responsibility generally is the result of wishing to judge and punish specific actions.
- Thus the “will” was created by ancient priests go allow for themselves or God the right to punish.
- So that every act could be judged for its guilt, every act had to have its origin located in consciousness.
 - Thus, the error of “free will” is based on the first three errors of causality.
- The modern “immoralists” are trying to cleanse the world of the concept of guilt.
- Naturally, it is the priests and their concept of a “moral world-order” that pose the greatest obstacle to this attempt to cure humanity of its sickness.

Humanity Has No Purpose

- The philosophies of the past have tried to impart meaning to humanity by describing it as having been made to achieve some end.
- But there is nothing that gives humans the qualities they have.
 - Not God.
 - Not society.
 - Not ourselves (as with Kant and perhaps Plato).
- There is no end for which humanity exists.

- Not an “ideal of humanity.”
- Not an “ideal of happiness.”
- Not an “ideal of morality.”
- The very concept of an “end” is an invention.
- We are all necessarily connected parts of a whole, whose “value” it is impossible to judge.
- To admit this fact is a great liberation, and we redeem the world by denying God.

On the Genealogy of Morality

- One of Nietzsche’s most widely-read books is the 1887 *On the Genealogy of Morality* (or *of Morals*).
- The book consists of three parts, each of which is self-contained, though fairly closely related with the others.
- The first part, “ ‘Good and Evil,’ “ ‘Good and Bad’,” attempts to document an “inversion” from noble values into Christian values.
- The second part, “ ‘Guilt,’ ‘Bad Conscience,’ and Related Matters,” tries to show how religion originated through the invention of “guilt” as a form of self-torment.
- The third part, “What Do Aescetic Ideals Mean?” purports to explain how humanity, which suffers naturally and apparently for no reason, adopts suffering itself as the reason for its existence.

The English Psychologists

- Nietzsche begins by considering the case of the “English psychologists,” who attempt to explain human behavior through such mechanisms as principles of association.
- It would be an offense to human pride if all that is responsible for our mental life is so mechanical.
- Thus, it is interesting to speculate as to what drives these psychologists to treat the human being in this way.
 - A mean instinct to belittle humanity?
 - The pessimistic gloominess of disillusioned idealists?
 - A turn away from Plato and Christianity?
 - A taste for the strange and paradoxical?
- Perhaps it is one of these reasons or a bit of all of them.
- Whatever the reason, Nietzsche holds out the hope that they are “brave, generous and proud animals,” who hold out the hope of learning the truth, however distasteful it turns out to be.

The Unhistorical Deduction of the Concept of “Good”

- For all their good spirits, the English psychologists failed in their attempt to understand the concept of “good.”
- They gave an historical explanation of the origin of the concept.
- Originally, the non-egoistic acts of people are praised and called “good” by their recipients because they found them to be useful to themselves.
- Then the origin of the praise was forgotten, and it became simply routine to praise non-egoistic acts.
 - That which is merely useful to the recipient is erroneously called “good in itself.”
- The results of the English psychologists are a devaluation of the proudest values of humanity.
- But they are “essentially unhistorical” because they reflect the idiosyncratic categories of the psychologists: utility, forgetting, routine, and error.

The Origin of “Good” and “Bad”

- The error of the English psychologists lies in locating the source of the concept “good” in the sentiments of the recipients of actions.
- Instead, its origin lies in the valuation given by “the noble, the mighty, the high-placed, and the high-minded” to *their own* actions.
- A “good action” is one that is “first-rate, in contrast to everything lowly, low-minded, common and plebean.”
- A “bad action” is one undertaken out of baseness.
- This contrast between the actions of the nobles and that of the base depends on the “pathos of distance,” the feeling of superiority of the “higher” over the “lower.”
- There is no element of utility here, as the noble values spring from their passions, rather from any cool calculation.
- Nor is there any reason to call “good” with actions that are not undertaken egoistically, as the herd would have it.

Goodness and Utility

- The first mistake of the English psychologists was to misunderstand the origin of the concept of “good” in utility.
- Their second mistake was internal to their theory: that goodness was taken to be an intrinsic value because the usefulness of “good” actions was forgotten.
- Surely, if the actions were so useful, their utility should never be forgotten.
- A more plausible view was taken by Herbert Spencer.
- He also equates goodness with utility, but he claims in addition that this association is never forgotten.
- It is because the association is made universally that goodness is thought to be an intrinsic value.
- Although Spencer’s view is wrong, it is at least in itself “rational and psychologically tenable” as an explanation.

The Etymology of ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’

- From the point of view of etymology (the study of the origins of words), one can obtain an “essential insight” into the genealogy of morality itself.
- In a number of different languages, the word ‘good’ developed to refer to features of nobility or aristocracy.
 - Spiritually high-minded.
 - Spiritually privileged.
- This development runs parallel to that of the word ‘bad,’ which refers to features of the base.
 - Common.
 - Low.
- In German, the word ‘bad’ (*schlecht*) is the same as ‘simple’ (*schlicht*), and is merely descriptive of someone as common, in contrast to the nobility.
- This development has not been noticed due to the destructive prejudice of democracy in modern times.

The Language of Nobility

- Further etymological investigation yields more information about the attitude of the nobility.
- Originally, the noble referred to themselves in a way that revealed their superiority in power.
 - The mighty.
 - The commanders.
- They later used words that showed that thought of themselves as “true” or “real” as compared to the deceitful common man.
- Linguistic usage also associated the nobility with light color (blonde) and baseness with dark color.
- This corresponds to the the light-colored skin and hair of the nobility and the dark-colored skin and hair of their subjects.
- The emerging strength of the plebeian dark people coincides with the rise of modern democracy, which may be a counter-attack against the nobility.

Priestly Aristocracies

- When the clerical caste is the highest caste, they appropriate the word ‘pure’ and detach ‘good’ from social standing.
- Originally, purity was a matter of simple hygiene, but in the hands of the priestly aristocracy, it is transformed into an unhealthy brooding and emotional explosiveness.
- The metaphysics of the clergy finds purity by repudiating the senses.
- Its discontent is to be “cured” by “God,” which is the epitome of purity: pure nothingness.
- This made the passions dangerous, which in turn made the human being into an interesting animal.
 - The human soul became deep.
 - The human soul became evil for the first time.

The Slave-Revolt in Morality

- When the priestly caste splits off from the aristocratic, there exists potential for conflict.
- The priests are physically powerless, but they are the most dangerous opponent because they become great haters.

- The priestly haters develop intellect as their weapon, which keeps human history from being “far too stupid a thing.”
- The Jewish priesthood were able to get their revenge against the powerful by inverting their values.
- Wealth, nobility, and power are turned into evil, and only the poor, lowly, and powerless are good.
- This inversion constituted the slave-revolt in the history of morality.
- The revolt remains successful and has been forgotten only because of its success.

The Emergence of Christianity

- From the hatred and revenge of the Jewish priesthood grew love, which could only have come from hatred.
- Love is not the negation of hatred, but rather is its culmination.
- The message of “love” preached by Jesus was an affirmation of the inverted values glorifying the base and villifying the noble.
- By denouncing him, the Jews made Jesus was the “bait” to draw their enemies into accepting their values.
- The creation of the bait was an act of great ingenuity, which produced irresistible lures.
 - The power of the symbol of the “holy cross.”
 - The horrible paradox of God on the cross.
 - The cruel execution of God for the salvation of mankind.

A “Free-Thinker’s” Epilogue

- Nietzsche imagines a response by a contemporary “free-thinker,” whom he characterizes as “an honest animal . . . and moreover a democrat.”
- The target of the free-thinker is the church, rather than the inversion of values that was originally brought about by the priestly caste.
- The values that were overthrown are not “noble,” and it is best that they be overthrown on behalf of “the people.”
- The people have been saved from their former masters by the priestly poison, which now does its work more slowly and discreetly.
- At this point in time, the heavy-handed church stand as an impediment to this leveling process because it slows it down by alienating “a more tender intellect, . . . a truly modern taste.”

The Man of Nobility and the Man of *Ressentiment*

- The values of the noble man and the man of *ressentiment* work in opposite ways.
- The values of the noble are positive, an affirmation of what he is.
- The values of the man of *ressentiment* are negative, a condemnation of what someone else (the noble) is.
- The noble looks at those below him as merely unhappy and at his enemies as worthy of respect, which is “a bridge to love.”
- The man of *ressentiment* feels the might of those above him and reacts by declaring them “evil.”
- Any cleverness on the part of the noble is subordinate to his power and thrust of his instincts.
- The man of *ressentiment* regards cleverness “as a condition of the first rank.”

The Taming of Humanity

- There is a fundamental tension between the nobility and the conditions under which they are restrained.
- Like the lion (“the blonde beast”), they must burst out of their confinement and embark on a bloody rampage.
- The noble races (“Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings”) are viewed by their victims as the barbarians.
- The meaning of “culture” is to tame the beast so that it becomes “civilized.”
- Modern man is no more than “a teeming mass of worms” who is not to be feared but rather viewed with disgust.
- And yet tamed modern man thinks of himself as “the higher man,” who is the pinnacle of history.

Is There Hope for Mankind?

- Nietzsche finds “absolutely intolerable” the situation “that something failed comes near me.”
- Everything else, no matter what the hardship, can be borne, and the greatest difficulties set us up for new triumphs.
- He looks for “a glimpse of a man who justifies *himself*.”
 - This person would be “something perfect, completely finished, happy, powerful, triumphant, which still leaves something to fear.”

- But what we see instead as the result of the levelling process is a sight which makes us grow tired.
- In losing our fear of man, we lose our love for him.
- Man becomes “better” the more he declines.
- Our tiredness at the sight of man is modern nihilism.

The Origin of “Freedom” and “Responsibility”

- The attributes of strength and weakness are natural, as are all the acts which are performed through strength and weakness.
- Common language deceives us into believing that behind every act is a “doer” which can be separated from the act.
 - There is an object, a bolt of lightning, which causes the flash of light to occur.
- This separation is applied to persons by the weak in the claim that it is the “subject” who is responsible for the act.
- Thus it is claimed that the strong are free not to act in the way that strong people naturally do.
- The weak then can claim that they have freely chosen weakness, which is to say that they have chosen to be “good.”

How Ideals Are Fabricated

- The ideals of the weak are created by the lie that regards weakness as an accomplishment.
- There are numerous ideals that are created in this way.
 - Passive impotence is called “goodness.”
 - Timid baseness is called “humility.”
 - Submission to those one hates is called “obedience.”
- The misery of the weak is considered “patience,” and life is considered as a test that may eventually be paid back with happiness.
- The most masterful reversal is the conversion of hatred and revenge into “justice.”
- They “live in faith,” waiting for the “last judgment,” which is the coming of “their kingdom,” called “the kingdom of God.”

“The Kingdom of God”

- The “kingdom of God” for which the believers wait in patience requires an eternal life.
- The “bliss” to be had in this Paradise is born of hatred.
- Nietzsche parodies Dante’s inscription over the gates of hell (“Eternal love created me as well”) as an inscription over the gates of heaven.
 - “Eternal *hate* created me as well.”
- He then quotes Thomas Aquinas who comments that the pleasures of heaven will be enhanced by the witnessing of the tortures of the damned.
- He gives a very extensive quotation from Tertullian with the same theme.
 - The philosophers who have taught that there is no soul will be burned along with the students they persuaded.

Rome versus Jerusalem

- The titanic battle between “good and bad” and “good and evil” as opposing value has not yet ended, though the side of “good and evil” is dominant.
- The battle is symbolized by struggle between the Romans and the Jews.
 - The Romans were a noble people, “stronger and nobler than anybody hitherto who had lived or been dreamt of on earth.”
 - The Jews were priestly, steeped in *ressentiment*, and “possessing an unparalleled genius for popular morality.”
- In Rome today, one bows to a Christian priest.
- The values of classical Rome were revived briefly during the Renaissance, only to be crushed by the “Reformation” led by the plebeian English and Germans.
- Yet in recent times, Napoleon has appeared as the embodiment of noble values.

The Road Ahead

- Nietzsche concludes by asking rhetorically whether the struggle is over, or whether it will have to be carried out more violently in the future.
- He expresses his conviction that the struggle to get “beyond good and evil” should be desired and willed with all of one’s strength.
- Returning to the original theme of the essay, he advocates the creation of a prize essay.

– “What signposts does linguistics, especially the study of etymology, give to the history of the evolution of moral concepts?”

- He then notes that not only philosophers and linguists, but also physiologists and physicians, should concern themselves with the evolution of moral concepts.
- They can reveal the origin of values, and in particular can show how what is useful for a people does not coincide with what would further the development of a higher type.