



Ecce Homo

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

A complete machine-assisted Plain English translation made independently and directly from the same German edition, including its concluding poem. This is the 1908 text, not a modern critical edition.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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SOURCE

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The 1908 edition retains early editorial omissions; no modern manuscript-final reconstruction is claimed.

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Preface



Ecce homo

How you become—what you are

- ¹ I expect that very soon I will have to make the hardest demand ever made on humanity. So I think I have to say *who I am*. People should really know already: I haven't left myself "without witnesses." But the gap between the greatness of my task and the *smallness* of my contemporaries has shown itself in this: they haven't heard me or even seen me. I live on my own credit. Perhaps the idea that I'm alive is just a prejudice?... I only need to speak to some "educated" person visiting the Upper Engadin in summer to convince myself that I'm *not* alive... In these circumstances I have a duty that goes against my habits and, even more, the pride of my instincts. I have to say: *Listen to me! This is who I am. Above all, don't mistake me for someone else!*
- ² For example, I'm certainly no bogeyman, no monster of morality. My nature is actually the opposite of the kind of person people have honored as virtuous until now. Between ourselves, I think that's precisely something to be proud of. I'm a follower of the philosopher Dionysus. I would rather be a satyr than a saint. But just read this book. Perhaps I've managed to express this contrast in a cheerful, friendly way; perhaps that was the whole point of writing it. The last thing *I* would promise is to "improve" humanity. I won't set up any new idols. Let the old ones find out what it means to have legs of clay. *Knocking down*

idols—my word for ideals—is more my line of work. The more people *lied* an ideal world into existence, the more they robbed reality of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness... The “true world” and the “apparent world”—in plain language, the world *made up by lies* and reality... The *lie* of the ideal has been a curse on reality until now. Through it, humanity itself has become dishonest and false down to its deepest instincts. It has even come to worship values that are the *reverse* of those that alone could guarantee its flourishing, its future, its great *right* to a future.

³ Anyone who knows how to breathe the air in my writings knows it’s mountain air, *strong* air. You have to be made for it. Otherwise there’s a real danger of catching cold in it. The ice is close, the solitude is enormous—but how calmly everything lies in the light! How freely you breathe! How much you *feel below* you! Philosophy, as I’ve understood and lived it until now, means choosing to live among ice and high mountains. It means seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence, everything morality has forbidden until now. Long experience of traveling *through forbidden territory* taught me to see the reasons behind moralizing and idealizing very differently from how people might like me to see them. The *hidden* history of philosophers, the psychology behind their great names, came to light for me. How much truth can a mind *bear*? How much truth does it *dare* to face? More and more, that became my real measure of value. Error—belief in the ideal—isn’t blindness. Error is *cowardice*... Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge, *comes from* courage, from being hard on yourself, from keeping yourself clean... I don’t refute ideals; I just put on gloves before handling them... We strive for what is *forbidden*: under this sign my philosophy will one day win, because until now it has always been truth, and nothing else, that people have forbidden on principle.—

⁴ Among my writings, my *Zarathustra* stands apart. With it I’ve given humanity the greatest gift it has ever received. This book speaks across thousands of years. It isn’t just the highest book there is, the true book of mountain air—the whole fact of being human lies immensely far *below* it. It’s also the *deepest* book, born

from the innermost richness of truth. It's a well that never runs dry: no bucket goes down into it without coming back up filled with gold and goodness. No "prophet" is speaking here, none of those horrifying mixtures of sickness and will to power that people call founders of religions. Above all, you have to *bear* the tone of this voice correctly, its deep calm, or you'll do a pitiful injustice to the meaning of its wisdom. "The quietest words are the ones that bring the storm. Thoughts that arrive on doves' feet guide the world—"

"Figs are falling from the trees. They're good and sweet, and as they fall their red skin splits.

"I'm a north wind to ripe figs.

"Like figs, these teachings fall to you, my friends. Now drink their juice and their sweet flesh!

"It's autumn all around, with clear skies and afternoon—"

No fanatic is speaking here. No one is "preaching"; no *belief* is demanded. Out of an endless abundance of light and depth of happiness, it falls drop by drop, word by word. These speeches move at a tender, slow pace. Something like this reaches only the most select few. To listen here is a privilege like no other. No one can just choose to have ears for Zarathustra... Doesn't all this make Zarathustra a *seducer*?... But what does he himself say when he returns to his solitude for the first time? Exactly the opposite of what any "sage," "saint," "savior of the world," or other decadent would say in that situation... He doesn't just speak differently. He *is* different too...

"Now I go alone, my students! You too must leave now, and go alone! That's what I want.

"Leave me and defend yourselves against Zarathustra! Better still, be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you.

"A person who seeks knowledge must not only love their enemies. They must also be able to hate their friends.

"You repay a teacher badly if you always remain just a student. And why don't you want to pull at my wreath?

"You admire me. But what if your admiration one day *topples over*? Be careful that a statue doesn't fall on you and kill you!

“You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what does Zarathustra matter! You’re my believers, but what do any believers matter!

“You hadn’t yet looked for yourselves when you found me.

“That’s what all believers do. That’s why all belief amounts to so little.

“Now I tell you to lose me and find yourselves. Only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you...”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Birthday Reflection



On this perfect day, when everything is ripening and not just the grapes are turning brown, a ray of sunlight just fell on my life. I looked back, I looked outward; I'd never seen that many things at once, and never things that good. It wasn't for nothing that I buried my forty-fourth year today. I *was allowed* to bury it: whatever was alive in it has been saved and is immortal. The first book of the *Revaluation of All Values*, the *Songs of Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, my attempt to philosophize with a hammer—all gifts from this year, even from its last three months! *How could I not be grateful for my whole life?—*

And so I tell myself
the story of my life.

Why I Am So Wise



¹ The good fortune of my life, perhaps its uniqueness, lies in its fate. To put it as a riddle: as my father, I have already died; as my mother, I am still alive and growing old. This double origin comes, as it were, from the highest and lowest rungs on the ladder of life. I am both a decadent and a *beginning*. If anything explains my neutrality toward the whole problem of life, my freedom from taking sides, which may set me apart, this does. I have a keener nose for signs of rising and decline than any human being has ever had. I am the supreme teacher in this field—I know both, I am both.—My father died at 36. He was delicate, lovable, and sickly, like a being meant only to pass through—more a kindly memory of life than life itself. At the same age when his life went downhill, mine did too. In my 36th year I reached the lowest point of my vitality. I was still alive, but unable to see three steps ahead. That was in 1879. I gave up my professorship at Basel, lived like a shadow in St. Moritz through the summer, and spent the next winter, the least sunny of my life, *as* a shadow in Naumburg. That was my lowest point. I wrote “The Wanderer and His Shadow” during that time. There is no doubt that I understood shadows then... The next winter, my first in Genoa, brought forth “Dawn.” It grew out of that sweetness and refinement of mind that almost inevitably come with an extreme lack of blood and muscle. The complete brightness and cheerfulness, even overflowing energy of mind, reflected in that work are compatible in me not just with the

deepest physical weakness, but even with extreme pain. In the middle of the torments brought on by three days of unbroken pain in the brain and exhausting vomiting of mucus, I had the clearest possible grasp of logical argument. I thought things through very coolly that, in healthier conditions, I am not enough of a climber, not subtle enough, not *cold* enough to reach. My readers may know how far I see this kind of logical argument as a symptom of decadence—for example, in the most famous case of all, that of Socrates.—To this day, all sickly disturbances of the mind have remained completely foreign to me, even the half-stunned state that comes with fever. I had to learn about their nature and frequency from scholarly study. My blood runs slowly. No one has ever been able to detect a fever in me. A doctor who treated me for a nervous disorder for quite some time finally said: “No! Your nerves aren’t the problem. I’m just nervous myself.” No localized degeneration can be demonstrated at all. There is no stomach disease with an organic cause, however extreme the weakness of my digestive system may be as a result of general exhaustion. Even my eye trouble, which at times came dangerously close to blindness, was only a result, not a cause. So every increase in vitality also brought an improvement in my eyesight.—For me, a long, far too long series of years means recovery. Unfortunately, it also means relapse, decline, the recurring cycle of a kind of decadence. After all this, do I need to say that I am *experienced* in questions of decadence? I have spelled it out forward and backward. Even that delicate art of grasping and understanding in general, those fingers for fine shades of difference, that psychology of “seeing around corners,” and whatever else belongs to me, were only learned then. They are the real gift of that time, when everything in me grew more sensitive, observation itself as well as all the organs of observation. To look from the sick person’s point of view toward *healthier* ideas and values, and then, in reverse, to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of a *rich* life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence—that was my longest practice, my real experience. If I became a master at anything, it was this. Now it is in my hands; I have the skill to *switch perspectives*. That is the first reason why a “revaluation of values” may be possible for me alone.—

² For, besides being a decadent, I am also its opposite. One proof is that I always instinctively chose the *right* remedies for bad conditions. A decadent as such always chooses remedies that harm him. Taken as a whole, I was healthy; in one corner, in one particular respect, I was decadent. That energy for complete isolation and breaking away from familiar circumstances, the force I used on myself to stop letting people look after me, wait on me, and *doctor me*—all this shows the absolute certainty of my instinct about *what* was needed above all at that time. I took myself in hand. I made myself healthy again. The condition for doing this—every physiologist will admit it—is *that you are basically healthy*. A being who is typically sickly cannot become healthy, still less make himself healthy. For someone typically healthy, on the other hand, sickness can even be a powerful *spur* to life, to more life. That is indeed how that long period of sickness looks to me *now*. I discovered life anew, as it were, including myself. I tasted all the good things, even the small things, as others could not easily taste them. I made my will to health, to *life*, into my philosophy... For notice this: it was in the years when my vitality was lowest that I *stopped* being a pessimist. The instinct to restore myself *forbade* me a philosophy of poverty and discouragement... And how, at bottom, do you recognize *someone who has turned out well*? Such a person is pleasant to our senses. He is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and fragrant at the same time. He likes the taste only of what is good for him. His liking, his pleasure, stops where the limit of what benefits him is passed. He senses the remedies for injuries. He turns bad accidents to his advantage. What does not kill him makes him stronger. He instinctively gathers *his own* total from everything he sees, hears, and experiences. He is a principle of selection; he lets much fall away. Whether he is dealing with books, people, or landscapes, he is always in *his own* company. He honors things by *choosing* them, by *admitting* them, by *trusting* them. He responds slowly to every kind of stimulus, with the slowness that long caution and deliberate pride have trained into him. He examines the stimulus that approaches him; he is far from going out to meet it. He believes neither in “bad luck” nor

in “guilt.” He comes to terms with himself and with others. He knows how to *forget*. He is strong enough that everything *must* turn out for his good.—Well then, I am the *opposite* of a decadent: what I just described was *myself*.

- ³ This *double* series of experiences, this access to apparently separate worlds, repeats itself in every part of my nature. I am a double; besides my first sight, I also have “second” sight. *And* perhaps third sight too... My ancestry alone lets me look beyond every perspective shaped merely by a locality or a nation. Being a “good European” takes no effort for me. On the other hand, perhaps I am more German than today’s Germans, mere Germans of the Reich, could still manage to be—I, the last *antipolitical* German. And yet my ancestors were Polish noblemen. I carry many racial instincts in my body from that source. Who knows? Perhaps, in the end, even the unrestricted right to veto. When I think how often people address me as a Pole on my travels, even Poles themselves, and how rarely they take me for a German, it might seem that I was only one of the Germans *speckled* with foreign blood. But my mother, Franziska Oehler, is certainly something very German, as is my grandmother on my father’s side, Erdmuthe Krause. The latter spent her whole youth in good old Weimar, with some connections to Goethe’s circle. Her brother, Krause, a professor of theology in Königsberg, was called to Weimar as general superintendent after Herder’s death. It is not impossible that her mother, my great-grandmother, appears under the name “Muthgen” in the young Goethe’s diary. She married a second time, to Superintendent Nietzsche in Eilenburg. In the great war year of 1813, she gave birth on the day Napoleon entered Eilenburg with his general staff, October 10. As a Saxon, she was a great admirer of Napoleon. It could be that I still am too. My father, born in 1813, died in 1849. Before taking over as pastor of the congregation in Röcken, near Lützen, he lived for several years at Altenburg Castle, where he taught the four princesses. His pupils are the Queen of Hanover, the Grand Duchess Constantine, the Grand Duchess of Oldenburg, and Princess Therese of Saxe-Altenburg. He felt deep devotion to the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who also gave him his position as pastor. The events of 1848 saddened him beyond measure. I myself

was born on that king's birthday, October 15, and, fittingly, received the Hohenzollern names *Friedrich* Wilhelm. The choice of that day had at least one advantage: throughout my childhood, my birthday was a holiday.—I see it as a great privilege to have had such a father. In fact, it seems to explain all my other privileges—*not* counting life, the great Yes to life. Above all, I do not need to make any deliberate effort, but only to wait, to enter without willing it a world of lofty and delicate things. I am at home there. Only there is my deepest passion set free. That I nearly paid for this privilege with my life is certainly no unfair bargain.—To understand even a little of my Zarathustra, perhaps you need to be constituted much as I am—with one foot *beyond* life...

- ⁴ I have never understood the art of turning people against me—another thing I owe to my incomparable father—even when doing so seemed very valuable to me. In fact, however unchristian it may seem, I am not even against myself. Turn my life this way and that, and you will rarely find traces of anyone having wished me harm—at bottom, only once. But perhaps you will find rather too many traces of *good* will... Even my experiences with people everyone else has had experiences with speak without exception in their favor. I tame every bear; I even make clowns behave decently. In the seven years when I taught Greek to the highest class at the Basel preparatory school, I never had reason to give a punishment. The laziest students worked hard for me. I am always a match for chance. I have to be unprepared to be master of myself. Whatever the instrument, however out of tune it may be—even as out of tune as the instrument “human being” can become—I would have to be sick not to get something worth hearing out of it. And how often I have heard from the “instruments” themselves that they had never heard themselves *like that* before... Perhaps the finest case was Heinrich von Stein, who died unforgivably young. Once, after carefully obtaining permission, he appeared in Sils-Maria for three days, explaining to everyone that he was *not* coming because of the Engadin. This excellent man had waded into the Wagnerian swamp with all the headstrong simplicity of a Prussian landed nobleman—and into Dühring's swamp as well! During those three days, he seemed transformed by a gale of freedom, like

someone suddenly lifted to *his own* height and given wings. I kept telling him it was the good air up here, that everyone felt that way, that we were not 6000 feet above Bayreuth for nothing—but he would not believe me... If, despite this, people have done me various small and large wrongs, “will” was not the reason, least of all *ill* will. Rather—as I have just suggested—I would have cause to complain about good will, which has done no small amount of mischief in my life. My experiences entitle me to distrust the so-called “selfless” drives in general, all that “love of one’s neighbor” ready with advice and action. I see it as weakness in itself, as a particular case of being unable to resist stimuli. Only decadents call *pity* a virtue. My charge against the pitying is that they easily lose their sense of shame, their respect, their delicate feeling for distances. Pity quickly smells of the mob and looks so like bad manners that you can mistake one for the other. Under some circumstances, pitying hands can actually reach in and destroy a great destiny, a wounded solitude, a *privilege* of bearing grave guilt. I count overcoming pity among the *noble* virtues. In “Zarathustra’s Temptation” I imagined a case in which a great cry of distress reaches him, and pity tries to fall on him like a final sin and turn him away from *himself*. To remain master here, to keep the *height* of his task free from the much lower and more shortsighted impulses at work in so-called selfless actions—that is the test, perhaps the final test, that a Zarathustra has to pass, his real *proof* of strength...

- 5 In one other respect, too, I am simply my father over again, as though he lived on after dying far too soon. Like anyone who has never lived among his equals, and to whom the idea of “retaliation” is as inaccessible as, say, the idea of “equal rights,” I forbid myself any countermeasure or protective measure when someone does something foolish to me, whether small or *very large*. Naturally, I also forbid any defense, any “justification.” My way of retaliating is to send something clever after the stupidity as quickly as possible: perhaps it can still catch up with it. To put it in an image: I send a jar of jam to get rid of a *sour* business... People only need to do me some harm, and I will “pay them back”—they can be sure of that. Before long, I find an opportunity to express my thanks to the “wrongdoer,” sometimes even for the wrongdoing, or to *ask* him for some-

thing, which can create a stronger bond than giving something... It also seems to me that the rudest word, the rudest letter, is still kinder and more honest than silence. Those who keep silent almost always lack delicacy and politeness of heart. Silence is an objection. Swallowing things down inevitably makes for a bad character—it even ruins the stomach. Everyone who keeps silent has indigestion.—You see, I do not want rudeness to be underrated. It is by far the most *humane* form of disagreement and, amid modern oversensitivity, one of our foremost virtues.—If you are rich enough for it, being in the wrong is even a piece of good fortune. A god who came to earth would have to *do* nothing but wrong. Taking on not the punishment but the *guilt* would be truly divine.

- ⁶ Freedom from resentment, insight into resentment—who knows how much I ultimately owe my long illness for these too! The problem is not exactly simple. You have to have experienced it from a position of strength and from a position of weakness. If anything must be held against sickness and weakness, it is that they wear down the real healing instinct in a person, the *instinct to defend and arm oneself*. You cannot get free of anything, cannot deal with anything, cannot push anything back—everything hurts you. People and things press too close. Experiences strike too deep. Memory is a festering wound. Being sick *is* itself a kind of resentment.—Against this, the sick person has just one great remedy. I call it *Russian fatalism*: that fatalism without rebellion with which a Russian soldier finally lies down in the snow when a campaign becomes too hard. To stop accepting anything at all, taking anything on, taking anything *in*—to stop reacting altogether... The great good sense of this fatalism, which is not always just the courage to die, lies in preserving life under the most dangerous conditions by reducing the metabolism, slowing it down—a kind of will to hibernate. Follow this logic a few steps further and you have the fakir who sleeps in a grave for weeks... Because you would use yourself up too quickly *if* you reacted at all, you stop reacting completely: that is the logic. And nothing burns you out faster than the emotions of resentment. Anger, sickly sensitivity to hurt, powerlessness to take revenge, the desire, the thirst for revenge, the mixing of poison in every sense—this is certainly the most harmful way for exhausted

people to react. It necessarily brings a rapid drain on nervous energy, a sickly increase in harmful discharges, such as bile into the stomach. For the sick person, resentment is what is forbidden *in itself*—his evil. Unfortunately, it is also his most natural inclination.—That profound physiologist Buddha understood this. His “religion,” which would be better called a system of *hygiene*, so as not to confuse it with such pitiful things as Christianity, made its effect depend on victory over resentment. Freeing the soul from *that* is the first step toward recovery. “Hostility does not end through hostility; hostility ends through friendship”: this stands at the beginning of Buddha’s teaching. That is *not* morality speaking; that is physiology.—Resentment is born of weakness, and harms no one more than the weak person himself. In the other case, where a rich nature is the starting point, it is a *needless* feeling. Keeping mastery over it is almost the proof of that richness. Anyone who knows how seriously my philosophy has taken up the struggle against feelings of revenge and lingering resentment, right into the doctrine of “free will”—the struggle against Christianity is only one particular case—will understand why I am bringing my personal conduct, my *certainty of instinct* in practice, to light on this very point. In times of decadence, I *forbade* myself those feelings as harmful. As soon as life was rich and proud enough again, I forbade them as *beneath* me. The “Russian fatalism” I spoke of showed itself in the way I stubbornly held on for years to almost unbearable situations, places, lodgings, and company once chance had put them there. This was better than changing them, than *feeling* that they could be changed, than rebelling against them... At that time I took deadly offense at anyone who disturbed me in this fatalism or forcibly woke me up. In truth, each time it was also a deadly danger.—To accept yourself as a fate, not to want yourself to be “different”—in such conditions, that is *great good sense* itself.

- ⁷ War is another matter. I am warlike by nature. Attacking is one of my instincts. Being *able* to be an enemy, being an enemy—perhaps this requires a strong nature; in any case, it is part of every strong nature. Such a nature needs resistance, so it *seeks* resistance. The *aggressive* passion belongs to strength as necessarily as feelings of revenge and lingering resentment belong to weakness.

Woman, for example, is vengeful. That comes from her weakness, just as her sensitivity to other people's distress does.—The strength of an attacker has a kind of *measure* in the opposition he needs. Every growth in strength reveals itself in seeking a more powerful opponent—or problem. For a warlike philosopher challenges problems to single combat too. The task is *not* to overcome just any resistance, but resistance that requires you to use all your strength, flexibility, and skill with weapons—opponents who are your *equals*... Equality with the enemy is the first condition for an *honest* duel. Where you despise, you *cannot* wage war. Where you command, where you see something *beneath* you, you *have no business* waging war.—My practice in war can be summed up in four statements. First: I attack only causes that are victorious. Sometimes I wait until they are victorious. Second: I attack only causes against which I would find no allies, where I stand alone—where I alone put myself in a compromising position... I have never taken a public step that did not put me in a compromising position. That is *my* test of right action. Third: I never attack people. I use a person only as a powerful magnifying glass to make visible a general but creeping, hard-to-grasp state of distress. That is how I attacked David Strauss—more precisely, the *success* of a senile book among German “educated society.” I caught that society in the act... That is how I attacked Wagner—more precisely, the falseness and mongrel instincts of our “culture,” which confuses the refined with the rich, the latecomers with the great. Fourth: I attack only things where any personal disagreement is ruled out, where there is no background of bad experiences. On the contrary, with me an attack is proof of good will, sometimes of gratitude. I honor and single out a cause or a person by linking my name with theirs. Whether I am for or against them makes no difference to me in this respect. If I wage war on Christianity, I have the right to do so because I have suffered no misfortunes or obstacles from that quarter. The most serious Christians have always been well disposed toward me. I myself, an uncompromising opponent of Christianity, am far from holding against an individual what is the fate of thousands of years.—

8 May I dare to point out one final trait of my nature, one that causes me no small difficulty in dealing with people? My instinct for cleanliness is sensitive to a completely uncanny degree. I physically sense—*smell*—the presence, or rather, what am I saying?—the innermost part, the “guts,” of every soul... This sensitivity gives me psychological feelers with which I touch and take hold of every secret. The great amount of *hidden* dirt at the bottom of many a nature, perhaps rooted in bad blood but whitewashed by upbringing, becomes clear to me almost at the first contact. If I have observed correctly, these natures that are bad for my cleanliness also sense the caution of my disgust. That does not make them smell any better... As I have always been used to doing—complete honesty with myself is a condition of my existence; I perish in impure conditions—I am, as it were, constantly swimming, bathing, and splashing in water, in some completely transparent and shining element. This makes dealing with people no small test of patience for me. My humanity does *not* consist in feeling what people are like, but in *enduring* that I feel it... My humanity is a constant overcoming of myself.—But I need *solitude*, by which I mean recovery, a return to myself, the breath of free, light, playful air... My whole Zarathustra is a song of praise to solitude—or, if you have understood me, to *purity*... Fortunately, not to *pure folly*...—Anyone with eyes for colors will call it diamond-like.—*Disgust* with humanity, with the “rabble,” has always been my greatest danger... Would you like to hear the words in which Zarathustra speaks of *release* from disgust? “What happened to me, then? How did I free myself from disgust? “Who made my eye young again? How did I fly up to the height where no rabble sits by the well anymore? “Did my disgust itself create wings for me, and powers to sense springs? Yes, I had to fly to the greatest heights to find the fountain of pleasure again!— “Oh, I found it, my brothers! Here at the greatest heights the fountain of pleasure springs up for me! And there is a life that no rabble drinks from! “You flow almost too fiercely for me, spring of pleasure! And often you empty the cup again by wanting to fill it. “And I must still learn to approach you more modestly: my heart still flows too fiercely toward you:

“—my heart, on which my summer burns, that short, hot, sad, overjoyed summer: how my summer heart longs for your coolness!

“The lingering sadness of my spring is past! The snowflakes of my malice in June are over! I have become all summer and summer noon—

“—a summer at the greatest heights, with cold springs and blissful stillness. Oh, come, my friends, so the stillness may grow still more blissful!

“For this is *our* height and our home. We live too high and steep here for all the unclean and their thirst.

“Just cast your pure eyes into the fountain of my pleasure, my friends! How could that make it cloudy? It should laugh back at you with *its own* purity.

“On the tree of the future we build our nest. Eagles are to bring food in their beaks to us who live alone!

“Yes, no food that the unclean would be allowed to share!

“They would think they were eating fire and would burn their mouths.

“Yes, we keep no homes ready here for the unclean! Our happiness would mean a cave of ice to their bodies and their minds!

“And like strong winds we want to live above them, neighbors to the eagles, neighbors to the snow, neighbors to the sun: that is how strong winds live.

“And like a wind I want one day to blow among them and with my spirit take the breath away from their spirit: that is what my future wills.

“Yes, Zarathustra is a strong wind to all lowlands. And this is the advice he gives his enemies and everything that spits and spews: beware of spitting *against* the wind!...”

Why I Am So Clever



¹ Why do I know a little *more*? Why am I so clever at all? I have never thought about questions that aren't really questions—I haven't wasted myself.—For example, I have no firsthand experience of real *religious* difficulties. I have completely failed to see how I could be “sinful.” I also have no reliable way to tell what a guilty conscience is. From what one *hears* about it, a guilty conscience seems to me nothing to respect... I wouldn't want to abandon an action *afterward*. I would rather leave a bad outcome, the *consequences*, out of the question of its value altogether. When something ends badly, it's all too easy to lose the *right* view of what one did. A guilty conscience seems to me a kind of “*evil* eye.” To value something all the more in one's own eyes when it fails, *because* it failed—that's closer to my morality.—“God,” “immortality of the soul,” “redemption,” “the afterlife”: I have given none of these ideas any attention or time, not even as a child. Perhaps I was never childish enough for that?—For me, atheism is certainly not a conclusion, still less an event. It comes naturally, by instinct. I am too curious, too *full of questions*, too high-spirited to accept a crude, heavy-handed answer. God is a crude, heavy-handed answer, an offense against the good taste of us thinkers. At bottom, he is even just a crude *ban* imposed on us: you must not think!... A very different question interests me. The “salvation of humanity” depends on it more than on any theological oddity: the question of *food*. For practical use, you can put it this way: “How should

you, in particular, eat to reach your greatest strength, your greatest force of character in the Renaissance sense, your greatest virtue free from moralizing?”—My experiences here have been as bad as possible. I am amazed that I heard this question so late and learned “sense” from these experiences so late. Only the complete worthlessness of our German education—its “idealism”—helps me understand why, in this very matter, I was backward enough to be a saint. This “education” teaches people from the start to lose sight of *realities* and chase thoroughly questionable, so-called ideal goals, such as a “classical education.” As if joining “classical” and “German” in one idea weren’t doomed from the start! More than that, it’s funny. Just picture a “classically educated” man from Leipzig!—In fact, until I was well into adulthood, I always ate *badly*. In moral language, I ate “impersonally,” “selflessly,” “altruistically,” for the good of cooks and other fellow Christians. Through Leipzig cooking, for example, I very seriously denied my “will to live” at the same time as I first studied Schopenhauer (1865). To upset your stomach while also getting too little nourishment—this was a problem that cooking seemed to solve with astonishing success. (People say 1866 brought a change in this respect.) But German cooking in general—what doesn’t it have on its conscience! Soup *before* the meal, still called “in the German style” in Venetian cookbooks of the 16th century. Meat boiled to death. Vegetables made fatty and floury. Flour-based dishes turned into paperweights! Add to that the downright animal need of the old Germans—and by no means just the *old* ones—to pour drink on top, and you can also understand where the *German spirit* comes from: unhappy bowels... The German spirit is indigestion. It can’t get through anything.—But the *English* diet also goes deeply against my own instinct. Compared with the German diet, even with the French, it is a kind of “return to nature”—that is, to cannibalism. It seems to give the mind *heavy* feet—the feet of Englishwomen... The best cooking is *Piedmont’s*.—Alcohol is bad for me. One glass of wine or beer a day is quite enough to turn my life into a “vale of tears.” My complete opposites live in Munich. Though I understood this rather late, I have actually *experienced* it since childhood. As a boy, I thought drinking wine, like smoking tobacco, was at first just young men’s vanity and later a bad habit.

Perhaps Naumburg wine also had something to do with this *harsh* judgment. To believe that wine *cheers people up*, I would have to be a Christian. In other words, I would have to believe something that is absurd precisely for me. Strangely enough, though *small*, heavily diluted doses of alcohol can upset my mood so badly, I become almost a sailor when it comes to *strong* doses. Even as a boy, I was brave in this respect. I could write a long essay in Latin in a single night and then make a clean copy of it too. My pen was driven by the ambition to match my model Sallust in strictness and conciseness, and I poured several very strong grogs over my Latin. Even when I was a pupil at the venerable Schulpforta, this was in no way at odds with my body's nature. Perhaps it wasn't at odds with Sallust's either—however much it was at odds with the venerable Schulpforta... Later, toward the middle of my life, I did take an ever firmer stand *against* every kind of “spirited” drink. I oppose vegetarianism on the basis of experience, just like Richard Wagner, who converted me. And I can't urge complete abstinence from alcohol strongly enough on all *more intellectual* people. *Water* does the job... I prefer places where you can draw water from flowing fountains everywhere: Nice, Turin, Sils. A little glass follows me around like a dog. In wine there is *truth*: it seems that here too I disagree with everyone else about the meaning of “truth.” In my case, the spirit hovers over the *water*... A few more hints from my morality. A substantial meal is easier to digest than one that's too small. The first condition for good digestion is that the stomach gets to work as a whole. You must *know* the size of your stomach. For the same reason, I advise against those drawn-out meals at the communal hotel table, which I call interrupted sacrificial feasts.—No snacks between meals, no coffee: coffee darkens the mood. *Tea* is good for you only in the morning. A little, but strong. Tea is very harmful and makes you feel ill all day if it is even one degree too weak. Everyone has their own measure here, often within very narrow and delicate limits. In a very irritating climate, tea isn't a good way to start. You should begin with a cup of thick, defatted cocoa an hour earlier.—*Sit* as little as possible. Don't trust any thought that wasn't born out-

doors and in free movement—one in which the muscles aren't holding a celebration too. All prejudices come from the bowels.—Sitting on your backside—I have said this before—is the real *sin* against the Holy Spirit.—

- ² Closely related to the question of food is the question of *place* and *climate*. No one is free to live just anywhere. And anyone who has great tasks to carry out, tasks that demand all their strength, has a very narrow choice here. Climate affects the *metabolism*, slowing it down or speeding it up, so much that a wrong choice of place and climate can do more than separate someone from their task. It can keep the task from them altogether. They never even see it. Their physical energy has never grown strong enough to reach that freedom which overflows into the highest activity of the mind, where someone realizes: only I can do *this*... Even the slightest sluggishness of the bowels, once it has become a bad habit, is quite enough to turn a genius into something average, something “German.” The German climate alone is enough to discourage strong bowels, even bowels with a heroic bent. The speed of the metabolism is directly linked to how nimble or lame the mind's *feet* are. The “mind” itself is only a form of this metabolism. Make a list of the places where people with lively minds live and have lived, where wit, refinement, and malice were part of happiness, where genius almost inevitably made itself at home. They all have remarkably dry air. Paris, Provence, Florence, Jerusalem, Athens—these names prove something. Genius *depends* on dry air, on clear skies—that is, on a rapid metabolism, on the ability to take in large, even enormous amounts of energy again and again. I have a case in mind where a mind built for greatness and freedom became narrow, withdrawn, specialized, and sour, simply because its instinct wasn't sensitive enough to climate. And I myself might have ended up as that case, if illness hadn't forced me to see sense, to think about the sense in reality. Now, after long practice, I read the effects of climate and weather in myself as on a very fine and reliable instrument. Even on a short trip, say from Turin to Milan, I work out the change in degrees of humidity from its effects on my body. So I look back with horror at the *unnerving* fact that, except for the last 10 years, the years when my life was in danger, I have always lived in the

wrong places, places positively *forbidden* to me. Naumburg, Schulpforta, Thuringia in general, Leipzig, Basel, Venice—every one of them a place of disaster for my body. I have no welcome memory of my entire childhood and youth. But it would be foolish to blame so-called “moral” causes for this—for instance, the undeniable lack of *suitable* company. That lack exists today just as it always did, without stopping me from being cheerful and brave. Instead, ignorance about the body—that damned “idealism”—has been the real curse of my life, the needless and stupid part of it. Nothing good has grown from it, and nothing makes up for it or balances it out. I explain all my wrong choices, all my great failures of instinct and acts of “modesty” away from my life’s *task*, as the results of this “idealism.” For example, that I became a philologist. Why not at least a doctor, or something else that opens one’s eyes? During my time in Basel, my whole mental diet, including how I divided up the day, was a completely senseless misuse of extraordinary powers. I took in nothing like enough strength to cover what I used up. I didn’t even think about what I spent and how to replace it. I lacked any finer sense of myself, any *care* from an instinct that knew how to command. I put myself on a level with just anyone. It was “selflessness,” a forgetting of my distance from others—something I never forgive myself for. When I was almost at the end, *because* I was almost at the end, I began thinking about this basic unreason in my life—“idealism.” Only *illness* brought me to my senses.—

- ³ The choice of food; the choice of climate and place. The third choice one must never get wrong, at any price, is the choice of *one’s own* kind of *relaxation*. Here too, the more a mind is one of a kind, the narrower the limits of what is allowed it—that is, what is *useful* to it. In my case, all *reading* is a form of relaxation. So it belongs among the things that free me from myself, that let me go for a walk through other people’s fields of knowledge and minds—things I no longer take seriously. Reading gives me a rest from *my own* seriousness. When I am deeply at work, you won’t see any books around me. I would take care not to let anyone speak near me, or even think. And reading would mean just that... Has anyone really noticed how, in the deep tension that pregnancy imposes on the

mind and basically on the whole body, chance, any kind of stimulus from outside, acts too strongly, “strikes home” too deeply? One must avoid chance and outside stimulation as much as possible. A kind of walling oneself in is among the first wise moves of instinct during a pregnancy of the mind. Will I allow a *foreign* thought to climb secretly over the wall? And reading would mean just that... After the times of work and fertility comes the time of relaxation. Come here, you pleasant, witty, clever books!—Will they be German books?... I have to look back six months to catch myself with a book in my hand. What was it? An excellent study by Victor Brochard, *les Sceptiques Grecs*, which also makes good use of my *Laertiana*. The skeptics, the only *honorable* type in that two-to-five-faced tribe of philosophers!... Otherwise, I almost always turn to the same books. There are only a few of them, really: the books that have *proved their worth* specifically for me. Perhaps it’s not in my nature to read a lot or to read widely. A reading room makes me ill. Nor is it in my nature to love a lot or to love widely. Caution, even hostility toward new books, is more a part of my instinct than “tolerance,” “generosity of heart,” and other forms of “love of one’s neighbor”... I keep returning to a small number of older French writers. I believe only in French culture. I consider everything else in Europe that calls itself “culture” a misunderstanding, not to mention German culture... The few examples of high culture I found in Germany were all French in origin. Above all, Mrs. Cosima Wagner, by far the foremost voice on questions of taste that I have ever heard.—I don’t read Pascal, I *love* him, as Christianity’s most instructive victim: slowly murdered, first physically, then psychologically, with all the logic of this most horrifying form of inhuman cruelty. I have something of Montaigne’s mischievous high spirits in my mind, and who knows, perhaps in my body too. My artistic taste defends the names Molière, Corneille, and Racine, not without anger at a wild genius like Shakespeare. But none of this rules out my also finding the very latest French writers charming company. I simply can’t see in what century of history one could gather psychologists as curious and at the same time as sensitive as those in Paris today. Let me name a few—for there are quite a lot of them—Paul Bourget, Pierre Loti, Gyp, Meilhac, Anatole France, Jules Lemaître. Or, to single out one of the strong

race, a true Latin whom I especially like, Guy de Maupassant. Between ourselves, I even prefer *this* generation to their great teachers. All those teachers have been spoiled by German philosophy—Mr. Taine, for example, by Hegel, to whom he owes his misunderstanding of great people and periods. Wherever Germany reaches, it *spoils* culture. Only the war “set free” the mind in France... Stendhal, one of the finest chance discoveries of my life—for everything that marks a turning point in my life has come to me by chance, never through a recommendation—is quite priceless. He has a psychologist’s eye that sees things ahead of time, and a grip on facts that recalls his closeness to the greatest realist: you can tell Napoleon by his claw.—Not least, he is priceless as an *honest* atheist, a rare and almost impossible-to-find species in France, with all due respect to Prosper Mérimée... Perhaps I myself envy Stendhal? He took away from me the best atheist joke, the one I in particular could have made: “God’s only excuse is that he doesn’t exist”... I myself have said somewhere: what has been the greatest objection to existence up to now? *God*...

⁴ *Heinrich Heine* gave me the highest idea of what a lyric poet can be. I search in vain through all the realms of thousands of years for music as sweet and passionate. He had that divine malice without which I can’t imagine perfection. I judge the value of people and races by how necessary they find it to see the god and the satyr as inseparable.—And how he handles German! One day people will say that Heine and I were by far the greatest artists of the German language—at an incalculable distance from everything that mere Germans have done with it.—I must be deeply related to *Byron’s* Manfred. I found all those depths within myself. At thirteen, I was ready for this work. I have no words, only a look, for those who dare to mention Faust in the presence of Manfred. The Germans are *incapable* of any idea of greatness. Schumann is the proof. Out of anger at this sugary Saxon, I deliberately composed a counter-overture to Manfred. Hans von Bülow said he had never seen anything like it on music paper: it was rape of Euterpe.—When I look for my highest way of describing *Shakespeare*, I always find only this: he conceived the Caesar type. You don’t guess something like that. You either are it or you aren’t. A great poet draws

only on his own reality—to the point that afterward he can no longer bear his own work... After I have glanced into my Zarathustra, I walk up and down the room for half an hour, unable to control an unbearable fit of sobbing.—I know no reading more heartbreaking than Shakespeare. How much a person must have suffered to need so badly to play the clown!—Does anyone *understand* Hamlet? It's not doubt but *certainly* that drives people mad... But to feel that way, you have to be deep, an abyss, a philosopher... We are all afraid of the truth... And let me admit it: I am instinctively sure and certain that Lord Bacon is the creator of this most unnerving kind of literature, torturing the animal in himself. What do *I* care about the pitiful chatter of muddled and shallow American minds? But the power to make visions overwhelmingly real is not just compatible with the greatest power to act, to carry out monstrous deeds, to commit crime—it *actually requires that power*... We know nowhere near enough about Lord Bacon, the first realist in every great sense of the word, to know all that he did, all that he wanted, all that he experienced within himself... And damn you, gentlemen critics! Suppose I had put someone else's name on my Zarathustra, Richard Wagner's, for example. The sharp insight of two thousand years would not have been enough to guess that the author of "Human, All Too Human" was the visionary of Zarathustra...

- 5 Here, as I speak of the things that have refreshed me in life, I need to say a word of thanks for what has refreshed me by far the most deeply and warmly. Without any doubt, this was my close friendship with Richard Wagner. I would let the rest of my human relationships go cheap. I wouldn't give up the days at Tribschen from my life at any price: days of trust, cheerfulness, sublime moments of chance—the *deep* moments... I don't know what others experienced with Wagner. No cloud ever crossed *our* sky.—And this brings me back to France once more. I have no arguments left for Wagnerians and all that sort, only a contemptuous curl of the lip. They think they honor Wagner by finding him like *themselves*... Being who I am, a stranger in my deepest instincts to everything German, so much so that just being near a German slows my digestion, my first contact with Wagner was also the first time in my life I could

breathe freely. I felt and honored him as *a foreign country*, as an opposite, as a living protest against all the “German virtues.”—We who were children in the swampy air of the fifties are necessarily pessimists about the idea of “German.” We can be nothing but revolutionaries. We will accept no state of affairs in which the religious hypocrite comes out on top. I don’t care at all whether he appears in different colors today, whether he dresses in scarlet and puts on hus-sar uniforms... Well then! Wagner was a revolutionary—he ran away from the Germans... As an *artist*, one has no home in Europe except Paris. The delicacy in all five artistic senses that Wagner’s art requires, the fingers sensitive to fine shades of difference, the sickliness of the mind—these are found only in Paris. Nowhere else is there this passion about form, this seriousness about staging. It is Parisian seriousness in its fullest sense. In Germany, people have no idea of the enormous ambition living in the soul of a Parisian artist. The German is good-natured. Wagner was not good-natured at all... But I have already said enough (in “Beyond Good and Evil,” S. 256f.) about where Wagner belongs, who his closest relatives are. They belong to late French Romanticism: that kind of artist who soars high and sweeps others high along with him, like Delacroix, like Berlioz. All of them have a foundation of sickness, of something incurable in their nature. All are fanatics of *expression*, masters of technique through and through... Who was Wagner’s first *intelligent* follower? Charles Baudelaire, the same man who first understood Delacroix, that typical decadent in whom a whole generation of artists recognized itself. Perhaps he was also the last... What have I never forgiven Wagner for? That he *stooped* to the Germans—that he became a German of the empire... Wherever Germany reaches, it *spoils* culture.—

- ⁶ All things considered, I couldn’t have endured my youth without Wagner’s music. For I was *condemned* to Germans. When you want to escape an unbearable pressure, you need hashish. Well, I needed Wagner. Wagner is the supreme antidote to everything German—a poison, I don’t deny it... From the moment a piano arrangement of *Tristan* appeared—my compliments, Mr. von Bülow!—I was a Wagnerian. I saw Wagner’s earlier works as beneath me: still too vul-

gar, too “German”... But even today I am looking for a work as dangerously fascinating, with an infinity as frightening and sweet, as *Tristan*. I search in vain through all the arts. All the strangeness of Lionardo da Vinci loses its spell at the first note of *Tristan*. This work is Wagner’s very highest achievement. He recovered from it with *Meistersinger* and the *Ring*. Getting healthier is a *step backward* for someone with Wagner’s nature... I count it a piece of the very greatest luck that I lived at the right time, and lived precisely among Germans, so that I was *ready* for this work. That is how far my curiosity as a psychologist goes. The world is poor for anyone who has never been sick enough for this “sensual pleasure of hell.” We may, we almost must, use a mystic’s phrase here.—I think I know better than anyone the enormous things Wagner can do, the fifty worlds of unfamiliar ecstasy for which no one but him had wings. And being who I am, strong enough to turn even the most questionable and dangerous things to my advantage and grow stronger through them, I call Wagner the great benefactor of my life. What we have in common is that we have suffered more deeply, even from each other, than people of this century could suffer. This will keep bringing our names together forever. And just as surely as the Germans simply misunderstand Wagner, they misunderstand me and always will.—Two centuries of psychological and artistic training *first*, my Germanic gentlemen!... But you can’t make up for missing that.—

- ⁷ One more word for the most sensitive ears: what I really want from music. I want it to be cheerful and deep, like an afternoon in October. I want it to have a character of its own, to be wild, tender, a sweet little woman full of malice and grace... I will never admit that a German *could* know what music is. Those called German musicians, the greatest first of all, are *foreigners*: Slavs, Croats, Italians, Dutch—or Jews. Otherwise they are Germans of the strong race, Germans who have *died out*, like Heinrich Schütz, Bach, and Handel. I myself am still Polish enough to give up all other music for Chopin. For three reasons, I make an exception for Wagner’s *Siegfried-Idyll*, perhaps also for some things by Liszt, who surpasses all other musicians in the noble accents of his orchestration. Finally, I also except everything that has grown on the far side of the Alps

—on *this side*... I couldn't do without Rossini, still less without *my* South in music, the music of my Venetian master Pietro Gasti. And when I say the far side of the Alps, I really mean only Venice. When I look for another word for music, I always find only the word Venice. I can't tell tears and music apart. I cannot think of happiness, of the *South*, without a shiver of fear.

By the bridge I stood
recently, in the brown night.
Singing came from far away;
it welled up in golden drops
across the trembling surface.
Gondolas, lights, music—
drunkenly it floated out into the twilight...

My soul, a stringed instrument,
sang to itself, touched by something unseen,
a secret gondola song along with it,
trembling with happiness in many colors.
—Was anyone listening to it?...

- ⁸ In all this—in the choice of food, place and climate, and relaxation—an instinct for self-preservation is in command. It shows itself most clearly as an instinct for *self-defense*. Not seeing many things, not hearing them, not letting them reach you: this is the first piece of wisdom, the first proof that you are not an accident but a necessity. The usual word for this instinct of self-defense is *taste*. Its command is not only to say no where saying yes would be “selflessness,” but also to *say no as little as possible*. Separate yourself, move away from whatever would make you say no again and again. The sense in this is that even the smallest expenses on defense, once they become a rule, a habit, make us extraordinarily and quite needlessly poorer. Our *big* expenses are the small ones that happen most often. Warding things off, not letting them get near, is an expense—don't fool yourself about this. It is strength *wasted* for negative purposes. Simply through the constant need to defend yourself, you can grow too

weak to defend yourself anymore.—Suppose I stepped out of my house and found, instead of quiet, aristocratic Turin, a small German town. My instinct would have to brace itself to push back everything pressing in on it from this flattened, cowardly world. Or suppose I found the big German city, this vice turned into buildings, where nothing grows, where every single thing, good or bad, has been brought in from elsewhere. Wouldn't I have to become a *hedgehog*?—But having spines is a waste, even a double luxury, when you are free to have no spines, but open hands instead...

Another wise form of self-defense is to *react as rarely as possible* and to escape situations and conditions where you would be forced to hang up your “freedom,” your initiative, so to speak, and become nothing but something that reacts. Take the example of dealing with books. The scholar who basically does nothing but “turn over” books—about 200 a day for a philologist, by a modest estimate—eventually loses the ability to think for himself altogether. If he isn't turning over books, he isn't thinking. When he thinks, he is *answering* a stimulus—a thought he has read. In the end, all he does is react. The scholar uses up all his strength saying yes and no, criticizing what has already been thought. He no longer thinks himself... His instinct for self-defense has worn out. Otherwise, he would defend himself against books. The scholar—a decadent.—I have seen this with my own eyes: gifted people, born with rich and free natures, already “read to ruin” in their thirties. They are nothing but matches that you have to strike to make them give off sparks—“thoughts.”—Early in the morning, as day breaks, in all your freshness, in the dawn of your strength, to read *a book*—I call that a vice!—

- ⁹ At this point I can no longer avoid giving the real answer to the question of *how you become what you are*. This brings me to the masterpiece in the art of self-preservation—of *selfishness*... Suppose that one's task, one's calling, the *destiny* of that task, lies far beyond the ordinary measure. Then nothing would be more dangerous than seeing oneself *together with* this task. Becoming what you are requires that you have not the faintest idea *what* you are. From this point of view, even life's *mistakes* have their own meaning and value: the temporary side

roads and wrong turns, the delays, the acts of “modesty,” the seriousness wasted on tasks outside the task. This expresses great wisdom, even the highest wisdom. Where “know yourself” would be a recipe for ruin, forgetting yourself, *misunderstanding* yourself, making yourself smaller, narrower, more average, becomes reason itself. In moral terms, loving your neighbor, living for others and other things, *can* be a protective measure that preserves the hardest sense of self. This is the exceptional case in which, against my rule and conviction, I take the side of the “selfless” drives. Here they work in the service of *selfishness*, *self-discipline*.—One must keep the whole surface of consciousness—consciousness is a surface—clear of any of the great commands. Be careful even of every grand word, every grand pose! They all risk making the instinct “understand itself” too early.—Meanwhile, the organizing “idea,” the one called to rule, keeps growing and growing in the depths. It begins to command. It slowly leads us back from side roads and wrong turns. It prepares *individual* qualities and skills that will one day prove essential as means to the whole. It develops all the *serving* abilities one after another before it lets anything be heard of the ruling task, of “goal,” “purpose,” “meaning.”—Seen from this side, my life is simply wonderful. The task of a *reevaluation of values* may have needed more abilities than have ever lived together in one individual. Above all, it needed opposing abilities too, without letting them interfere with or destroy each other. A ranking of abilities; distance; the art of separating without creating enemies; mixing nothing, “reconciling” nothing; an enormous variety that is still the opposite of chaos—this was the precondition, the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct. Its *higher care* proved so strong that I never had even a guess at what was growing in me. All my abilities suddenly *sprang out* one day, mature, in their final perfection. I have no memory of ever making an effort. No trace of *struggle* can be found in my life. I am the opposite of a heroic nature. To “want” something, to “strive” for something, to have a “purpose,” a “wish” in view—I have no firsthand experience of any of this. Even at this moment I look out on my future—a *vast* future!—as on a smooth sea. No longing ripples across it. I don’t want anything at all to be different from what it is. I myself don’t want to become different... But I have always lived like this. I have had no

wish. Someone who, past the age of forty-four, can say he has never pursued *honors, women, or money!*—Not that I lacked them... For example, one day I was a university professor. I had never remotely thought of such a thing, since I was barely 24 years old. In the same way, two years earlier, one day I was a philologist. I mean that my teacher Ritschl asked to print my *first* work in philology, my beginning in every sense, in his “Rheinisches Museum.” (*Ritschl*—I say this with respect—is the only scholar of genius I have seen to this day. He had that pleasant roguishness that marks us Thuringians and with which even a German becomes likable. Even to reach the truth, we still prefer the back roads. With these words I certainly don’t mean to undervalue my closer countryman, the *clever* Leopold von Ranke...).

- ¹⁰ People will ask why I have told them all these little things, things usually thought unimportant. They will say I am harming myself by doing so, all the more if I am meant to stand for great tasks. My answer: these little things—food, place, climate, relaxation, all the fine points of selfishness—are more important beyond all measure than everything people have considered important up to now. This is exactly where we must begin to *learn differently*. The things humanity has seriously considered up to now aren’t even realities. They are mere imaginings, or, to speak more strictly, *lies* born from the bad instincts of sick people, people harmful in the deepest sense: all those ideas of “God,” “soul,” “virtue,” “sin,” “the afterlife,” “truth,” “eternal life”... Yet people have looked for the greatness of human nature, its “divinity,” in them... Every question of politics, social order, and education has been falsified to its very roots because people took the most harmful people for great people. They taught us to despise the “little” things—that is, the basic matters of life itself... If I now compare myself with those honored up to now as the *foremost* human beings, the difference is plain to see. I don’t even count these supposedly “foremost” ones as human beings at all. To me, they are humanity’s rejects, monstrous offspring of sickness and vengeful instincts. They are all disastrous, basically incurable monsters who take revenge on life... I want to be their opposite. My special advantage is that I have the finest sensitivity to every sign of healthy instincts.

There isn't a sickly trait in me. Even during serious illness, I never became sickly. Anyone looking for a trace of fanaticism in my nature will look in vain. No one will be able to point to any moment in my life when I took an arrogant or theatrical pose. The drama of a pose is *not* part of greatness. Anyone who needs poses at all is *fake*... Beware of all people who make a striking picture!—Life has been easy for me, easiest when it demanded the hardest things from me. Anyone who saw me during the seventy days of this fall, when I did nothing but first-rate things without a break, things no one can copy from me—or show me beforehand—with a responsibility for all the thousands of years after me, will have noticed no trace of tension in me. All the more so, they will have noticed an overflowing freshness and cheerfulness. I have never eaten with more pleasant feelings, never slept better.—I know no other way of dealing with great tasks than *play*. As a sign of greatness, this is an essential condition. The slightest strain, a gloomy face, any harsh tone in the throat, all count against a person—how much more against their work!... You must have no nerves... To *suffer* from loneliness also counts against you. I have only ever suffered from “too much company”... At an absurdly early age, at seven, I already knew that no human word would ever reach me. Has anyone ever seen me saddened by that?—Even today I am just as friendly toward everyone. I even show special respect to the lowliest. In all this there isn't a grain of arrogance or secret contempt. Anyone I despise *guesses* that I despise them. My mere existence outrages everyone with bad blood in their body... My formula for greatness in a human being is *love of fate*: not wanting anything to be different, not in the future, not in the past, not for all eternity. Not merely putting up with what is necessary, still less hiding it—all idealism is dishonesty in the face of what is necessary—but *loving* it...

Why I Write Such Good Books



¹ I am one thing; my writings are another.—Before I talk about the writings themselves, I will touch on whether people understand them or do *not* understand them. I will do this as casually as I can decently manage. The time for this question has not come at all. My own time has not come yet. Some people are born after their deaths.—Someday people will need institutions where they live and teach as I understand living and teaching. Perhaps they will even set up special university chairs to interpret Zarathustra. But I would completely contradict myself if I already expected ears *and hands for my* truths today. It is not just understandable that people do not hear me today, that they do not know how to take anything from me. It even seems right to me. I do not want to be confused with anyone else—and that means I must not confuse myself with anyone else.—Again, there is little evidence of “ill will” in my life. I could hardly name a case of literary “ill will” either. But there is far too much *sheer stupidity!*... It seems to me one of the rarest honors anyone can do himself to pick up a book of mine. I even assume that he takes off his shoes for the occasion—not to mention his boots... Once Dr. Heinrich von Stein honestly complained that he could not understand a word of my Zarathustra. I told him that was quite all right. To have understood six sentences from it—that is, to have *lived through* them—would raise someone to a higher level among mortals than

“modern” people could reach. With *this* feeling of distance, how *could* I even wish to be read by the “modern people” I know!—My triumph is just the opposite of Schopenhauer’s. I say, “I am not read; I will not be read.”—Not that I want to underrate the pleasure I have several times taken in the *innocence* with which people reject my writings. Just this summer, at a time when my weighty, all-too-weighty writing might throw all other writing off balance, a professor at the University of Berlin kindly suggested that I should use a different form. Nobody, he said, reads this sort of thing.—In the end it was not Germany but Switzerland that supplied the two extreme cases. An article by Dr. V. Widmann in the “Bund” about “Beyond Good and Evil,” titled “Nietzsche’s Dangerous Book,” and an overall account of my books by Mr. Karl Spitteler, also in the “Bund,” mark a high point in my life—I am careful not to say of what... The latter, for instance, treated my Zarathustra as an *advanced exercise in style*, with the wish that later I might also provide some content. Dr. Widmann expressed his respect for the courage with which I was working to abolish all decent feelings.—Through a small trick of chance, every sentence here was a truth turned upside down, with a consistency I admired. Basically, all one had to do was “revalue all values” to hit the nail on the head about me, quite remarkably—instead of hitting my head with a nail... So I will make all the more effort to explain.—In the end, no one can hear more in things, books included, than he already knows. If you have no access to something through experience, you have no ear for it. Now imagine an extreme case: a book speaks entirely of experiences that lie completely beyond the possibility of frequent or even fairly rare experience. It is the *first* language for a new set of experiences. In this case people simply hear nothing. They suffer from the acoustic illusion that where nothing is heard, *nothing is there either*... This, in short, is my usual experience and, if you like, the *originality* of my experience. Anyone who thought he had understood something of me had made something out of me in his own image—quite often my opposite, an “idealist,” for example. Anyone who understood nothing of me denied that I mattered at all.—The word “*overman*” describes a type that has turned out supremely well, in contrast to “modern” people, “good” people, Christians, and nihilists. In the mouth of a Zarathustra,

the *destroyer* of morality, this word gives one much to think about. Almost everywhere, people have understood it with complete innocence in terms of the very values whose opposite the figure of Zarathustra embodies. That is, they take it to mean an “idealistic” type of higher human being, half “saint,” half “genius”... Other learned cattle have suspected me of Darwinism on its account. People have even recognized in it Carlyle’s “hero worship,” which I so spitefully rejected—Carlyle, that great counterfeiter who did not know or mean to be one. When I whispered in someone’s ear that he should look for a Cesare Borgia rather than a Parsifal, he could not believe his ears.—You will have to forgive my complete lack of curiosity about reviews of my books, especially in newspapers. My friends and publishers know this and do not talk to me about such things. In one particular case I once saw all the sins committed against a single book—it was “Beyond Good and Evil.” I could give a pretty account of them. Would anyone believe that the *Nationalzeitung*—a Prussian newspaper, I mention for my foreign readers; I myself, if you please, read only the *Journal des Débats*—quite seriously took the book as a “sign of the times,” as the genuine *philosophy of the Junkers* that the *Kreuzzeitung* merely lacked the courage to express?...

- ² That was said for Germans. Everywhere else I have readers—all of them *exceptional* minds, proven characters trained in high positions and responsibilities. I even have real geniuses among my readers. In Vienna, in St. Petersburg, in Stockholm, in Copenhagen, in Paris, and in New York—everywhere I have been discovered. I have *not* been discovered in Europe’s flatland, Germany... And I admit that I take even more pleasure in my nonreaders, people who have never heard either my name or the word philosophy. Wherever I go, here in Turin for instance, every face grows brighter and kinder at the sight of me. What has flattered me most so far is that old market women cannot rest until they have picked out their sweetest grapes for me. A philosopher must go *that far*... It is not for nothing that the Poles are called the French of the Slavs. A charming Russian woman will not be mistaken for a moment about where I belong. I cannot manage to be solemn. At most I become embarrassed... To

think like a German, to feel like a German—I can do anything, but *that* is beyond my powers... My old teacher Ritschl even claimed that I planned my philological papers like a Parisian novelist—absurdly gripping. In Paris itself people are amazed at “all my daring and subtleties”—Monsieur Taine’s words. I fear that even in the highest forms of the dithyramb people find in me a dash of that salt which never becomes stupid—“German”—namely wit... I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen.—We all know, some of us even from experience, what a long-eared ass is. Well then, I dare to claim that I have the smallest ears. This interests the little women quite a bit. It seems to me that they feel I understand them better?... I am the *anti-ass* above all others, and therefore a monster of world-historical importance. In Greek, and not only in Greek, I am the *Antichrist*...

- 3 I have some sense of my privileges as a writer. In individual cases, people have also told me how much getting used to my writings “spoils” their taste. They simply cannot stand other books anymore, least of all philosophical ones. It is an honor like no other to enter this noble and delicate world. You absolutely must not be a German to do so. In the end it is an honor you must have earned. But anyone related to me through the *height* of his aspirations experiences real ecstasies of learning here. For I come from heights no bird has ever reached in flight. I know depths where no foot has ever strayed. People have told me they cannot put down a book of mine—that I even disturb their sleep... There is no prouder and at the same time more refined kind of book. Here and there they reach the highest thing that can be reached on earth: cynicism. You must win them for yourself with the most delicate fingers as well as the bravest fists. Any weakness of the soul shuts you out of them once and for all—even any indigestion. You must not be nervous; you must have a cheerful belly. It is not just the poverty of a soul, its stuffy backroom air, that shuts people out. Far more, it is the cowardice, the dirt, the secret desire for revenge in their guts. A word from me brings every bad instinct to the surface of the face. Among my acquaintances I have several experimental animals. They let me study the different, instructively different reactions to my writings. Anyone who wants nothing to

do with their content—my so-called friends, for example—becomes “impersonal” about them. They congratulate me on being “that far along” again. They also see progress in the greater cheerfulness of the tone... The thoroughly vicious “spirits,” the “beautiful souls,” the people who are false through and through, simply do not know what to do with these books. So they regard the books as *beneath* them—the beautiful consistency of all “beautiful souls.” The cattle among my acquaintances—mere Germans, if you please—give me to understand that they do not always agree with me, but sometimes do... I have even heard this about Zarathustra... Likewise, any “femininity” in a person, even in a man, means a closed gate to me. Such a person will never enter this maze of daring insights. You must never have spared yourself. *Hardness* must be part of your habits if you are to feel well and cheerful among nothing but hard truths. When I picture a perfect reader, he always turns into a monster of courage and curiosity. He is also something flexible, cunning, cautious: a born adventurer and discoverer. Finally, I could find no better words than Zarathustra’s for saying who my only real audience is. To *whom* alone does he want to tell his riddle?

“To you, the bold seekers, the experimenters, and whoever has ever set sail with
cunning sails on terrible seas—
to you, drunk on riddles, happy in the twilight, whose soul is lured by flutes to
every treacherous abyss:
—for you do not want to feel your way along a thread with a coward’s hand;
and where you can *guess*, you hate to *deduce*...”

- ⁴ I will also say something general here about my *art of style*. To *communicate* a state, an inner tension of strong feeling, through signs—including the pace of those signs—that is the point of every style. And since I have an extraordinary range of inner states, I have many possibilities of style. I have the most varied art of style any human being has ever had. Any style is *good* if it really communicates an inner state, if it makes no mistake about the signs, their pace, or the *gestures*—all the rules of long, structured sentences are an art of gesture. My

instinct here is infallible.—Good style *in itself* is sheer stupidity, mere “idealism,” like the “beautiful *in itself*,” the “good *in itself*,” the “thing *in itself*”... All this still assumes that there are ears to hear—that there are people capable and worthy of the same intensity of feeling, that there are people to whom one *may* communicate oneself.—My Zarathustra, for instance, is still looking for such people—oh, he will have to keep looking for a long time!—You must be *worthy* of hearing him... Until then there will be no one who understands the *art* lavished here. No one has ever had so many new, unheard-of artistic means to lavish, means really created for the first time to do this. That such a thing was possible in German, of all languages, still had to be proved. I myself would have denied it most emphatically beforehand. Before me, people do not know what can be done with German—what can be done with language at all. I was the first to discover the art of *great* rhythm, the *grand style* of long, structured sentences, which expresses an enormous rise and fall of sublime, superhuman passion. With a dithyramb like the last one in the *third* part of Zarathustra, titled “The Seven Seals,” I flew a thousand miles beyond what had been called poetry until then.

- 5 The first insight a good reader reaches may be that a *psychologist* without an equal speaks through my writings. I mean a reader such as I deserve, who reads me as good old philologists read their Horace. Statements on which basically everyone agrees—not to mention the commonplace philosophers, moralists, and other empty heads and cabbageheads—appear in my work as naive blunders. Take, for instance, the belief that “unselfish” and “selfish” are opposites, when the self itself is merely a “higher fraud,” an “ideal”... There are *neither* selfish *nor* unselfish actions. Both ideas are psychological nonsense. Or the statement “Human beings seek happiness”... Or the statement “Happiness is the reward of virtue”... Or the statement “Pleasure and displeasure are opposites”... Morality, humanity’s Circe, has falsified everything psychological through and through—*turned it into morality*—right up to the dreadful nonsense that love is supposed to be something “unselfish”... You must be firmly seated on *yourself*, you must stand bravely on your own two legs, or you simply

cannot love. The little women know this only too well, after all. They do not give a damn about selfless men, men who are merely objective... May I venture to suggest, by the way, that I *know* the little women? That is part of my Dionysian endowment. Who knows? Perhaps I am the first psychologist of the eternal feminine. They all love me—an old story, apart from the *failed* little women, the “emancipated” ones, who do not have what it takes to bear children.—Luckily, I have no intention of letting myself be torn apart. The perfect woman tears apart when she loves... I know these lovable maenads... Ah, what a dangerous little predator, creeping along underground! And so pleasant at the same time!... A little woman chasing her revenge would knock fate itself flat.—Woman is indescribably more evil than man, and cleverer too. Goodness in a woman is already a form of *degeneration*... All so-called “beautiful souls” have an underlying physiological problem. I am not saying everything, or I would turn medically cynical. The struggle for *equal* rights is itself a symptom of sickness. Every doctor knows that.—The more a woman is a woman, the more she fights tooth and nail against rights in general. The state of nature, the eternal *war* between the sexes, gives her by far the highest rank.—Have people had ears for my definition of love? It is the only one worthy of a philosopher. Love—war in its methods, the deadly hatred between the sexes at its root.—Have people heard my answer to the question of how to *cure* a woman—to “redeem” her? Get her pregnant. Woman needs children; man is always only a means: thus spoke Zarathustra.—“Women’s emancipation” is the instinctive hatred of the *failed* woman, meaning one who cannot bear children, for the woman who has turned out well. The struggle against “man” is always just a means, a pretext, a tactic. By raising *themselves* up as “woman in herself,” as “higher woman,” as the “idealist” kind of woman, they want to *lower* the general rank of women. There is no surer means to this than an academic high-school education, pants, and political rights as voting cattle. Basically, emancipated women are the *anarchists* in the world of the “eternal feminine,” the ones who have come off badly, whose deepest instinct is revenge... A whole species of the most malicious “idealism”—which also occurs in men, for example in Henrik Ibsen, that typical old maid—aims to *poison* the good conscience, the naturalness of

sexual love... And to leave no doubt about my views here, which are as honest as they are strict, I will share another statement from my moral code against *vice*. With the word vice I fight everything against nature—or, if you like fine words, idealism. The statement reads: “Preaching chastity is a public incitement to acts against nature. Every contempt for sexual life, every defilement of it through the idea of ‘impurity,’ is the crime against life itself—is the real sin against the holy spirit of life.”—

- ⁶ To give some idea of me as a psychologist, I will take an unusual piece of psychology from “Beyond Good and Evil.” I forbid any guesses, by the way, about whom I am describing here. “The genius of the heart, such as that great hidden one has, the tempter god and born piper of consciences, whose voice knows how to descend into the underworld of every soul. He says no word, casts no glance, without some thought and a subtle twist of enticement in it. Part of his mastery is knowing how to appear—not as what he is, but as what gives his followers *one more* compelling reason to press ever closer to him, to follow him ever more inwardly and thoroughly... The genius of the heart, which silences everything loud and self-satisfied and teaches it to listen, which smooths rough souls and gives them a taste of a new desire: to lie still like a mirror, so that the deep sky may be reflected in them... The genius of the heart, which teaches the clumsy, overhasty hand to pause and grasp more delicately; which senses the hidden and forgotten treasure, the drop of goodness and sweet spirituality beneath cloudy, thick ice, and is a divining rod for every grain of gold long buried in a prison of mud and sand... The genius of the heart, from whose touch everyone goes away richer—not blessed with a gift and surprised, not delighted and burdened as by someone else’s possessions, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, perhaps less sure, more tender, more breakable, more broken, but full of hopes that have no name yet, full of new willing and flowing, full of new unwillingness and flowing back...”

The Birth of Tragedy



- ¹ To be fair to “The Birth of Tragedy” (1872), you have to forget a few things. The book *made its impact*, and even fascinated people, through what was wrong with it: its application to the *Wagner cult*, as though this were a sign of *rising* strength. For that very reason, this book was an event in Wagner’s life. Only from then on were great hopes attached to Wagner’s name. Even today people remind me of this, sometimes right in the middle of Parsifal: how *I* am really responsible for the high opinion that came to prevail about this movement’s *cultural value*.—Several times I have found the book cited as “The Rebirth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music.” People had ears only for a new formula for *Wagner’s* art, intentions, and task. They failed to hear what was really valuable in the book. “The Greeks and Pessimism” would have been a clearer title. It was the first account of how the Greeks dealt with pessimism—how they *overcame* it... Tragedy itself proves that the Greeks were *not* pessimists. Schopenhauer was wrong here, as he was wrong about everything.—Read with some neutrality, “The Birth of Tragedy” seems very much out of step with its time. You would never dream that it was *begun* amid the thunder of the battle of Wörth. I thought these problems through outside the walls of Metz, on cold September nights, while serving as a nurse. You might more easily believe the book was fifty years older. It is indifferent to politics—“un-German,” people would say today. It smells offensively of Hegel. Only a few of

its formulas carry Schopenhauer's undertaker's perfume. An "idea"—the opposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian—translated into metaphysical terms; history itself as the development of this "idea"; the opposition resolved into a unity in tragedy. Seen this way, things that had never before looked each other in the face were suddenly set opposite each other, illuminated through each other, and *understood*... Opera and revolution, for example... One of the book's two decisive *innovations* is its understanding of the *Dionysian* phenomenon among the Greeks. It gives the first psychology of this phenomenon and sees it as the single root of all Greek art. The other is its understanding of Socratism. For the first time, Socrates is recognized as a tool of Greek disintegration, a typical decadent. "Rationality" *against* instinct. "Rationality" at any price as a dangerous force that undermines life!—A deep, hostile silence about Christianity runs through the whole book. Christianity is neither Apollonian nor Dionysian. It *denies* all *aesthetic* values—the only values "The Birth of Tragedy" recognizes. It is nihilistic in the deepest sense, while the Dionysian symbol reaches the furthest limit of *affirmation*. Once, Christian priests are referred to as a "treacherous kind of dwarf," as "underground creatures"...

- ² This beginning is remarkable beyond measure. I had *discovered* the only image and parallel that history offers for my innermost experience. In doing so, I was the first to understand the wonderful phenomenon of the Dionysian. Likewise, by recognizing Socrates as a decadent, I had given completely unambiguous proof that no moral peculiarity would threaten the sureness of my psychological grasp. Morality itself as a symptom of decadence is an innovation, something unique of the first rank in the history of knowledge. With these two insights, how far I had leaped above the pathetic chatter of shallow minds about optimism versus pessimism!—I was the first to see the real opposition: the *degenerating* instinct, which turns against life with an underground desire for revenge—Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, in a certain sense already Plato's philosophy, and all idealism are typical forms—and a formula of *the highest affirmation*, born of fullness, of overflowing fullness. This is a yes

without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything questionable and strange in existence... This final, most joyful, extravagantly exuberant yes to life is not just the highest insight. It is also the *deepest*, the one most strictly confirmed and sustained by truth and science. Nothing that exists is to be subtracted; nothing can be dispensed with. The sides of existence rejected by Christians and other nihilists actually rank infinitely higher in the order of values than what the instinct of decadence was allowed to approve, to *call good*. Understanding this takes *courage* and, as a condition of courage, a surplus of *strength*. For you approach truth exactly as far as your courage *can* venture forward, exactly in proportion to your strength. Knowledge, saying yes to reality, is as necessary for the strong as cowardice and *escape* from reality—the “ideal”—are for the weak, inspired by their weakness... They are not free to know: decadents *need* lies. Lying is one of the conditions of their survival.—Anyone who not only understands the word “Dionysian” but understands *himself* in the word “Dionysian” needs no refutation of Plato or Christianity or Schopenhauer—he *smells the decay*...

- ³ I recently explained in *Twilight of the Idols*, page 139, how I had also found the concept of the “tragic,” the final understanding of the psychology of tragedy: “Saying yes to life even in its strangest and harshest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types—that is what I called Dionysian. That is what I understood as the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet. *Not* to get rid of terror and pity, not to cleanse oneself of a dangerous emotion by discharging it violently—that was Aristotle’s misunderstanding—but to go beyond terror and pity and *yourself be* the eternal joy of becoming—that joy which also includes the *joy of destruction*...” In this sense I have the right to understand myself as the first *tragic philosopher*—that is, the most extreme opposite, the farthest counterpart, of a pessimistic philosopher. Before me there was no such translation of the Dionysian into a philosophical passion. *Tragic wisdom* was missing. I looked in vain for signs of it even among the *great* Greek philosophers, those of the two centuries *before* Socrates. I was left with a doubt about *Heraclitus*, in whose company I generally feel

warmer and better than anywhere else. Affirming passing away *and destroying*, the decisive thing in a Dionysian philosophy; saying yes to opposition and war; *becoming*, with a radical rejection even of the very concept of “*being*”—in all this I must recognize the closest kinship to myself in anything thought so far. The teaching of “eternal recurrence,” meaning the unconditional and infinitely repeated cycle of all things—this teaching of Zarathustra’s *could*, after all, have been taught before. At least the Stoic school, which inherited almost all its basic ideas from Heraclitus, shows traces of it.—

- ⁴ An enormous hope speaks through this book. In the end I have no reason at all to take back my hope for a Dionysian future of music. Let us look a century ahead. Suppose my attack on two thousand years of crimes against nature and degradation of humanity succeeds. That new party of life, which takes on the greatest of all tasks, breeding humanity to a higher level—including the ruthless annihilation of everything that is degenerating or parasitic—will once again make possible that *excess of life* on earth from which the Dionysian state must grow again. I promise a *tragic* age. The highest art of saying yes to life, tragedy, will be reborn once humanity has passed through awareness of the harshest but most necessary wars, *without suffering from it...* A psychologist might add that what I heard in Wagner’s music when I was young had nothing at all to do with Wagner. When I described Dionysian music, I was describing what *I* had heard. Instinctively I had to translate and transform everything into the new spirit I carried within me. The proof, *as strong as any proof can be*, is my book “Wagner in Bayreuth.” At every psychologically decisive point it talks only about me. You can put my name or the word “Zarathustra” wherever the text says Wagner, without any hesitation. The whole portrait of the *dithyrambic* artist is a portrait of the poet of Zarathustra *before he appeared*, drawn with unfathomable depth and without touching on Wagner as he really was for even a moment. Wagner himself had some sense of this. He did not recognize himself in the book.—Likewise, “the idea of Bayreuth” had changed into something that will be no riddle to those who know my Zarathustra: that *great noon* when the most select people dedicate themselves to the greatest of all tasks. Who

knows? Perhaps it is the vision of a festival I will live to see... The passion of the first pages is on the scale of world history. The *gaze* discussed on the seventh page is the true gaze of Zarathustra. Wagner, Bayreuth, all that petty German misery is a cloud in which an infinite mirage of the future is reflected. Even psychologically, all the decisive features of my own nature have been written into Wagner's: the brightest and most fateful forces side by side; the will to power such as no human being has ever had; ruthless courage in matters of the mind; the unlimited strength to learn without crushing the will to act in the process. Everything in this book foretells what is to come: the approaching return of the Greek spirit, the need for *counter-Alexanders* who will *tie* the Gordian knot of Greek culture again after it has been untied... Listen to the world-historical tone in which the idea of a "tragic outlook" is introduced on page 30. Every emphasis in this book is on the scale of world history. This is the strangest "objectivity" there can be: absolute certainty about what I *am* projected itself onto some random reality. The truth about me spoke from a terrifying depth. On page 71, the *style* of Zarathustra is described and anticipated with incisive certainty. And no one will ever find a grander expression of the *event* of Zarathustra, the act of an enormous purification and consecration of humanity, than the one found on pages 43–46.—

The Untimely Meditations



¹ The four *Untimely Meditations* are combative through and through. They show that I was no “Jack the Dreamer.” I enjoy drawing my sword—and perhaps my wrist is dangerously loose. The *first* attack (1873) targeted German culture, which I already looked down on with ruthless contempt. No meaning, no substance, no goal: just “public opinion.” Nothing could be a more damaging mistake than to think that the Germans’ great military success proved anything in favor of this culture—or even marked *its* victory over France... The *second* Untimely Meditation (1874) exposes what is dangerous, what eats away at life and poisons it, in the way we practice scholarship. Life is *sick* from this dehumanized system of gears and machinery, from the worker’s “*impersonality*,” from the false economy of the “division of labor.” The *goal*, culture, gets lost. The means, the modern system of scholarship, makes us *barbaric*... This essay was the first to identify the “historical sense,” the pride of this century, as a disease, a typical sign of decline.—The *third* and *fourth* Untimely Meditations set two portraits against this. They point toward a *higher* idea of culture and toward restoring the meaning of “culture.” These are portraits of the most unyielding *selfishness*, *self-discipline*: supremely untimely figures, full of sovereign contempt for everything around them called “Empire,” “culture,” “Christianity,” “Bismarck,” or “success”—Schopenhauer and Wagner, *or*, in a word, Nietzsche...

² The first of these four attacks was an extraordinary success. The uproar it caused was magnificent in every way. I had touched a victorious nation's sore spot: its victory was *not* a cultural event, but perhaps, perhaps something quite different... Answers came from every side, and by no means only from the old friends of David Strauss. I had ridiculed him as a typical German cultural philistine, smug and satisfied—in short, as the author of his beer-bench gospel of “The Old Faith and the New” (the word “cultural philistine” entered the language through my essay). These old friends were natives of Württemberg and Swabia. I had wounded them deeply by finding their wonder-beast, their Strauss, comical. Their replies were as stolid and crude as I could possibly have wished. The Prussian replies were cleverer—they had more “Berlin blue” in them. The most indecent response came from a Leipzig paper, the notorious “Grenzboten.” I had trouble keeping the outraged people of Basel from taking action. Only a few old gentlemen came out firmly on my side, for mixed reasons, some of which could not be traced. One was Ewald in Göttingen, who indicated that my attack had proved fatal to Strauss. Another was the old Hegelian Bruno Bauer, who from then on was one of my most attentive readers. In his last years he liked to point people toward me. For example, he gave Mr. von Treitschke, the Prussian historian, a hint about where he could learn the meaning of “culture,” which he had lost. The most thoughtful response to the essay and its author, and also the longest, came from an old student of the philosopher von Baader, a Professor Hoffmann in Würzburg. From the essay he foresaw a great destiny for me: to bring about a kind of crisis and final decision on the question of atheism. He recognized me as its most instinctive and ruthless representative. Atheism was what led me to Schopenhauer.—By far the most widely heard and most bitterly felt response was an extraordinarily forceful, brave defense of me by the usually gentle Carl Hillebrand, that last *humane* German who knew how to write. His article appeared in the “Augsburger Zeitung.” Today it can be read, in a slightly more cautious form, in his collected writings. It presented my essay as an event, a turning point, the first act of self-examination, the best possible sign: a real *return* of German seriousness and passion in intellectual matters. Hillebrand gave high praise to the

essay's form, its mature taste, and its perfect tact in separating the person from the issue. He singled it out as the best polemical essay written in German—in an art of polemic that is especially dangerous and ill-advised for Germans. He agreed completely with what I had dared to say about the degradation of language in Germany, and even sharpened my attack (today they play the purist and can no longer put a sentence together). Sharing my contempt for this nation's "leading writers," he ended by expressing admiration for my *courage*—that "highest courage, which puts a people's very favorites in the dock"... The effect this essay has had on my life is beyond price. No one has tried to pick a fight with me since. People keep silent. In Germany they treat me with a gloomy caution. For years I have made use of an absolute freedom of speech that no one today, least of all in the "Empire," has a *hand* free enough to claim. My paradise lies "in the shadow of my sword"... Basically I had put a maxim of Stendhal's into practice: he advises making your entrance into society with a *duel*. And what an opponent I had chosen! Germany's leading free spirit!... In fact, a completely *new* kind of free thinking found its first expression here. To this day nothing is more foreign to me, or less like me, than the whole European and American species of "freethinkers." They are incurable shallow heads and clowns of "modern ideas." I am in even deeper conflict with them than with any of their opponents. They too want to "improve" humanity in their own way, in their own image. They would wage an unforgiving war against what I am, what I *want*, if they understood it. Every one of them still believes in the "ideal"... I am the first *immoralist*—

- 3 I would not claim that the Untimely Meditations bearing the names of Schopenhauer and Wagner do much to help us understand either man, or even frame psychological questions about them—with a few exceptions, of course. For instance, a deep certainty of instinct already identifies the basic element in Wagner's nature as an actor's talent, which simply works out its implications in his methods and aims. At bottom, I wanted these writings to do something quite different from psychology. An unmatched problem of education, a new idea of *self-discipline*, *self-defense* carried to the point of hardness, a path to

greatness and to tasks of world-historical importance—all this needed its first expression. Broadly speaking, I seized two famous figures, both still wholly undefined, by the forelock, as one seizes an opportunity. I used them to say something, to have a few more formulas, signs, and means of expression at hand. In fact, this is hinted at with perfectly uncanny insight on S. 93 of the third Untimely Meditation. Plato used Socrates in the same way, as a language of signs for Plato.—Now that I look back from some distance at the states of mind these writings record, I would not deny that at bottom they speak only of me. “Wagner in Bayreuth” is a vision of my future. “Schopenhauer as Educator,” by contrast, records my innermost history, my *becoming*. Above all, my *vow!*... *What* I am today, *where* I am today—at a height where I no longer speak with words but with lightning—oh, how far I still was from that then!—But I *saw* the land. I was not mistaken for a moment about the way, the sea, the danger—and success! The great calm of that promise, that happy gaze into a future that is not to remain a mere promise!—Every word here has been lived, deeply and inwardly. The most painful experiences are there too; some of its words are positively bloodthirsty. But a wind of *great* freedom blows over it all. Even the wound does *not* count as an objection.—I understand the philosopher as a terrible explosive that puts everything in danger. I place my idea of the “philosopher” miles away from an idea that still includes even Kant, not to mention academic “cud-chewers” and other professors of philosophy. This essay offers priceless instruction on that point, even if we grant that at bottom it is not “Schopenhauer as Educator” speaking here, but his *opposite*, “Nietzsche as Educator.”—At that time my trade was scholarship, and perhaps I also *knew* my trade. So there is some significance in a harsh piece of psychology about the scholar that suddenly appears in this essay. It expresses my *sense of distance*, my deep certainty about what can be my *task* and what can only be a means, an interlude, and a sideline. My wisdom lies in having been many things in many places so that I could become one thing—so that I could arrive at one thing. I *had* to be a scholar for a while too.

Human, All Too Human



With two sequels.

- ¹ “Human, All Too Human” stands as a monument to a crisis. It calls itself a book for free spirits. Almost every sentence in it expresses a victory: with this book I freed myself from what *did not belong* in my nature. Idealism does not belong in me. The title says, “Where you see ideal things, I see—human things, oh, only all-too-human things”... I know human beings *better*... “Free spirit” is meant in no other sense here: a spirit that has *become free*, that has taken possession of itself again. The tone, the sound of the voice, has completely changed. Readers will find the book intelligent, cool, sometimes hard and mocking. A certain intellectual quality of *noble* taste seems to keep itself constantly above a more passionate current below. In this context it makes sense that the centenary of *Voltaire’s* death supplies, so to speak, the excuse for publishing the book as early as 1878. For Voltaire, unlike everyone who wrote after him, is above all an aristocrat of the mind: exactly what I am too.—Voltaire’s name on a book of mine—that really was a step forward—*toward me*... A closer look reveals a merciless spirit that knows every hiding place where the ideal makes its home—where it has its castle dungeons and, so to speak, its last refuge. With a torch in hand that certainly gives no “wavering” light, it casts a cutting brightness into this *underworld* of the ideal. This is war, but war without gunpowder and smoke, without military poses, without grand emotion and contorted limbs—

all that would itself still be “idealism.” One error after another is calmly laid on ice. The ideal is not refuted—*it freezes to death*... Here, for example, “genius” freezes to death. A corner farther on, “the saint” freezes to death. Under a thick icicle, “the hero” freezes to death. Finally, “faith,” so-called “conviction,” freezes to death. “Pity” also cools down considerably. Almost everywhere “the thing in itself” freezes to death...

- ² The beginnings of this book fall right in the middle of the weeks of the first Bayreuth Festival. One of the conditions behind it was a deep sense of alienation from everything around me there. Anyone who has some idea of the visions that had already crossed my path can guess how I felt when I woke up one day in Bayreuth. It was just as if I were dreaming... Where was I? I recognized nothing; I hardly recognized Wagner. I searched my memories in vain. Tribschen—a distant island of the blessed: not a trace of resemblance. Those incomparable days of laying the foundation stone, the little group that celebrated them and *belonged* there, people who already had a delicate touch: not a trace of resemblance. *What had happened?*—Wagner had been translated into German! The Wagnerian had become master of Wagner!—*German* art! The *German* master! *German* beer!... The rest of us knew only too well that Wagner’s art speaks only to highly refined artists, to a cosmopolitan taste. We were beside ourselves to find Wagner draped in German “virtues.”—I think I know the Wagnerian. I have “lived through” three generations, from the late Brendel, who confused Wagner with Hegel, to the “idealists” of the Bayreuther Blätter, who confuse Wagner with themselves. I have heard every kind of confession about Wagner from “beautiful souls.” A kingdom for one sensible word!—Really, a hair-raising company! Nohl, Pohl, *rigmarole* served up gracefully, without end! Every kind of monstrosity is there, even the antisemite.—Poor Wagner! Where had he ended up!—If only he had at least entered into pigs! But into Germans!... In the end, to instruct future generations, we should stuff a genuine Bayreuth follower. Better still, preserve him in spirits, since spirit is what he lacks—with the caption: this is what the “spirit” looked like on which the “Empire” was founded... Enough: in the middle of it all I left very

suddenly for a few weeks, even though a charming Parisian woman tried to comfort me. I excused myself to Wagner with nothing but a fatalistic telegram. In Klingenberg, a place hidden deep in the forests of the Bohemian Forest, I carried my melancholy and contempt for Germans around like a disease—and now and then I wrote a sentence in my notebook under the general title “The Plowshare.” They were all *hard* psychological observations, which may still be found in “Human, All Too Human.”

- 3 What I settled then was not simply a break with Wagner. I felt that my instinct had gone completely astray. Any single wrong move, whether called Wagner or the Basel professorship, was only a sign of that. *Impatience* with myself came over me. I saw that it was high time to think back to *myself*. Suddenly I saw with terrible clarity how much time I had already wasted—how useless, how arbitrary my whole life as a philologist seemed beside my task. I was ashamed of this *false* modesty... Ten years behind me in which my mind had, strictly speaking, received no *nourishment*, in which I had learned nothing useful, in which I had forgotten a senseless amount while busy with the odds and ends of dusty scholarship. Crawling through ancient writers on meter, with painstaking care and bad eyes—that was what I had come to!—I looked at myself with pity, all thin and starved. *Realities* were simply missing from my knowledge, and the “idealities” weren’t worth a damn!—A positively burning thirst took hold of me. From then on, in fact, I studied nothing but physiology, medicine, and the natural sciences. I did not even return to historical studies proper until my *task* forced me back to them. It was then, too, that I first guessed the connection between an occupation chosen against one’s instincts, a so-called “calling” for which one is *least* suited, and the need to *numb* that feeling of emptiness and hunger with a narcotic art—for example, Wagner’s art. Looking around more carefully, I discovered that a great many young men are in the same distress. One violation of nature virtually *forces* another. In Germany—to speak plainly, in the “Empire”—far too many people are condemned to decide too early and

then *waste away* under a burden they can no longer throw off... They crave Wagner as an *opiate*. They forget themselves; they escape themselves for a moment... What am I saying! *Five to six hours!*—

⁴ At that time my instinct decided without mercy against any further giving in, going along, or mistaking myself for something else. Any kind of life, the worst conditions, sickness, poverty—everything seemed preferable to that degrading “selflessness” into which I had first fallen through ignorance, through *youth*, and in which I had later stayed out of laziness, out of a so-called “sense of duty.”—Here, in a way I cannot admire enough, and just in time, that *bad* inheritance from my father came to my aid—basically, a predisposition to an early death. Illness *slowly freed me*. It spared me every break, every violent and offensive step. I lost no one’s goodwill then, and gained much more. Illness also gave me the right to reverse all my habits completely. It allowed me, it *ordered* me, to forget. It gave me the gift of *having* to lie still, do nothing, wait, and be patient... But that is what thinking means!... My eyes alone put an end to all bookworm activity—in plain words, philology. I was freed from the “book.” For years I read nothing more—the *greatest* kindness I have ever done myself!—That deepest self, buried as it were, silenced as it were by constantly *having* to listen to other selves (and that is what reading means!), slowly woke up, shyly, uncertainly—but at last *it spoke again*. I have never found so much happiness in myself as during the sickest and most painful times of my life. You only have to look at “Dawn” or perhaps “The Wanderer and His Shadow” to understand what this “return to myself” was: itself a supreme kind of *recovery!*... The other recovery simply followed from it.—

⁵ *Human, All Too Human*, this monument to a strict self-discipline through which I abruptly ended all the imported “higher fraud,” “idealism,” “beautiful feeling,” and other feminine traits in myself, was written in all its main parts in Sorrento. It was finished and given its final form during a winter in Basel, under conditions far less favorable than those in Sorrento. Basically, Mr. *Peter Gast*, then a student at the University of Basel and very devoted to me, has the book on his conscience. I dictated with my head bandaged and aching. He wrote it

down and also corrected it. At bottom, he was the actual writer, while I was merely the author. When the finished book finally reached my hands—to the deep astonishment of a very sick man—I sent two copies to Bayreuth, among other places. By a miracle of meaning in coincidence, a fine copy of the text of *Parsifal* arrived at the same time, with Wagner’s dedication to me: “To his dear friend Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, church councilor.”—This crossing of the two books—I seemed to hear an ominous sound in it. Didn’t it sound like *swords* crossing?... At any rate, we both felt that way: for we both kept silent.—The first issues of the *Bayreuther Blätter* appeared around this time. I understood *what* it had been high time for.—Unbelievable! Wagner had become pious...

- 6 How I thought about myself then (1876), how enormously sure I was of my task and its world-historical importance—the whole book bears witness to that, but above all one very explicit passage. Only, with my instinctive cunning, I once again avoided the little word “I.” This time I bathed not Schopenhauer or Wagner but one of my friends, the excellent Dr. Paul Rée, in world-historical glory—fortunately an animal far too subtle to... *Others* were less subtle. I have always recognized the hopeless cases among my readers, the typical German professor for example, by their belief that this passage required them to understand the whole book as a higher form of Réalism... In fact it contradicted five or six of my friend’s propositions. On that point, read the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The passage reads: What is the main proposition reached by one of the boldest and coldest thinkers, the author of “On the Origin of Moral Sensations” (read: Nietzsche, the first *immoralist*), through his penetrating, cutting analyses of human action? “The moral human being is no closer to the intelligible world than the physical human being—*because* there is no intelligible world...” This proposition, hardened and sharpened under the hammer blows of historical knowledge (read: *revaluation of all values*), may someday, in some future—1890!—serve as the ax laid to the root of humanity’s “metaphysical need.” Whether that will be more a blessing or a curse for

humanity, who could say? But in any case it will be a proposition with the most far-reaching consequences, fruitful and frightening at once, looking into the world with that *double vision* that all great insights possess...

Dawn



Thoughts on morality as a prejudice.

- ¹ This book begins my campaign against *morality*. Not that it carries the slightest smell of gunpowder: you will notice quite different and much lovelier smells, if your nostrils have any sensitivity. Neither heavy nor light artillery: if the book's effect is negative, its means are all the less so. The effect follows from those means like a conclusion, *not* like a cannon shot. You finish the book with a shy caution toward everything that has so far been honored, even worshiped, under the name of morality. This does not conflict with the fact that the whole book contains no negative word, no attack, no malice. Instead, it lies in the sun, round and happy, like a sea creature basking among rocks. In the end, I myself was that sea creature. Almost every sentence of the book was thought out, *hatched*, in that tangle of rocks near Genoa, where I was alone and still shared secrets with the sea. Even now, when I happen to touch this book, almost every sentence becomes a loose end I can grasp to pull something incomparable back up from the depths. Its whole skin trembles with delicate shivers of memory. The art in which it excels is no small one: holding fast, for a little while, things that flit past lightly and silently, moments I call divine lizards. Not with the cruelty of that young Greek god who simply skewered the poor little lizard, but still with something pointed, with a pen... "There are so many dawns that have not yet shone"—this *Indian* inscription is on the door to this book. Where

does its author *look* for that new morning, that delicate red not yet discovered, with which another day begins—oh, a whole series, a whole world of new days? In a *revaluation of all values*, in breaking free of all moral values, in saying yes to and trusting everything that has so far been forbidden, despised, and cursed. This *yes-saying* book pours out its light, its love, its tenderness on nothing but bad things. It gives them back their “soul,” their good conscience, their high right and *privilege* of existence. Morality is not attacked; it simply no longer enters into consideration... This book ends with an “Or?”—it is the only book that ends with an “Or?”...

- ² My task is to prepare a moment of humanity’s deepest self-examination, a *great noon*, when it looks back and looks ahead, when it steps out from under the rule of chance and priests and, *as a whole*, asks for the first time, “Why?” and “What for?” This task follows necessarily from the insight that humanity is not on the right path on its own, that it is *not* governed by God, that instead the instinct of denial, of corruption, the instinct of decadence, has held seductive power precisely under its holiest ideas of value. The question of where moral values come from is therefore a question of the *first importance* for me, because it determines humanity’s future. We are told we must *believe* that everything is basically in the best of hands, that one book, the Bible, gives final reassurance about divine guidance and wisdom in humanity’s fate. Translated back into reality, this demand is the will to suppress the truth about the pitiful opposite: that humanity has so far been in the *worst* hands. It has been governed by those who have come off badly, the cunningly vengeful, the so-called “saints,” these slanderers of the world and defilers of humanity. The decisive sign that the priest—including the *hidden* priests, the philosophers—has become master, not just within one religious community but in general, is this: unselfishness is given absolute value, while selfishness meets hostility everywhere. This shows that the morality of decadence, the will to the end, counts as *morality itself*. I consider anyone who disagrees with me on this point *infected*... But the whole world disagrees with me... For a physiologist, this opposition of values leaves no room for doubt. If the smallest organ in a body slackens even slightly in ensur-

ing its own preservation, the renewal of its strength, its “selfishness,” with complete certainty, the whole body degenerates. The physiologist demands that the degenerating part be *cut out*. He rejects any solidarity with what is degenerating; nothing is further from him than pity for it. But the priest *wants* the whole to degenerate, wants humanity to degenerate. That is why he *preserves* what is degenerating—this is the price at which he rules humanity... What is the point of those lying concepts, morality’s *supporting* concepts, “soul,” “spirit,” “free will,” “God,” if not to ruin humanity’s bodily health?... When you divert serious attention from preserving the body and increasing its strength, *which means preserving and strengthening life*, when you turn anemia into an ideal and contempt for the body into “the salvation of the soul,” what is that but a *recipe* for decadence?—Losing one’s center of gravity, resisting natural instincts, “selflessness” in a word—that is what has so far been called *morality*... With “Dawn” I first took up the fight against the morality of self-erasure.—

The Gay Science



(“la gaya scienza”).

“Dawn” is a yes-saying book, deep but bright and kind. The same is true again, and to the highest degree, of *gaya scienza*: in almost every sentence, depth of thought and mischief tenderly hold hands. A poem expresses my gratitude for the most wonderful January I have ever experienced—the whole book is its gift. It reveals well enough the depths from which “science” here became *joyful*:

You whose spear of flame
Splits the ice within my soul,
So now it rushes roaring to the sea
Of its highest hope:
Ever brighter, ever healthier,
Free in the most loving necessity—
So it praises your wonders,
Most beautiful Januarius!—

Who could doubt what “highest hope” means here after seeing the diamond beauty of Zarathustra’s first words flash out at the end of the fourth book?—Or after reading the granite sentences at the end of the third book, where for the first time a destiny takes shape in formulas *for all time*? The *Songs of Prince Free-as-a-Bird*, mostly written in Sicily, quite explicitly recall the Provençal idea of the “*gaya scienza*”: that unity of *singer*, *knight*, and *free spirit* that sets the

Provençals' wonderful early culture apart from all ambiguous cultures. The very last poem in particular, "*To the Mistral*," an exuberant dance song in which, if you please, the dance goes right over morality, is perfectly Provençal.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra



A Book for Everyone and No One.

¹ I will now tell the story of Zarathustra. The book's basic idea, the *thought of eternal recurrence*, the highest possible formula of affirmation, dates from August 1881. It was jotted down on a sheet of paper, with the words underneath: "6,000 feet beyond humanity and time." That day I was walking through the woods by Lake Silvaplana. I stopped by a huge block of stone piled up like a pyramid, not far from Surlei. That was where the thought came to me. —If I count back a few months from that day, I find an early sign: a sudden change in my taste, decisive at the deepest level, especially in music. Perhaps the whole of Zarathustra could be counted as music. Certainly a rebirth in the art of *bearing* was a necessary condition for it. In Recoaro, a little mountain spa near Vicenza where I spent the spring of 1881, my master and friend Peter Gast, who had also been "reborn," joined me in discovering that music, the phoenix, was flying past us in lighter, brighter feathers than it had ever shown before. But if I count forward from that day to the sudden delivery in February 1883, under the most unlikely conditions—the closing passage, the very one I quoted a few sentences from in the *Foreword*, was finished at exactly the sacred hour when Richard Wagner died in Venice—the pregnancy comes to eighteen months. That exact figure of eighteen months might suggest, at least to Buddhists, that I am really a female elephant.—The intervening period

includes *The Gay Science*, with its hundred signs that something beyond comparison is near. At the end it even gives the beginning of Zarathustra itself, and in the next-to-last piece of its fourth book it gives Zarathustra's basic idea.—The same period also includes the *Hymn to Life* (for mixed chorus and orchestra), whose score was published two years ago by E. W. Fritsch in Leipzig. It may be a not insignificant sign of my condition that year, when I was filled to the highest degree with the passion of *saying yes* above all else, what I call tragic passion. One day people will sing it in my memory.—Let me state this clearly, because a misunderstanding is going around: the words are not mine. They are the astonishing inspiration of a young Russian woman I was friends with then, Miss Lou von Salomé. Anyone who can find any meaning at all in the poem's last words will guess why I preferred and admired it: they have greatness. Pain is *not* treated as an objection to life: "If you have no happiness left to give me, well then! *You still have your pain ...*"

Perhaps my music has greatness at this point too. (The oboe's last note is C-sharp, not C. A printing error.)—The following winter I lived in the lovely, quiet bay of Rapallo near Genoa, which cuts into the land between Chiavari and the headland of Portofino. My health was not the best. The winter was cold and excessively rainy. A little inn stood right by the sea, so that the high waves made sleep impossible at night; in almost every way it offered the opposite of what I wanted. Yet, almost as proof of my claim that everything decisive comes into being "in spite of everything," it was in this winter and under these unfavorable conditions that my Zarathustra came into being.—In the morning I climbed southward along the splendid road toward Zoagli, past pine trees and with a wide view over the sea. In the afternoon, whenever my health allowed it, I walked around the whole bay from Santa Margherita all the way to beyond Portofino. This place and landscape have grown even closer to my heart because of Emperor Frederick III's great love for them. I happened to be back on this coast in the fall of 1886, when he visited this little forgotten world of happiness for the last time.—On these two walks the whole first Zarathustra came to me, above all Zarathustra himself as a type. More accurately, *he ambushed me ...*

² To understand this type, you first have to be clear about its physiological basis: what I call *great health*. I know no better or more *personal* way to explain this idea than I already did in one of the closing sections of the fifth book of *The Gay Science*. “We new, nameless, hard-to-understand people,” it says there, “we premature births of a future still unproven, also need a new means for a new purpose: a new health, stronger, shrewder, tougher, bolder, more cheerful than any health before it. Anyone whose soul thirsts to experience the full range of values and things people have wished for up to now, and to sail around every coast of this ideal ‘Mediterranean’; anyone who wants to know through the adventures of their own most personal experience how a conqueror and discoverer of the ideal feels, or an artist, a saint, a lawgiver, a wise person, a scholar, a devout person, someone divinely detached in the old style—such a person needs one thing before anything else: *great health*. This is a health you don’t just have, but keep gaining and must keep gaining, because you keep giving it up and must give it up ... And now, after we have traveled this way for a long time, we Argonauts of the ideal, perhaps braver than is wise, often enough shipwrecked and injured, but, as I said, healthier than people would like to allow us, dangerously healthy, healthy again and again—it seems to us that our reward is a still undiscovered land ahead, whose borders no one has yet seen: a world beyond all the lands and corners of the ideal known so far, a world so overflowing with beauty, strangeness, things to question, terrors, and divinity that both our curiosity and our thirst to possess have gone wild—ah, nothing can satisfy us anymore! ... After such prospects, and with such a ravenous hunger in our knowledge and conscience, how could we still be satisfied with *human beings as they are today*? Bad enough, but it is unavoidable: we can watch their most worthy goals and hopes only with a seriousness we can barely keep up, and perhaps we no longer even watch ... A different ideal runs ahead of us, a strange, tempting, dangerous ideal that we wouldn’t want to persuade anyone to adopt, because we don’t readily grant anyone *the right to it*: the ideal of a spirit that plays naturally—that is, without intending to, out of overflowing fullness and power—with everything previously called holy, good, untouchable, divine. For such a spirit, the highest things by which the people

rightly measure value would already mean danger, decline, degradation, or at least relaxation, blindness, temporary self-forgetting. It is the ideal of a human and superhuman well-being and goodwill that will often enough seem *inhuman*: for example, when it stands beside all the seriousness the earth has known, beside all the solemnity of gesture, word, sound, look, morality, and task, as their most living, unintentional parody. And yet perhaps only with it does *great seriousness* start, the real question mark get put down, the soul's fate turn, the hand of the clock move, tragedy *begin* ...”

- 3 Does anyone at the end of the nineteenth century have a clear idea of what the poets of strong ages called *inspiration*? If not, I will describe it.—With the slightest trace of superstition left in you, you could hardly shake off the idea that you were merely the incarnation, mouthpiece, or medium of overwhelming powers. The idea of revelation describes the facts exactly: something suddenly becomes *visible*, audible, with indescribable certainty and precision, something that shakes you and knocks you over at the deepest level. You hear, you don't search; you take, you don't ask who gives. A thought flashes up like lightning, inevitably, with no hesitation over its form—I have never had a choice. A state of rapture whose tremendous tension sometimes releases itself in a flood of tears, while your steps involuntarily rush forward or slow down; a complete state of being outside yourself, with the clearest awareness of countless delicate shudders and tingles down to your toes; a depth of happiness in which the most painful and darkest things don't act as opposites, but as something required, called forth, a *necessary* color within such an overflow of light; an instinct for rhythmic relationships that spans broad expanses of form—the length, the need for a *far-reaching* rhythm, is almost the measure of the force of inspiration, a sort of counterweight to its pressure and tension ... Everything happens utterly involuntarily, but as though in a storm of feeling free, unconditioned, powerful, divine ... The most remarkable thing is how involuntary the image, the metaphor, is. You no longer have any idea what is an image or a metaphor. Everything offers itself as the nearest, most accurate, simplest expression. It really seems, to recall something Zarathustra says, as if things themselves

came forward and offered themselves as metaphors (—"here all things come caressingly to your speech and flatter you: for they want to ride on your back. Here you ride on every metaphor to every truth. Here the words and word-shrines of all being open up for you; all being wants to become words here, all becoming wants to learn from you how to speak—"). This is *my* experience of inspiration. I have no doubt that you would have to go back thousands of years to find someone entitled to tell me, "It is mine too."—

- ⁴ A few weeks later I was lying sick in Genoa. Then came a gloomy spring in Rome, where I put up with life—it wasn't easy. At bottom this place, the most improper place on earth for the poet of Zarathustra, irritated me beyond measure. I hadn't chosen it freely. I tried to get away—I wanted to go to *Aquila*, Rome's opposite, founded out of hostility to Rome, as I too will found a place someday, a memorial to an atheist and enemy of the church in the proper sense, one of my closest relatives, the great Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II. But fate was against all this: I had to go back. In the end I settled for the Piazza Barberini, after my efforts to find an *anti-Christian* area had tired me out. I'm afraid that once, to get as far as possible from bad smells, I inquired at the Palazzo del Quirinale itself whether they had a quiet room for a philosopher.—On a loggia high above that square, looking out over Rome and hearing the fountain rush far below, I wrote the loneliest song ever written, the *Night Song*. Around this time a melody of unspeakable sadness was always floating around me; I found its refrain again in the words "dead from immortality ..." In summer, back at the sacred place where the first lightning flash of the Zarathustra idea had shone for me, I found the second Zarathustra. Ten days were enough. In no case—not for the first, nor for the third and last—did I need more. The following winter, under Nice's calm, clear sky, which then shone into my life for the first time, I found the third Zarathustra—and was finished. Barely a year, counting the whole thing. Unforgettable moments have made many hidden spots and heights in the landscape of Nice sacred to me. That decisive passage titled "On Old and New Tablets" was written during the hardest climb from the station to the wonderful Moorish village perched on the rocks at Eza.

My muscles were always most agile when my creative strength flowed most richly. The *body* is inspired: let's leave the "soul" out of it ... People could often see me dancing. In those days I could spend seven or eight hours on the move in the mountains without any sense of fatigue. I slept well, I laughed a lot—I was full of vigor and patience.

- ⁵ Apart from these ten-day works, the years during and especially *after* Zarathustra were a time of unmatched hardship. You pay dearly for being immortal: you die several times during your lifetime.—There is something I call the resentment of greatness: everything great, a work, a deed, turns *against* the person who did it as soon as it is completed. Precisely because he did it, he is now *weak*—he can no longer bear his deed or look it in the face. To have something *behind* you that you should never have dared to want, something in which the knot in humanity's fate is tied—and now to have it *upon* you! ... It almost crushes you ... The resentment of greatness!—Another thing is the terrifying silence you hear around you. Solitude has seven skins; nothing gets through anymore. You meet people, you greet friends: fresh desolation, no welcoming look anymore. At best a kind of revolt. I experienced this kind of revolt in very different degrees, but from almost everyone close to me. It seems that nothing offends more deeply than suddenly making a distance felt. *Noble* natures, who don't know how to live without revering something, are rare.—A third thing is the absurd sensitivity of the skin to little pinpricks, a kind of helplessness in the face of everything small. This seems to me to result from the enormous expenditure of all defensive strength required by every *creative* deed, every deed that comes from what is most your own, deepest within you, furthest down. The *small* defensive powers are, so to speak, disconnected; no strength reaches them anymore.—I will venture to add that you digest worse, dislike moving, and are all too open to feelings of cold, and also to mistrust—mistrust that in many cases is merely a mistaken diagnosis of the cause. In such a state, I once sensed a herd of cows nearby through the return of gentler, more friendly thoughts about people, even before I saw it: *that* has warmth in it ...

⁶ This work stands entirely on its own. Leave the poets aside: perhaps nothing at all has ever been done from such an overflow of strength. Here my idea of the “Dionysian” became the *highest deed*. Measured against it, everything else humans have done looks poor and conditioned. Goethe or Shakespeare could not breathe for a moment in this tremendous passion and height; compared with Zarathustra, Dante is merely a believer, not someone who first *creates* truth, a *world-ruling* spirit, a fate; the poets of the Veda are priests, not even worthy to loosen the soles of a Zarathustra’s shoes. All this is the least of it and gives no idea of the distance, the *sky-blue* solitude in which this work lives. Zarathustra has an eternal right to say: “I draw circles around myself and sacred boundaries; fewer and fewer climb with me up higher and higher mountains—I build a mountain range out of ever holier mountains.” Add together the spirit and goodness of all great souls: all of them together could not produce a single speech of Zarathustra’s. The ladder he climbs up and down is tremendous. He has seen further, wanted more, been *capable* of more than any human being. With every word he contradicts, this most affirmative of all spirits. In him all opposites are bound into a new unity. The highest and lowest forces of human nature, the sweetest, most carefree, and most terrible things, flow from one spring with immortal certainty. Until this point you don’t know what height or depth is; still less do you know what truth is. There is not a moment in this revelation of truth that has already been anticipated, guessed by one of the greatest people. Before Zarathustra there is no wisdom, no exploration of the soul, no art of speaking. Here the nearest, most everyday things speak of things never heard before. The saying trembles with passion; eloquence has become music; lightning flashes are hurled ahead toward futures no one has yet guessed. The greatest power to make metaphors that has existed up to now is poor child’s play beside this return of language to its natural use of images.—And how Zarathustra comes down and says the kindest things to everyone! How he handles even his opponents, the priests, with gentle hands, and suffers with them and because of them!—Here at every moment the human being is overcome, the idea of the “overman” has become the highest reality. Everything previously called great in humanity lies infinitely far *below* him. The calm brightness, the

light feet, the mischief and high spirits present everywhere, and everything else typical of Zarathustra's type—no one has ever dreamed that these were essential to greatness. It is precisely in this extent of space, this openness to opposites, that Zarathustra feels himself to be *the highest kind of everything that exists*. And when you hear how he defines it, you will give up looking for his equal.

“—the soul that has the longest ladder and can go down deepest,
the most far-reaching soul, which can run and wander and roam furthest
within itself,
the most necessary soul, which throws itself joyfully into chance,
the soul that is, which *wants* to enter becoming; the soul that has, which *wants*
to enter willing and longing—,
the soul fleeing itself, which catches up with itself in the widest circles,
the wisest soul, to which folly speaks most sweetly,
the soul that loves itself most, in which all things have their flow and
counterflow and ebb and flood——”

But this is the idea of Dionysus himself.—Another line of thought leads to the same place. The psychological problem in the type Zarathustra is this: how can someone who says no, who *acts* no to an unheard-of degree toward everything people have said yes to until now, still be the opposite of a no-saying spirit? How can the spirit bearing the heaviest fate, a fateful task, still be the lightest and the one furthest beyond—Zarathustra is a dancer? How can someone with the harshest, most terrible insight into reality, someone who has thought the “most abysmal thought,” still find in it no objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence—but rather one more reason *himself to be* the eternal yes to all things, “the tremendous, boundless saying of yes and amen” ... “Into every abyss I still carry my blessing yes” ... *But this is the idea of Dionysus once again.*

- ⁷ What language will a spirit like this speak when speaking alone to itself? The language of the *dithyramb*. I am the inventor of the dithyramb. Listen to how Zarathustra speaks to himself *before sunrise* (III, 18). No tongue before mine had expressed such emerald happiness, such divine tenderness. Even the deep-

est sadness of a Dionysus like this becomes a dithyramb. As evidence, I take the *Night Song*: the immortal lament of someone condemned not to love by his excess of light and power, by his nature as a *sun*.

“It is night: now all the leaping fountains speak more loudly.

And my soul too is a leaping fountain.

It is night: only now do all the songs of lovers wake up.

And my soul too is a lover’s song.

Something unsatisfied, impossible to satisfy, is inside me and wants to speak

out. A craving for love is inside me, and it speaks the language of love itself.

I am light: if only I were night! But this is my loneliness: light surrounds me.

If only I were dark and full of night! How I would suck at the breasts of light!

And I would even bless you, little sparkling stars and glowworms up above!—
and find happiness in your gifts of light.

But I live in my own light; I drink back into myself the flames that burst out of
me.

I don’t know the happiness of receiving; often I have dreamed that stealing
must be happier still than receiving.

This is my poverty: my hand never rests from giving. This is my envy: I see
waiting eyes and the lit-up nights of longing.

Oh, the unhappiness of all who give! Oh, the darkening of my sun! Oh, the
craving to be craved! Oh, the ravenous hunger in being full!

They receive from me: but do I still touch their souls?

There is a gap between receiving and giving; and the smallest gap is the last to
be bridged.

A hunger grows out of my beauty: I want to hurt those I shine on, to rob those
I have given to—that is how I hunger to do harm.

Pulling back my hand when another hand is already reaching toward it; like the
waterfall that hesitates even as it falls—that is how I hunger to do harm.

My overflowing fullness devises this revenge; my loneliness pours out this
malice.

My happiness in giving died away in giving; my virtue grew tired of itself
because of its excess!

Someone who always gives risks losing their sense of shame; someone who
always hands things out gets calluses on hand and heart from all that
giving.

My eyes no longer overflow at the shame of those who ask; my hand has grown
too hard to feel the trembling of hands it has filled.

Where have the tears in my eyes and the soft down on my heart gone? Oh, the
loneliness of all who give! Oh, the silence of all who shine!

Many suns circle in empty space: they speak with their light to everything dark
—to me they are silent.

Oh, this is light's hostility toward things that shine: it follows its paths without
mercy.

Unfair at heart to things that shine, cold toward suns—that is how every sun
moves.

Like a storm the suns follow their paths; they follow their unrelenting will—
that is their coldness.

Oh, only you, you dark ones, you creatures of night, draw warmth from things
that shine! Oh, only you drink milk and refreshment from the udders of
light!

Ah, ice surrounds me; my hand burns itself on icy things! Ah, there is a thirst
inside me that pines for your thirst.

It is night: if only I did not have to be light! And thirst for what belongs to
night! And loneliness!

It is night: now my longing bursts out of me like a spring—I long to speak.

It is night: now all the leaping fountains speak more loudly.

And my soul too is a leaping fountain.

It is night: now all the songs of lovers wake up.

And my soul too is a lover's song.—”

⁸ Nothing like this has ever been written as poetry, ever been felt, ever been *suffered*: this is how a god suffers, a Dionysus. The answer to such a dithyramb of a sun growing lonely in its light would be Ariadne ... Who besides me knows what Ariadne is! ... No one before now had the solution to any of these riddles; I doubt anyone ever even saw riddles here.—At one point Zarathustra defines his task—it is mine too—so precisely that its *meaning* cannot be mistaken: he *says yes* to the point of justifying, even redeeming, everything in the past.

“I walk among people as among fragments of the future: the future I see.
And all my poetry and effort aim to compose into one whole, to gather
together, what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance.
And how could I bear being human if human beings were not also poets,
solvers of riddles, and redeemers of chance?
To redeem those of the past and transform every ‘It was’ into ‘That is how I
wanted it!’—only that would count as redemption for me.”

Elsewhere he defines as precisely as possible the only thing ‘the human being’ can be for him—*not* an object of love, much less of pity. Zarathustra has also mastered his *great disgust* at humanity: for him the human being is something unformed, a material, an ugly stone that needs a sculptor.

“No longer *wanting* and no longer *valuing* and no longer *creating*: oh, may this great weariness always stay far from me!

Even in understanding, I feel only my will’s pleasure in producing life and coming into being; and if there is innocence in my understanding, it is because there is a *will to reproduce* in it.

This will lured me away from God and gods: what would there be to create if gods—existed?

But my passionate will to create drives me back to human beings again and again; that is how the hammer is driven toward the stone.

Ah, you human beings, an image lies asleep for me in the stone, the image of images! Ah, that it has to sleep in the hardest, ugliest stone!

Now my hammer rages cruelly against its prison.

Fragments fly off the stone: what do I care!

I mean to finish it, because a shadow came to me—the stillest and lightest of all things once came to me!

The beauty of the overman came to me as a shadow: what do I care now about —the gods! ...”

I will stress one last point, prompted by the underlined line. The hammer’s hardness, the *pleasure even in destroying*, is an essential requirement for a *Dionysian* task. The command “Become hard!”, the deepest certainty *that all creators are hard*, is the true distinguishing mark of a Dionysian nature.—

Beyond Good and Evil



Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.

- ¹ The task for the years that followed was laid out as strictly as possible. I had finished the yes-saying part of my task. Now it was time for its no-saying, *no-doing* half: the revaluation of the values accepted up to now, the great war—the summoning of a day of decision. This included slowly looking around for kindred spirits, for people who would join hands with me *in destruction* out of their own strength.—From then on, all my writings have been fishhooks. Perhaps I know as much about fishing as anyone?... If nothing was *caught*, that isn't my fault. *There were no fish...*
- ² In all its essentials, this book (1886) is a *critique of modernity*. That includes modern science, modern art, and even modern politics. It also points toward an opposite type of person, as unmodern as possible: a noble, yes-saying type. In this last sense, the book is a *school for gentlemen*, with that idea understood more intellectually *and more radically* than ever before. You need real courage just to stand it. You must never have learned fear... Everything our age is proud of is felt to clash with this type, almost like bad manners. Take the famous “objectivity,” for example, “sympathy with all who suffer,” or the “historical sense,” with its submission to other people's tastes, its crawling on its belly before little facts, its “scientific approach.”—Remember that the book comes *after* Zarathustra, and you may also guess the dietary discipline that brought it into

being. The eye had grown spoiled by an enormous demand to see *far away*—Zarathustra is even more farsighted than the tsar. Here it is forced to focus sharply on what is nearest: the present, *what surrounds us*. In every respect, above all in its form, you will find the same *deliberate* turning away from the instincts that made a Zarathustra possible. Subtlety in form, intention, and the art of *keeping silent* comes first. Psychology is practiced with openly admitted harshness and cruelty—the book has not one good-natured word... All this is restful. But who can guess *what* sort of rest is needed after spending so much goodness as Zarathustra does?... Speaking as a theologian—listen, because I rarely speak that way—it was God himself who lay down as a snake beneath the tree of knowledge at the end of his day's work. That was how he rested from being God... He had made everything too beautiful... The devil is simply God doing nothing every seventh day...

On the Genealogy of Morality



A Polemic.

In their expression, intention, and art of surprise, the three essays that make up this Genealogy may be the most unsettling things ever written. Dionysus, as we know, is also the god of darkness.—Each starts in a way that is *meant* to mislead: cool, scientific, even ironic, deliberately staying on the surface, deliberately keeping you waiting. Gradually, there is more unease. Isolated flashes of distant lightning. Very unpleasant truths begin to sound from far away with a low rumble—until at last the pace grows fierce and everything drives forward under enormous tension. Each time, at the end, amid utterly terrifying explosions, a *new* truth appears between thick clouds.—The truth of the *first* essay is the psychology of Christianity: Christianity's birth from the spirit of resentment, *not* from “the Spirit,” as people tend to believe. It is a countermovement in its very nature, the great revolt against the rule of *noble* values. The *second* essay gives the psychology of *conscience*. Conscience is *not* “the voice of God in man,” as people tend to believe. It is the instinct for cruelty turning back on itself once it can no longer discharge itself outward. Here, for the first time, cruelty is brought to light as one of culture's oldest foundations, one we cannot imagine culture without. The *third* essay answers the question of where the enormous *power* of the ascetic ideal, the priestly ideal, comes from, even though it is the supremely *harmful* ideal: a will to bring things to an end, an ideal of decline. The answer: *not* because God is at work behind the priests, as people tend to

believe, but for lack of anything better—because it was the only ideal so far, because it had no rival. “For man would rather will nothingness than *not* will”... Above all, there was no *opposing ideal—until Zarathustra*.—I have been understood. Three decisive preliminary studies by a psychologist for a revaluation of all values.—This book contains the first psychology of the priest.

Twilight of the Idols



How to Philosophize with a Hammer.

- ¹ This book of fewer than 150 pages is cheerful and fateful in tone, a demon that laughs. It took so few days to write that I hesitate to name the number. Among books, it stands alone: nothing is richer in substance, more independent, more revolutionary—or more wicked. If you want a quick idea of how everything stood on its head before me, start with this book. What the title calls an *idol* is simply what people have called truth until now. *Twilight of the Idols*—in plain words: the old truth is coming to an end...
- ² There is no reality, no “ideality,” that this book doesn’t touch on (touch on—what a cautious way to put it!...). Not just the *eternal* idols, but also the newest and therefore the most decrepit. The “modern ideas,” for example. A great wind blows through the trees, and fruit falls everywhere—truths. It has the extravagance of an all-too-rich autumn: you stumble over truths, you even trample some to death—there are too many... But what you get into your hands is no longer something open to question. These are decisions. I am the first to hold the measuring stick for “truths”; I am the first who *can* decide. It is as if a *second consciousness* had grown in me, as if “the will” had lit a lamp inside me to illuminate the *sloping* path it has been running down until now... The *sloping* path—that was what people called the road to “truth”... All “dark urges” are finished. It was precisely the *good* person who knew least about the

right road... And in all seriousness, no one before me knew the right road, the road *upward*. Only with me are there once again hopes, tasks, paths to lay down for culture—*I bring their good news*... That also makes me a destiny.—

- 3 Immediately after finishing that book, without losing even a day, I took on the enormous task of the *revaluation*. I felt a supreme pride beyond anything else, certain of my immortality at every moment, carving sign after sign into bronze tablets with the certainty of fate. The preface was written on September 3, 1888. That morning, when I stepped outside after writing it, I found the most beautiful day the Upper Engadin had ever shown me—clear, glowing with color, holding every contrast and every point between ice and the South.—Flooding kept me in Sils-Maria until September 20. By the end, I was the only guest left anywhere in that wonderful place, to which my gratitude wants to give an immortal name. The journey had its mishaps. My life was even in danger in flooded Como, which I did not reach until late at night. On the afternoon of the 21st, I arrived in Turin, my *proven* place, my home from now on. I took the same rooms I had occupied in the spring, via Carlo Alberto 6^{III}, across from the great Palazzo Carignano, where Vittorio Emanuele was born. They overlooked the Piazza Carlo Alberto and, beyond it, the hills. Without hesitation, without letting myself be distracted for a moment, I went back to work. Only the last quarter of the book remained to be done. On September 30, a great victory; the seventh day; a god's day off along the Po. That same day I also wrote the *preface* to "Twilight of the Idols," whose proofs I had been correcting for relaxation during September.—I have never experienced an autumn like that. I had never even thought anything like it possible on earth—a Claude Lorrain carried into infinity, every day showing the same unrestrained perfection.—

The Case of Wagner



A Musician's Problem.

- ¹ To do this book justice, you must feel the fate of music like an open wound.—*What* hurts me when I suffer over the fate of music? That music has been robbed of its yes-saying power to make the world shine—that it has become music of decline instead of the flute of Dionysus... But suppose you feel the cause of music as your *own* cause, as the story of your *own* suffering. Then you will find this book full of consideration and extraordinarily mild. To stay cheerful in such cases, to include yourself in the good-natured mockery—to say something *severe* with a laugh, when telling the truth sincerely would justify any harshness—is humanity itself. Does anyone really doubt that, as the old artilleryman I am, I could bring my *heavy* guns to bear on Wagner?—I held back everything decisive in this matter—I loved Wagner.—Ultimately, an attack on a subtler “unknown,” one few others could guess, fits the meaning and course of my task. Oh, I have quite other “unknowns” to expose than a Cagliostro of music. Still more does an attack on the German nation fit my task. In intellectual matters it grows ever lazier, poorer in instinct, and *more honest*. With an enviable appetite, it keeps feeding on opposites. It swallows “faith” as readily as the scientific approach, “Christian love” as readily as anti-semitism, the will to power (to the “empire”) as readily as the gospel of the humble, without indigestion... This refusal to take sides between opposites!

This neutrality and “selflessness” of the stomach! This fair-mindedness of the German *palate*, which grants everything equal rights—which finds everything tasty... Without a doubt, the Germans are idealists... The last time I visited Germany, I found German taste working to grant equal rights to Wagner and The Trumpeter of Säckingen. I myself saw a Liszt Society founded in Leipzig to honor the master *Heinrich Schütz*, one of the most genuine and German musicians in the old sense of the word German, not a mere citizen of the Empire. Its purpose was to cultivate and spread *tricky, Liszt-style* church music... Without a doubt, the Germans are idealists...

- ² But nothing here will stop me from being rude and telling the Germans a few hard truths: *who else does it?*—I mean their indecency in historical matters. German historians have not just completely lost the *broad view* of the course of culture and its values, becoming every last one of them the buffoons of politics (or the church—). They have actually *outlawed* that broad view. First you must be “German,” belong to the “race”; then you can decide what does and doesn’t have value in history—you lay down the values... “German” is an argument; “Germany, Germany above everything” is a principle. The Germanic peoples are the “moral world order” in history: compared with the Roman Empire, the champions of freedom; compared with the eighteenth century, the restorers of morality, of the “categorical imperative”... There is an imperial-German way of writing history. I fear there is even an antisemitic one. There is history written for the *court*, and Mr. von Treitschke feels no shame... Recently an idiotic judgment about history made the rounds of the German newspapers as a “truth” that every German *must agree with*. It came from Vischer, the Swabian writer on aesthetics, who is fortunately dead: “The Renaissance *and* the Reformation: only together do they make a whole—aesthetic rebirth *and* moral rebirth.”—With statements like that, my patience runs out. I feel the urge, even the duty, to tell the Germans for once just *what* they already have on their conscience. *They have all the great crimes against culture of four centuries on their conscience!*... And always for the same reason: their deepest *cowardice* in the face of reality, which is also cowardice in the face of truth; the dishonesty that has

become instinctive in them; their “idealism”... The Germans robbed Europe of the harvest, of the meaning of the last *great* age, the Renaissance. This happened just when a higher order of values had won out in the very seat of the opposite values, the *values of decline*: noble values that said yes to life and guaranteed a future—*even reaching into the instincts of the people seated there!* Luther, that disastrous monk, restored the church and, a thousand times worse, Christianity, at the very moment *it was going under*... Christianity, that *denial of the will to live* turned into a religion... Luther, an impossible monk who attacked the church because of his own “impossibility,” and so—of course!—restored it... Catholics would have good reason to celebrate Luther festivals and write Luther plays... Luther—and “moral rebirth”! To hell with all psychology!—Without a doubt, the Germans are idealists.—Twice, just when enormous courage and self-overcoming had achieved an honest, clear, thoroughly scientific way of thinking, the Germans managed to find back roads to the old “ideal,” compromises between truth and the “ideal.” At bottom, these were formulas for a right to reject science, a right to *lie*. Leibniz and Kant—Europe’s two greatest obstacles to intellectual honesty!—Finally, on the bridge between two centuries of decline, an overwhelming power of genius and will appeared. It was strong enough to make Europe a unity, a political *and economic* unity, for the purpose of governing the earth. With their “Wars of Liberation,” the Germans robbed Europe of the meaning, the miracle of meaning, in Napoleon’s existence. That puts everything that followed, everything we have today, on their conscience: nationalism, the disease and irrationality *most hostile to culture* that exists, this *national neurosis* that makes Europe sick; this perpetuation of Europe’s division into little states, of *petty* politics. They robbed Europe itself of its meaning, of its *reason*—they drove it into a dead end.—Does anyone besides me know a *way* out of this dead end?... A task great enough to *bind* the peoples together again?...

- 3 And finally, why shouldn’t I put my suspicion into words? In my case too, the Germans will try everything again to make an enormous destiny give birth to a mouse. So far, their behavior toward me has disgraced them. I doubt they will

do better in the future.—Ah, how I long to be a *bad* prophet here!... My natural readers and listeners are already Russians, Scandinavians, and French people—will they become increasingly so?—The Germans have entered the history of knowledge with nothing but dubious names. They have only ever produced “unconscious” counterfeiters (Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel, and Schleiermacher deserve that word just as much as Kant and Leibniz—they are all just makers of veils—Schleiermachers). They must never have the honor of seeing the first *honest* mind in the history of thought counted as one with the German mind—the mind in which truth passes judgment on four thousand years of counterfeiting. The “German spirit” is *my* bad air. I struggle to breathe near this instinctive filthiness in psychological matters, which every word and every expression of a German betrays. They never went through a seventeenth century of harsh self-examination like the French. A La Rochefoucauld or a Descartes is a hundred times more honest than the foremost Germans. To this day, they have not had a psychologist. But psychology is almost the measure of a race’s *cleanliness* or *uncleanliness*... And if you aren’t even clean, how can you have *depth*? With a German, almost as with a woman, you never get to the bottom: *he has none*. That’s all. But that doesn’t even make him shallow.—What Germany calls “deep” is precisely this instinctive uncleanliness toward oneself that I am talking about: people don’t *want* to be clear about themselves. May I suggest the word “German” as an international coin for *this* psychological depravity?—At this very moment, for example, the German emperor calls it his “Christian duty” to free the slaves in Africa. Among us *other* Europeans, that would simply be called “German”... Have the Germans produced even one book with depth? They lack even the idea of what makes a book deep. I have met scholars who thought Kant was deep. At the Prussian court, I fear they think Mr. von Treitschke is deep. And when I occasionally praise Stendhal as a deep psychologist, German university professors have asked me to spell his name...

⁴ And why shouldn't I go all the way? I like to settle things once and for all. It is even my ambition to be known as the foremost despiser of Germans. I expressed my *distrust* of the German character back when I was twenty-six (dritte Unzeitgemäße S. 71). The Germans are impossible for me. If I imagine a type of person who goes against all my instincts, a German always emerges. The first thing I check when I test someone to the core—"probe his kidneys"—is whether he has a sense of distance in his body: does he see rank, degree, and order between people everywhere? Does he *make distinctions*? That makes a gentleman. In every other case, he belongs beyond rescue under the broad-hearted and, alas, so good-natured heading of the rabble. But the Germans are rabble—alas, they are so good-natured... You lower yourself by mixing with Germans: a German *puts everyone on the same level*... Apart from my dealings with a few artists, above all Richard Wagner, I have not spent one good hour with Germans... Suppose the deepest mind of all the millennia appeared among Germans. Some goose who rescued the Capitol would imagine that her very ugly soul counted for at least as much... I can't stand this race, with whom you are always in bad company. They have no fingertips for nuances—poor me! I am a nuance—and no wit in their feet; they can't even walk... In the end, the Germans have no feet at all, only legs... The Germans have no idea how vulgar they are. But that is the height of vulgarity: they aren't even *ashamed* of being nothing but German... They join in on every subject. They think their own judgment is decisive. I fear they have even passed judgment on me... My whole life supplies the necessary proof of these statements. I search it in vain for a sign of tact, of sensitivity toward me. From Jews, yes; from Germans, never. My nature makes me mild and well-disposed toward everyone—I have a *right* to make no distinctions. But that doesn't keep my eyes from being open. I make no exceptions, least of all for my friends. I hope, in the end, that this has not lessened my humanity toward them! There are five or six things I have always made a point of honor.—Even so, it remains true that for years I have felt almost every letter I receive as an act of cynicism. There is more cynicism in goodwill toward me than in any hatred... I tell every one of my friends to his face that he has never thought it worth the trouble to *study* any of my writings.

From the smallest signs, I can tell that they don't even know what's in them. As for my Zarathustra, which of my friends has seen anything more in it than an outrageous piece of arrogance, fortunately of no consequence at all?... Ten years—and no one in Germany felt bound by conscience to defend my name against the absurd silence in which it lay buried. A foreigner, a Dane, was the first to have enough delicacy of instinct *and courage* to do so, and to be outraged at my supposed friends... At which German university would lectures on my philosophy be possible today, like those Dr. Georg Brandes gave in Copenhagen last spring, once again proving himself a psychologist?—I myself have never suffered from any of this. What is *necessary* doesn't hurt me. Love of fate is my innermost nature. But that doesn't stop me from loving irony, even world-historical irony. And so, about two years before the crushing lightning strike of the *revaluation* that will throw the earth into convulsions, I sent "The Case of Wagner" into the world. The Germans were to do me an immortal wrong one more time, and *immortalize themselves!* There is still just time for it!—Has that been achieved?—To my delight, my Germanic gentlemen! My compliments...

Why I Am a Destiny



¹ I know my fate. One day my name will be linked to the memory of something enormous—a crisis unlike any the earth has seen, the deepest clash of conscience, a decision called forth *against* everything people had believed, demanded, and held sacred until then. I am not a human being; I am dynamite.—And yet there is nothing of a religious founder in me. Religions are affairs of the rabble; I need to wash my hands after contact with religious people... I don't *want* "believers." I think I am too malicious to believe even in myself. I never speak to crowds... I am terribly afraid that one day people will declare me a *saint*. You can guess why I am publishing this book *beforehand*: it is meant to stop people from playing such tricks with me... I don't want to be a saint. I would rather be a buffoon... Perhaps I am a buffoon... And yet—or rather, *not* "and yet," since nothing so far has been more dishonest than saints—truth speaks through me.—But my truth is *terrible*: until now, people have called the *lie* truth.—*Revaluation of all values*: that is my formula for an act of humanity's deepest self-examination, which has become flesh and genius in me. My fate requires me to be the first *decent* human being, to know myself in opposition to the dishonesty of millennia... I was the first to *discover* truth, because I was the first to feel—to *smell*—the lie as a lie... My genius is in my nostrils... I contradict as no one has ever contradicted, yet I am the opposite of a no-saying mind. I am a *bringer of good news* unlike any before me. I know tasks so high that until now

there has been no concept for them. Only with me are there hopes again. All this necessarily makes me a man of doom as well. For when truth goes to battle with the lie of millennia, there will be tremors, a spasm of earthquakes, a shifting of mountains and valleys beyond anything ever dreamed of. The very idea of politics will then be entirely absorbed into a war of minds. All the power structures of the old society will be blown apart—they all rest on the lie. There will be wars unlike any the earth has seen. Only with me does *great politics* begin on earth.—

- ² Do you want a formula for such a destiny *taking human form*?—It is in my Zarathustra.

“—and whoever wants to be a creator in good and evil must first be a destroyer and break values.

So the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but that goodness is creative.”

I am by far the most terrible human being there has ever been. That doesn't rule out my becoming the most beneficial. I know the pleasure of *destroying* to a degree that matches my *power* to destroy. In both, I obey my Dionysian nature, which cannot separate saying no through action from saying yes. I am the first *immoralist*: that makes me the *destroyer* in the fullest sense.—

- ³ No one has asked me, but someone should have asked, what the name *Zarathustra* means in my mouth, the mouth of the first immoralist. For what makes that Persian so enormously unique in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see the struggle between good and evil as the real wheel in the machinery of things. Turning morality into something meta-physical, into a force, a cause, an end in itself, was *his* work. But at bottom, asking this question would already supply the answer. Zarathustra *created* this most fateful error, morality. So he must also be the first to *recognize* it. It is not just that he has longer and greater experience of it than any other thinker—after all, the whole of history is an experimental refutation of the claim that there is a “moral world order.” More importantly, Zarathustra is more truthful

than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, makes truthfulness the highest virtue. That means the opposite of the *cowardice* of the “idealist” who runs from reality. Zarathustra has more courage in his body than all thinkers put together. To speak the truth and *shoot arrows well*: that is the Persian virtue. —Do you understand me?... Morality overcoming itself through truthfulness, the moralist overcoming himself into his opposite—into *me*—that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth.

- ⁴ At bottom, my word *immoralist* includes two denials. First, I deny a type of person who until now has been considered the highest: the *good*, the *well-meaning*, *helpful*. Second, I deny a kind of morality that has gained acceptance and power as morality itself—the morality of decline, or, more plainly, *Christian* morality. You could see the second objection as the more decisive one. In the larger picture, I already consider the overvaluing of goodness and goodwill a result of decline, a sign of weakness, incompatible with a rising, yes-saying life. Saying yes requires denying *and destroying*.—For now, I will stay with the psychology of the good person. To judge what a type of person is worth, you must work out the price of maintaining it. You must know the conditions of its existence. The condition of the good person’s existence is the *lie*. In other words, it is *wanting* at any cost not to see what reality is like at bottom. Reality is *not* made to call forth well-meaning instincts at every moment, still less to put up at every moment with interference from shortsighted, good-natured hands. To see *hardships* of every kind as an objection, as something we must *abolish*, is the height of foolishness. On the large scale, its effects are a real disaster, a fate determined by stupidity—almost as stupid as wanting to abolish bad weather, perhaps out of pity for poor people... In the great economy of the whole, the terrifying things in reality—in emotions, in desires, in the will to power—are incomparably more necessary than that form of small happiness called “goodness.” It even takes indulgence to grant goodness any place at all, since it depends on instinctive dishonesty. I will have a great opportunity to show the extraordinarily disturbing effects of *optimism*, this offspring of the best people, on the whole of history. Zarathustra was the first to understand

that the optimist is just as much a person of decline as the pessimist, and perhaps more harmful. He says: “*Good people never tell the truth. The good taught you false shores and false safety. You were born and sheltered in the lies of the good. Everything has been falsified and twisted to its roots by the good.*” Fortunately, the world is not built around instincts that would let nothing but good-natured herd animals find their little happiness in it. To demand that everyone become a “good person,” a herd animal, blue-eyed, well-meaning, a “beautiful soul”—or altruistic, as Mr. Herbert Spencer wishes—would take the *great* character out of existence. It would castrate humanity and reduce it to a miserable Chinese-style existence.—*And people have tried to do this!... This is precisely what they called morality...* In this sense, Zarathustra sometimes calls the good “the last human beings,” sometimes the “beginning of the end.” Above all, he feels they are *the most harmful kind of person*, because they maintain their existence at the expense of both *truth* and the *future*.

—“The good—they cannot *create*, they are always the beginning of the end

—

—they crucify anyone who writes *new* values on new tablets; they sacrifice the future to themselves; they crucify all human future!

—The good—they were always the beginning of the end...

—And whatever harm the slanderers of the world may do, *the harm done by the good is the most harmful harm.*”

- ⁵ Zarathustra, the first psychologist of the good, is—therefore—a friend of the evil. If a declining type of person has risen to the rank of the highest type, this could only have happened at the expense of its opposite: the strong type, confident in life. If the herd animal shines in the glory of the purest virtue, the exceptional person must have been devalued as evil. If dishonesty claims the word “truth” for its way of seeing at any cost, then the truly truthful person must be found under the worst names. Zarathustra leaves no doubt here. He says it was precisely his knowledge of the good, the “best,” that made him shudder at human beings in general. From *this* disgust he grew wings “to soar away into

distant futures.” He doesn’t hide the fact that *his* type of person, a relatively superhuman type, is superhuman precisely in relation to the *good*. The good and the just would call his overman a *devil*...

“You highest human beings my eyes have met, this is my doubt about you and my secret laughter: I guess you would call my overman—a devil! Your souls are so foreign to greatness that the overman would be *terrible* to you in his goodness...”

Here, and nowhere else, is where you must start to understand what Zarathustra *wants*. The type of person he conceives of conceives of reality *as it is*: he is strong enough for it. He is not estranged from it, not carried away from it; he is *reality itself*. He also has everything terrifying and questionable about reality within him. *Only with this can a human being have greatness...*

⁶ But there is another sense in which I have chosen the word *immoralist* as my badge, my badge of honor. I am proud to have this word, which sets me apart from all humanity. No one before has felt *Christian* morality to be *beneath* him. That required a height, a far-reaching vision, a psychological depth and capacity for probing the depths never heard of before. Until now, Christian morality has been the Circe of all thinkers—they were in its service.—Who before me went down into the caves from which the poisonous breath of this kind of ideal—the *slandering of the world!*—rises? Who even dared suspect *that* they were caves? Who among philosophers before me was a *psychologist* rather than his opposite, a “higher swindler,” an “idealist”? Before me, there was no psychology at all.—Being the first here can be a curse. In any case, it is a destiny: for *you are also the first to feel contempt...* My danger is *disgust* at human beings...

⁷ Have I been understood?—What sets me apart, what places me on one side against all the rest of humanity, is that I have *discovered* Christian morality. That is why I needed a word carrying the sense of a challenge to everyone. I consider humanity’s failure to open its eyes here sooner the greatest filth on its conscience. It is self-deception turned into instinct, a fundamental will *not* to see any event, any process of cause and effect, any reality; counterfeiting in psy-

chological matters to the point of crime. Blindness to Christianity is the *supreme crime*—the crime *against life*... The millennia, the peoples, the first and the last, the philosophers and the old women—apart from five or six moments in history, with me as the seventh—are all worthy of each other on this point. Until now, the Christian has been *the* “moral being,” a curiosity without equal—and, *as* a “moral being,” more absurd, dishonest, vain, careless, and *harmful to himself* than even the greatest despiser of humanity could dream. Christian morality—the most malicious form of the will to lie, humanity’s real Circe: what has *corrupted* it. What horrifies me at this sight is *not* error as error, *not* the thousands of years of failing in “goodwill,” discipline, decency, and intellectual courage that its victory reveals. It is the lack of nature. It is the utterly dreadful fact that what is *against nature* received the highest honors as morality and remained hanging over humanity as law, as a categorical imperative!... To go so wrong, *not* as an individual, *not* as a people, but as humanity!... That people were taught to despise the most basic instincts of life; that a “soul,” a “spirit,” was *made up* to disgrace the body; that people are taught to feel something unclean in sexuality, the condition of life; that the principle of evil is sought in *strict* selfishness, the deepest necessity for thriving (even the word is slanderous!); that, on the contrary, the typical signs of decline and conflicting instincts—“selflessness,” losing one’s center of gravity, “depersonalization,” and “love of one’s neighbor” (an *addiction* to one’s neighbor!)—are seen as the *higher* value, what am I saying, as *value itself*!... What! Could humanity itself be in decline? Has it always been?—What is certain is that it has only ever been *taught* values of decline as its highest values. The morality of stripping away the self is the morality of decline above all others. It turns the fact “*I* am perishing” into the command “you *must* all perish”—and *not only* into a command!... This one morality, the only one taught until now, the morality of stripping away the self, reveals a will to the end. At its deepest level, it *denies* life.—Here the possibility remains that it is not humanity that is degenerating, but only that parasitic type of person, the *priest*, who used morality to lie his way up into the role of humanity’s judge of values, who recognized Christian morality as his means to *power*... And in fact, this is *my* insight: humanity’s teachers and lead-

ers, theologians every one, were also people of decline every one. *Hence* the revaluation of all values into values hostile to life; *hence* morality... *Definition of morality*: morality—the peculiar nature of people of decline, with the hidden intention of *taking revenge on life—and* with success. I attach importance to *this* definition.

- ⁸ Have I been understood?—I have just said nothing that I had not already said through Zarathustra’s mouth five years ago.—The *discovery* of Christian morality is an event without equal, a real catastrophe. Whoever throws light on it is an overwhelming force, a destiny—he breaks humanity’s history into two pieces. People live *before* him; people live *after* him... The lightning of truth struck precisely what had stood highest until then. Anyone who understands *what* was destroyed should see whether he has anything left in his hands at all. Everything called “truth” until now has been recognized as the most harmful, most treacherous, most deeply buried form of the lie. The sacred pretext of “improving” humanity has been recognized as a trick for *sucking the blood out of* life itself, making it anemic. Morality as *vampirism*... Whoever discovers morality has also discovered the worthlessness of all the values people believe or have believed in. He no longer sees anything worthy of respect in the most respected types of person, even those declared *saints*. He sees in them the most disastrous kind of monstrosity, disastrous *because they fascinate*... The concept “God” was invented as the opposite of life. In it, everything harmful, poisonous, and slanderous, the whole deadly hatred of life, was brought together into one terrifying unity! The concepts “afterlife” and “true world” were invented to devalue the *only* world there is—to leave no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality! The concepts “soul,” “spirit,” and finally even “immortal soul” were invented to make people despise the body, to make it sick—“holy”—and to treat with dreadful carelessness everything that deserves to be taken seriously in life: food, housing, mental diet, care of the sick, cleanliness, weather! Instead of health, “salvation of the soul”—meaning a recurring madness that swings between convulsions of repentance and hysteria over redemption! The concept “sin” was invented, together with its instrument of torture, the concept “free

will,” to confuse the instincts and make distrust of the instincts second nature! In the concepts of the “selfless” and the “self-denying,” the very mark of decline—being *lured* by what harms you, no longer being *able* to find what benefits you, self-destruction—was made the mark of value itself, of “duty,” of “holiness,” of the “divine” in a human being! Finally—and this is the most terrible thing—in the concept of the *good* person, sides were taken with everything weak, sick, failed, and suffering from itself, with everything *that should perish*. The law of *selection* was thwarted. An ideal was made out of opposition to the proud and well-formed person, the yes-saying person, confident in the future and guaranteeing it. That person is now called *the evil one*... And all this was believed *as morality!*—*Crush the infamous thing!*——

⁹ Have I been understood?—*Dionysus against the Crucified*...

Fame and Eternity



¹ How long have you been sitting
on your misfortune?
Watch out! You'll hatch
an egg for me yet,
a basilisk's egg,
out of your long misery.

Why is Zarathustra creeping along the mountain?—

Distrustful, covered in sores, gloomy,
long lying in wait—,
but suddenly, lightning,
bright, terrible, a blow
from the abyss toward the sky:
—the mountain's own
insides shake ...

Where hatred and a lightning bolt
became one, a *curse*—,
Zarathustra's anger now lives in the mountains;
he creeps along his way, a storm cloud.

Let anyone with one last blanket crawl under it!
Off to bed, you tender creatures!
Now thunder rolls over the vaulted roofs,
now every beam and wall trembles,
now lightning and sulfur-yellow truths flash—
Zarathustra *curses* ...

- ² This coin that
the whole world pays with,
fame—,
I handle this coin with gloves;
I stamp it *under* my feet in disgust.

Who wants to be paid?
Those who can be bought ...
Anyone *for sale* reaches
with fat hands
for this cheap, tinny jingle everyone calls fame!

—Do you *want* to buy them?
They can all be bought.
But offer plenty!
Jingle a full purse!
—Otherwise you *strengthen* them,
you strengthen their *virtue* ...

They are all virtuous.
Fame and virtue—they rhyme.
As long as the world lives,
it pays for virtue's babbling
with fame's rattling—,
the world *lives* on this noise ...

Before all the virtuous
I want to be guilty,
to be called guilty of every great wrong!
Before all the megaphones of fame
my ambition becomes a worm—,
among such people I feel the urge
to be the *lowest* ...

This coin that
the whole world pays with,
fame—,
I handle this coin with gloves;
I stamp it *under* my feet in disgust.

3 Quiet!—
About great things—I *see* great things!—
we should keep silent
or speak grandly:
speak grandly, my delighted wisdom!

I look up—
seas of light roll there:
—oh night, oh silence, oh deathly quiet noise! ...
I see a sign—,
from the farthest distances
a sparkling constellation slowly sinks toward me ...

4 Highest star of existence!
Tablet of eternal images!
You are coming to me?—
What no one has ever seen,
your silent beauty—
what? It doesn't flee from my eyes?

Shield of necessity!
Tablet of eternal images!
—but you already know:
what everyone hates,
what *I* alone love,
is that you are *eternal*!
that you are *necessary*!
My love is set alight
forever by necessity alone.

Shield of necessity!
Highest star of existence!
—which no wish reaches,
which no denial stains,
existence's eternal yes,
forever I am your yes:
because I love you, oh eternity!——