



Twilight of the Idols

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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Preface



Twilight of the Idols

or

How to Philosophize with a Hammer.

Keeping your good spirits in the middle of a dark undertaking that carries an immense responsibility is no small feat—and yet, what could be more necessary than good spirits? Nothing succeeds without a share of high spirits. Only an excess of strength proves that strength is there.—A revaluation of all values: this question mark is so black, so enormous, that it casts a shadow over the person who puts it down. Having such a task as your fate forces you to run out into the sun at every chance, to shake off a seriousness that has grown heavy, much too heavy. Any means will do; every “case” is a stroke of luck. Above all, war. War has always been the great act of wisdom for all minds that have turned too far inward, grown too deep; even a wound still has healing power. A saying whose origin I withhold from scholarly curiosity has long been my motto:

Spirits rise; courage grows strong through a wound.

Another way to recover, one I sometimes want even more, is to sound out idols... There are more idols in the world than realities: that is my “evil eye” for this world, and my “evil ear” too... To ask questions here with a hammer for once, and perhaps hear in reply that famous hollow sound that speaks of

bloated guts—what a delight for someone who has ears even behind his ears—for me, an old psychologist and rat-catcher, before whom precisely what would like to stay silent has to speak up...

This book too—its title gives it away—is above all a rest, a patch of sunlight, a psychologist's brief escape into idleness. Perhaps a new war too? And are new idols being sounded out?... This little book is a great declaration of war. As for sounding out idols, this time they are not idols of the moment but eternal idols that are touched here with a hammer as with a tuning fork—there are no older idols at all, none more sure of themselves, none more puffed up... And none more hollow... That does not stop them from being the ones people believe in most; besides, especially in the most distinguished case, people do not call them idols at all...

Turin, September 30, 1888,
on the day when the book of the revaluation
of all values was completed.
Friedrich Nietzsche.

Maxims and Arrows



- ¹ Idleness is the beginning of all psychology. What? Could psychology be a—
vice?
- ² Even the bravest of us rarely has the courage to face what he actually knows...
- ³ To live alone, you have to be an animal or a god—says Aristotle. He leaves out
the third case: you have to be both—a philosopher...
- ⁴ “All truth is simple.”—Isn’t that a double lie?—
- ⁵ Once and for all, there are many things I do not want to know.—Wisdom puts
limits on knowledge too.
- ⁶ In your wild nature you recover best from your unnaturalness, from your intel-
lectual life...
- ⁷ What? Is the human being just a mistake God made? Or is God just a
mistake human beings made?—
- ⁸ From life’s school of war.—What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.
- ⁹ Help yourself; then everyone else will help you too. The principle of
loving your neighbor.
- ¹⁰ Don’t be a coward toward your own actions! Don’t abandon them afterward!
—Remorse is indecent.

- 11 Can a donkey be tragic?—To go under beneath a load you can neither carry nor throw off?... The philosopher's situation.
- 12 If you have your why of life, you can put up with almost any how.—Human beings do not seek happiness; only the Englishman does that.
- 13 Man created woman—but out of what? Out of a rib of his God—his “ideal”...
- 14 What? You're looking? You want to multiply yourself by ten, by a hundred? You're looking for followers?—Look for zeros.
- 15 Posthumous people—me, for example—are understood less well than people who fit their times, but get a better hearing. More strictly: we are never understood—and that is the source of our authority...
- 16 Among women.—“The truth? Oh, you don't know the truth! Isn't it an assault on all our feelings of modesty?”—
- 17 This is the kind of artist I love, modest in his needs: he really wants only two things, his bread and his art—bread and Circe...
- 18 Anyone who cannot put his will into things at least puts a meaning into them: that is, he believes a will is already in them (the principle of “faith”).
- 19 What? You chose virtue and a proudly lifted chest, and at the same time you look with envy at the advantages of people with no scruples?—But choosing virtue means giving up “advantages”... (For an antisemite's front door.)
- 20 The perfect woman commits literature as she commits a little sin: to try it out, in passing, looking around to see if anyone notices, and to make sure someone notices...
- 21 Put yourself only in situations where you cannot have pretend virtues, where instead, like a tightrope walker on his rope, you either fall or stand—or get away...

- 22 “Evil people have no songs.”—How is it that the Russians have songs?
- 23 “German spirit”: a contradiction in terms for eighteen years.
- 24 Searching for beginnings turns you into a crab. The historian looks backward; eventually he believes backward too.
- 25 Contentment even protects you from catching cold. Has a woman who knew she was well dressed ever caught cold?—Even supposing she was barely dressed.
- 26 I distrust everyone who builds systems, and I keep out of their way. The will to build a system is a lack of honesty.
- 27 People think woman is deep—why? Because they never get to the bottom of her. Woman is not even shallow.
- 28 When a woman has manly virtues, you want to run away; and when she has no manly virtues, she runs away herself.
- 29 “How much did the conscience used to have to bite on? What good teeth it had!—And today? What’s missing?”—A dentist’s question.
- 30 You rarely act too hastily just once. The first time, you always do too much. That is exactly why you usually do it a second time—and now you do too little...
- 31 A worm curls up when it is stepped on. That is smart. It makes it less likely to be stepped on again. In the language of morality: humility.—
- 32 There is a hatred of lying and pretending that comes from a touchy sense of honor. There is the same hatred that comes from cowardice, because a divine commandment forbids lying. Too cowardly to lie...
- 33 How little it takes to be happy! The sound of a bagpipe.—Without music, life would be a mistake. A German even imagines God singing songs.

- ³⁴ You can think and write only while sitting down (G. Flaubert).—Now I've caught you, nihilist! Sitting still is precisely the sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts arrived at by walking have any value.
- ³⁵ There are times when we psychologists are like horses and grow restless: we see our own shadow swaying up and down in front of us. To see anything at all, a psychologist has to look away from himself.
- ³⁶ Do we immoralists harm virtue?—No more than anarchists harm princes. Only since people started shooting at them have princes sat firmly on their thrones again. Moral: morality needs to be shot at.
- ³⁷ You run ahead?—Are you doing it as a shepherd? Or as an exception? A third possibility would be the runaway... First question of conscience.
- ³⁸ Are you genuine? Or just an actor? A representative? Or the thing represented itself?—In the end you may even be just an imitation of an actor... Second question of conscience.
- ³⁹ The disappointed man speaks.—I looked for great people; all I ever found were apes of their ideal.
- ⁴⁰ Are you someone who watches? Or who gets to work?—Or who looks away, steps aside?... Third question of conscience.
- ⁴¹ Do you want to go along? Or go ahead? Or go on your own?... You have to know what you want, and that you want. Fourth question of conscience.
- ⁴² Those were steps for me; I climbed up over them—to do that, I had to pass beyond them. But they thought I wanted to settle down on them...
- ⁴³ What does it matter whether I turn out to be right! I am right about too much. —And whoever laughs best today will also laugh last.
- ⁴⁴ My formula for happiness: a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal...

The Problem of Socrates



- ¹ In every age, the wisest people have passed the same judgment on life: it is no good... Always and everywhere we have heard the same note from their mouths—a note full of doubt, full of gloom, full of weariness with life, full of resistance to life. Even Socrates said as he died: “Living means being sick for a long time: I owe Asclepius the healer a rooster.” Even Socrates had had enough.—What does that prove? What does it point to?—In the past, people would have said (—oh, they did say it, loudly enough, with our pessimists leading the way!): “Something here must be true! The agreement of the wise proves the truth.”—Will we still talk like that today? Are we allowed to? “Something here must be sick”—that is our reply. These wisest people of all time deserve a closer look first! Perhaps none of them was steady on his feet anymore? Past his prime? Shaky? Decadent? Could wisdom appear on earth as a raven excited by a faint smell of carrion?...
- ² This irreverent idea, that the great wise men are types of decline, first dawned on me in precisely the case where both learned and unlearned prejudice oppose it most strongly. I recognized Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decay, as tools of Greek disintegration, as falsely Greek, as anti-Greek (“The Birth of Tragedy,” 1872). That agreement of the wise—I came to understand this more and more—does least of all prove that they were right about what they agreed on. Instead, it proves that they themselves, these wisest men, had something in

common physiologically that made them take the same negative attitude toward life—that forced them to take it. Judgments, value judgments about life, for it or against it, can ultimately never be true. They have value only as symptoms; only as symptoms do they matter—in themselves, such judgments are stupidities. We really must reach out and try to grasp this astonishingly subtle point: the value of life cannot be assessed. Not by a living person, because he is a party to the dispute, even its object, and not its judge; not by a dead person, for a different reason.—So when a philosopher treats life's value as a problem, that itself counts against him. It puts a question mark over his wisdom; it shows a lack of wisdom.—What? All these great wise men—could they not only have been decadent, but not even have been wise?—But I return to the problem of Socrates.

- ³ By birth, Socrates belonged to the lowest class: Socrates was rabble. People know how ugly he was; you can still see it yourself. But ugliness, an objection in itself, is almost a refutation among Greeks. Was Socrates even a Greek? Ugliness is often enough the expression of development that has been crossed and held back by crossbreeding. In other cases, it appears as development in decline. The anthropologists among criminologists tell us that the typical criminal is ugly: a monster in face, a monster in soul. But the criminal is decadent. Was Socrates a typical criminal?—At the very least, this would not contradict that famous judgment by a reader of faces, which sounded so offensive to Socrates' friends. A foreigner who understood faces was passing through Athens and told Socrates to his face that he was a monster—that he harbored every evil vice and desire inside him. And Socrates answered only: "You know me, sir!"—
- ⁴ It is not just the admitted wildness and anarchy of his instincts that point to decadence in Socrates. So do the overgrowth of logic and that malice of someone with rickets that marks him out. Nor should we forget those auditory hallucinations that have been interpreted in religious terms as "Socrates' divine sign." Everything about him is exaggerated, clownish, a caricature; at the same time, everything is hidden, full of ulterior motives, underground.—I am trying

to understand what personal peculiarity produced that Socratic equation of reason = virtue = happiness. It is the strangest equation there is, and in particular it has every instinct of the older Greeks against it.

- 5 With Socrates, Greek taste turns in favor of dialectical argument: what is actually happening here? Above all, an aristocratic taste is defeated; with dialectic, the rabble comes out on top. Before Socrates, good society rejected dialectical manners: they were considered bad manners, they exposed you. Young people were warned against them. Even presenting your reasons like that was distrusted. Respectable things, like respectable people, do not carry their reasons openly in their hands like that. It is indecent to show all five fingers. What first has to be proved is worth little. Wherever authority is still part of good manners, wherever people do not “give reasons” but give orders, the dialectician is a kind of clown. People laugh at him; they do not take him seriously.—Socrates was the clown who got people to take him seriously: what actually happened here?—
- 6 People choose dialectic only when they have no other means. They know it arouses distrust and does little to persuade. Nothing is easier to brush aside than the effect a dialectician produces: the experience of every gathering where people speak proves that. It can only be self-defense in the hands of people who have no other weapons left. You must be in a position where you have to force recognition of your right; otherwise you do not use it. That is why the Jews were dialecticians; Reynard the Fox was one. What? And Socrates was one too? —
- 7 —Is Socrates’ irony an expression of revolt? Of the rabble’s resentment? As an oppressed man, does he enjoy his own ferocity in the knife thrusts of logical deduction? Does he take revenge on the aristocrats he fascinates?—As a dialectician, you hold a merciless tool in your hand. You can play the tyrant with it; by winning, you expose the other person. The dialectician leaves it to his

opponent to prove he is not an idiot: he makes him furious and helpless at the same time. The dialectician robs his opponent's intellect of its power.—What? Is dialectic just a form of revenge in Socrates?

⁸ I have indicated what could make Socrates repellent; that makes it all the more necessary to explain why he fascinated people.—One reason is that he discovered a new kind of contest and was its first fencing master for the aristocratic circles of Athens. He fascinated people by touching the Greeks' drive to compete—he introduced a variation into the wrestling match between young men and adolescent boys. Socrates was also a great master of erotic love.

⁹ But Socrates guessed still more. He saw behind his aristocratic Athenians; he understood that his case, his peculiar sort of case, was no longer an exception. The same kind of degeneration was quietly preparing itself everywhere: old Athens was coming to an end.—And Socrates understood that everyone needed him—his remedy, his cure, his personal trick for preserving himself... Everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere people were five steps away from excess: the monster in the soul was the common danger. “The drives want to play the tyrant; we must invent a counter-tyrant who is stronger”... After that reader of faces had revealed to Socrates what he was—a cave full of every evil desire—the great ironist added a remark that gives us the key to him. “That is true,” he said, “but I became master of them all.” How did Socrates become master of himself?—His case was basically only the extreme case, only the most striking example of what was then starting to become everyone's plight: no one was master of himself anymore; the instincts were turning against one another. He fascinated people as this extreme case—his frightening ugliness proclaimed it to every eye. Of course, he fascinated them still more as an answer, a solution, an apparent cure for this case.—

¹⁰ If you need to make reason a tyrant, as Socrates did, the danger that something else will play the tyrant must be considerable. At that time people hit on rationality as their savior. Neither Socrates nor his “patients” had any choice about being rational—it was compulsory, it was their last resort. The fanaticism with

which all Greek thought throws itself into rationality betrays a desperate situation. People were in danger; they had only one choice: either go under or—be rational to the point of absurdity... The moralism of the Greek philosophers from Plato onward is caused by sickness; so is their high opinion of dialectic. Reason = virtue = happiness means only: we must copy Socrates and set up a permanent daylight against the dark desires—the daylight of reason. We must be clever, clear, bright at any cost: every surrender to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads downward...

¹¹ I have indicated why Socrates fascinated people: he seemed to be a doctor, a savior. Do I still need to point out the error in his belief in “rationality at any cost”?—Philosophers and moralists deceive themselves when they think that waging war against decadence already takes them out of it. Getting out is beyond their power: what they choose as a remedy, as salvation, is itself just another expression of decadence. They change its expression; they do not get rid of it. Socrates was a misunderstanding; the whole morality of improvement, including Christian morality, was a misunderstanding... The harshest daylight, rationality at any cost, a life that is bright, cold, cautious, conscious, without instinct, resisting instincts—this itself was just a sickness, another sickness, and certainly no way back to “virtue,” to “health,” to happiness... Having to fight the instincts—that is the formula for decadence. As long as life is on the rise, happiness equals instinct.—

¹² —Did he himself finally understand this, this cleverest of all self-outwitters? Did he tell himself this at the end, in the wisdom of his courage to die?... Socrates wanted to die—it was not Athens but he who gave himself the cup of poison; he forced Athens to give him the cup... “Socrates is no doctor,” he said quietly to himself: “death alone is the doctor here... Socrates himself was just sick for a long time...”

“Reason” in Philosophy



- ¹ You ask me what peculiarities philosophers have?... Their lack of a sense of history, for example, their hatred of the very idea of becoming, their Egyptianism. They think they honor something when they remove it from history and view it from the standpoint of eternity—when they make a mummy of it. Everything philosophers have handled for thousands of years has been a mummy of a concept; nothing real has come out of their hands alive. These gentlemen who worship conceptual idols kill and stuff things when they worship—they endanger the life of everything when they worship. Death, change, age, as well as procreation and growth, are objections to them—even refutations. What is does not become; what becomes is not... Now all of them believe, even desperately, in what is. But since they cannot get hold of it, they look for reasons why it is being kept from them. “There must be some illusion, some deception involved in our not perceiving what is: where is the deceiver?”—“We’ve got him,” they cry joyfully, “it’s the senses! These senses, so immoral in other ways too, deceive us about the true world. Moral: get free of the senses’ deception, of becoming, of history, of the lie—history is nothing but belief in the senses, belief in the lie. Moral: say no to everything that trusts the senses, to the whole rest of humanity: they are all ‘common people.’ Be a philosopher, be a mummy, portray monotonous monotheism with a gravedig-

ger's gestures!—And above all, away with the body, that pitiful fixed idea of the senses! Riddled with every logical error there is, refuted, even impossible, although it is shameless enough to behave as if it were real!"...

- 2 With great respect, I set the name of Heraclitus apart. While the other tribe of philosophers rejected the evidence of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their evidence because they showed things as though they had permanence and unity. Heraclitus too did the senses an injustice. They lie neither in the way the Eleatics believed nor in the way he believed—they do not lie at all. What we make of their evidence first puts the lie into it: the lie of unity, for example, the lie of thinghood, of substance, of permanence... "Reason" is what causes us to falsify the evidence of the senses. To the extent that the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie... But Heraclitus will always be right that being is an empty fiction. The "apparent" world is the only one: the true world is just a lie added to it...
- 3 —And what fine tools of observation we have in our senses! This nose, for example, which no philosopher has yet spoken of with respect and gratitude, is actually, for now, the most delicate instrument available to us. It can detect even tiny differences in movement that the spectroscope itself cannot detect. Today we have science to exactly the extent that we have decided to accept the evidence of the senses—that we have also learned to sharpen them, equip them, and think their evidence through to the end. The rest is a malformed birth and not yet science: meaning metaphysics, theology, psychology, the theory of knowledge. Or else formal science, the study of signs: such as logic and that applied logic, mathematics. Reality does not appear in them at all, not even as a problem; nor does the question of what value such a convention of signs as logic has at all.—
- 4 The other peculiarity of philosophers is no less dangerous: it consists in confusing the last with the first. What comes at the end—unfortunately! For it should not come at all!—they put at the beginning, as the beginning: the "highest concepts," meaning the most general, the emptiest concepts, the last smoke of real-

ity as it evaporates. This too is just an expression of their way of worshipping: the higher must not grow out of the lower; it must not have grown at all... Moral: everything of the first rank must be its own cause. Coming from something else counts as an objection, as casting doubt on its value. All the supreme values are of the first rank; all the highest concepts, what is, the unconditioned, the good, the true, the perfect—all this cannot have come into being, and must therefore be its own cause. But none of this can be unlike the rest, or contradict itself... That gives them their stupendous concept “God”... The last, thinnest, emptiest thing is put first, as the cause in itself, as the most real being... To think that humanity has had to take the brain disorders of sick web-spinners seriously!—And it has paid dearly for doing so!...

- 5 —Let us finally contrast this with the different way we (—I say “we” out of politeness...) look at the problem of error and appearance. In the past, people took alteration, change, becoming in general as proof of mere appearance, as a sign that something must be there to lead us astray. Today, on the contrary, we see ourselves as caught up in error, in a sense, forced into error, precisely to the extent that our prejudice in favor of reason forces us to assume unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood, being. At the same time, careful checking makes us certain that the error lies here. It is no different from the movements of the great heavenly body: in that case, error has our eye as its constant advocate; in this case, it has our language. Language originated in the time of the most rudimentary form of psychology. We enter a crude world of fetishism when we bring to awareness the basic assumptions of the metaphysics of language—in plain terms, of reason. This sees doers and deeds everywhere; it believes in will as a cause in general; it believes in the “I,” in the I as being, in the I as substance, and projects this belief in the I as substance onto all things—only in this way does it create the concept “thing”... Being is thought into everything as a cause, slipped in underneath it; only from the conception “I” does the concept “being” follow, as something derived... At the beginning stands the great, disastrous error that the will is something that acts—that will is a faculty... Today we know it is only a word... Much later, in a world a thou-

sand times more enlightened, philosophers became aware, to their surprise, of the confidence, the subjective certainty, with which they used the categories of reason. They concluded that these could not come from experience—after all, the whole of experience contradicted them. Where, then, did they come from?—And in India as in Greece, people made the same mistake: “We must once have been at home in a higher world (—instead of a much lower one, which would have been the truth!); we must have been divine, because we have reason!”... In fact, nothing so far has had a more naive power to persuade than the error about being, as formulated by the Eleatics, for example: after all, it has every word, every sentence we speak on its side!—Even the Eleatics’ opponents fell for the lure of their concept of being: Democritus, among others, when he invented his atom... “Reason” in language—oh, what an old, deceitful woman! I’m afraid we won’t get rid of God because we still believe in grammar...

- ⁶ People will thank me if I compress such an essential, such a new insight into four propositions: that makes it easier to understand, and challenges people to contradict it.

First proposition. The reasons for calling “this” world apparent instead establish its reality—any other kind of reality is absolutely impossible to demonstrate.

Second proposition. The features people have assigned to the “true being” of things are the features of nonbeing, of nothingness—they have built the “true world” out of its opposition to the real world: an apparent world indeed, since it is merely a moral-optical illusion.

Third proposition. Inventing tales about a world “other” than this one makes no sense at all, unless an instinct to slander, belittle, and cast suspicion on life is powerful within us. In that case, we take revenge on life with the fantasy spectacle of an “other,” a “better” life.

Fourth proposition. Dividing the world into a “true” and an “apparent” one, whether in the Christian way or in Kant’s way (a sly Christian after all), is only a suggestion prompted by decadence—a symptom of life in decline... The fact that the artist values appearance more highly than reality is no objection to this

proposition. For “appearance” here means reality once again, only selected, intensified, corrected... The tragic artist is no pessimist—he says yes precisely to everything questionable and terrible itself; he is Dionysian...

How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable



History of an Error.

- ¹ The true world is within reach of the wise, the devout, the virtuous—he lives in it, he is it.
(The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, convincing.
Another way of saying “I, Plato, am the truth.”)
- ² The true world, out of reach for now, but promised to the wise, the devout, the virtuous (“to the sinner who repents”).
(The idea progresses: it becomes more subtle, more ensnaring, harder to grasp—it becomes a woman, it becomes Christian...)
- ³ The true world, beyond reach, beyond proof, beyond any promise, but even as a thought a comfort, an obligation, a command.
(Basically the old sun, but through fog and skepticism; the idea has become lofty, pale, northern, from Königsberg.)
- ⁴ The true world—beyond reach? At any rate, not reached. And since it has not been reached, it is also unknown. So it offers no comfort, no redemption, no obligation either: what obligation could something unknown place on us?...

(Gray morning. Reason's first yawn. The cockcrow of
positivism.)

- 5 The "true world"—an idea no longer useful for anything, not even imposing any obligation anymore—an idea that has become useless, unnecessary, and therefore an idea that has been refuted: let's do away with it!

(Bright day; breakfast; the return of common sense and good spirits;
Plato blushes with shame; all free spirits raise a devilish uproar.)

- 6 We have done away with the true world: what world is left? The apparent one, perhaps?... But no! Along with the true world, we have also done away with the apparent one!

(Noon; the moment of the shortest shadow; the end of the longest
error; humanity's high point; Zarathustra begins.)

Morality as Anti-Nature



- ¹ All passions have a time when they are simply disastrous, when they drag their victim down with the weight of stupidity—and a later, much later time when they marry the spirit, become “spiritualized.” In the past, because of the stupidity in passion, people made war on passion itself. They conspired to destroy it—all the old moral monsters agree on this: “The passions must be killed.” The most famous formula for this appears in the New Testament, in that Sermon on the Mount where, incidentally, things are by no means viewed from on high. It says there, for example, with a practical application to sexuality, “If your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out.” Fortunately, no Christian follows this rule. To destroy passions and desires just to prevent their stupidity and its unpleasant consequences now seems to us to be simply an acute form of stupidity itself. We no longer admire dentists who pull teeth out so that they will not hurt anymore... On the other hand, to be fair, we should admit that the idea of “giving passion a spiritual form” could not have been conceived on the soil from which Christianity grew. As everyone knows, the early Church fought against the “intelligent” on behalf of the “poor in spirit”: how could we expect it to wage an intelligent war against passion?—The Church fights passion by cutting it out in every sense: its practice, its “cure,” is castration. It never asks: “How do we give a desire a spiritual form, make it beautiful, make it divine?”—In its discipline, it has always emphasized rooting out sensuality,

pride, the lust for power, greed, and the desire for revenge.—But attacking the passions at the root means attacking life at the root: the Church's practice is hostile to life...

- ² The same means, castration, rooting out, is instinctively chosen in the struggle against a desire by people whose wills are too weak, who are too degenerate to impose moderation on themselves in it: those natures who need La Trappe, figuratively speaking (and not figuratively—), some final declaration of hostility, a gulf between themselves and a passion. Radical means are indispensable only to the degenerate. Weakness of will—or, more precisely, the inability not to react to a stimulus—is itself just another form of degeneration. Radical hostility, hostility to the death, against sensuality remains a symptom that gives us something to think about: it entitles us to draw conclusions about the overall condition of someone so extreme.—Besides, this hostility, this hatred, reaches its peak only when such natures no longer have enough firmness even for the radical cure, for renouncing their “devil.” Survey the whole history of priests and philosophers, and artists as well: the most poisonous things said against the senses have not come from the impotent, or from ascetics, but from failed ascetics, from people who would have needed to be ascetics...
- ³ When sensuality takes on a spiritual form, we call it love: this is a great triumph over Christianity. Another triumph is the spiritual form we have given hostility. This consists in deeply understanding the value of having enemies: in short, in acting and reasoning in the opposite way to how people acted and reasoned before. The Church has always wanted to destroy its enemies; we, we immoralists and anti-Christians, see an advantage for ourselves in the Church's continuing to exist... In politics too, hostility has now become more spiritual—much smarter, much more thoughtful, much more sparing. Almost every party understands that its own survival depends on the opposing party not losing its strength; the same applies to politics on the grand scale. A new creation in particular, such as the new Reich, needs enemies more than friends: only in opposition does it feel necessary, only in opposition does it become necessary... We take the same approach to the “inner enemy”: here too we have given hostility a

spiritual form; here too we have understood its value. You can be productive only at the price of being full of opposing forces; you stay young only if your soul does not stretch out, does not long for peace... Nothing has become stranger to us than that old ideal of “peace of soul,” the Christian ideal; nothing makes us less envious than the moral cow and the fat happiness of a good conscience. When you have given up war, you have given up a great life... In many cases, of course, “peace of soul” is just a misunderstanding—something else that simply does not know how to give itself a more honest name. A few cases, without beating around the bush or prejudging them. “Peace of soul” can be, for example, the gentle glow of a rich animal vitality spreading into morality (or religion). Or the beginning of tiredness, the first shadow cast by evening, any kind of evening. Or a sign that the air is damp, that south winds are approaching. Or unwitting gratitude for good digestion (sometimes called “love of humanity”). Or the growing quiet of someone recovering from illness, to whom everything tastes new, and who waits... Or the state that follows a powerful satisfaction of our ruling passion, the well-being of a rare fullness. Or the old-age weakness of our will, our desires, our vices. Or laziness, persuaded by vanity to dress itself up in moral finery. Or the arrival of certainty, even a terrible certainty, after long tension and torment through uncertainty. Or the expression of maturity and mastery in the midst of doing, creating, working, willing: calm breathing, the “freedom of the will” now achieved... Twilight of the Idols: who knows? Perhaps just a kind of “peace of soul” too...

- ⁴ —I put a principle into a formula. Every natural morality—that is, every healthy morality—is governed by an instinct of life. Some command of life is fulfilled through a definite set of “shoulds” and “should nots”; some obstacle or hostility on life’s path is cleared away by it. Unnatural morality, on the other hand—that is, almost every morality that has been taught, respected, and preached so far—turns precisely against the instincts of life. It condemns these instincts, sometimes secretly, sometimes loudly and shamelessly. In saying

“God looks at the heart,” it says no to life’s lowest and highest desires, and takes God as the enemy of life... The saint who pleases God is the ideal castrato... Life ends where the “kingdom of God” begins...

- 5 If you have understood the outrageous wrong of such a rebellion against life, a rebellion that has become almost sacred in Christian morality, you have fortunately understood something else too: how useless, illusory, absurd, and dishonest such a rebellion is. A living person’s condemnation of life is ultimately still only the symptom of a particular kind of life. Whether that condemnation is justified or unjustified is not a question that this even raises. You would have to stand outside life, and at the same time know it as well as one, as many, as all the people who have lived it, to be entitled even to touch the problem of life’s value. Those are reasons enough to understand that the problem is beyond our reach. When we speak of values, we speak under life’s inspiration, from life’s perspective: life itself forces us to establish values; life itself values through us when we establish values... It follows that even that unnatural morality which sees God as life’s opposite and condemnation is only a value judgment made by life—which life? What kind of life?—But I have already given the answer: declining, weakened, tired, condemned life. Morality as it has been understood up to now—as Schopenhauer most recently formulated it too, as “denial of the will to life”—is the instinct of decadence itself, turning itself into a command. It says: “Perish.” It is the judgment of the condemned...
- 6 Finally, let us consider how naive it is to say, “Human beings should be like this and that!” Reality shows us a delightful wealth of types, the abundance of an extravagant play and change of forms. And some pitiful street-corner moralist says in response: “No! Human beings should be different”?... This poor sanctimonious wretch even knows what they should be like: he paints himself on the wall and says, “Here is the man!”... But even when the moralist addresses only the individual and says to him, “You should be like this and that!” he still makes himself ridiculous. The individual is a piece of fate, from before and from behind, one more law, one more necessity for everything that comes and will be. To tell him “Change yourself” means demanding that everything change,

even backward into the past... And in fact there have been consistent moralists: they wanted human beings to be different, namely virtuous; they wanted them in their own image, namely sanctimonious. For that purpose they denied the world! No small madness! No modest kind of immodesty!... Morality, insofar as it condemns in itself, and not from life's viewpoints, considerations, and purposes, is a particular error we should have no sympathy for, a peculiarity of the degenerate that has done unspeakable harm!... We others, we immoralists, have instead opened our hearts wide to every kind of understanding, comprehension, approval. We do not say no easily; we take pride in being people who say yes. More and more, our eyes have opened to that economy which still needs, and knows how to use, everything that the priest's holy lunacy, the sick reason in the priest, rejects. That economy in the law of life draws an advantage even from the repulsive species of the sanctimonious, the priest, the virtuous person—what advantage?—But we ourselves, we immoralists, are the answer here...—

The Four Great Errors



- ¹ The error of confusing cause and effect.—No error is more dangerous than confusing an effect with its cause. I call it the real corruption of reason. Yet this error is one of humanity’s oldest habits, and also one of its newest. Even among us it is treated as sacred: it goes by the names “religion” and “morality.” Every statement that religion and morality put forward contains it. Priests and moral lawmakers are the people who brought about this corruption of reason.—Here is an example. Everyone knows the famous Cornaro’s book. He recommends his meager diet as a recipe for a long and happy life—and a virtuous one too. Few books have been read so widely. Even now, many thousands of copies are printed in England every year. I have no doubt that hardly any book—the Bible excepted, as is only fair—has done as much harm or shortened as many lives as this well-meant curiosity. The reason is that it confuses an effect with its cause. The respectable Italian saw his diet as the cause of his long life. In fact, the condition that made a long life possible—his extremely slow metabolism and low energy use—was the cause of his meager diet. He was not free to eat little or much. His frugal eating was not a matter of “free will”: eating more made him sick. But anyone who is not a carp does not merely benefit from eating a proper amount: they need to. A scholar today, who rapidly uses up nervous energy, would ruin himself on Cornaro’s diet. Believe someone who has tried it.—

² The most general formula behind every religion and morality says: “Do this and that, don’t do this and that—and you’ll be happy! Otherwise...” Every morality, every religion, is this command. I call it reason’s great original sin, its undying unreason. In my mouth, that formula turns into its opposite—the first example of my “revaluation of all values.” A person who has turned out well, a “happy” person, has to do certain things and instinctively avoids doing others. He brings the order that his body embodies into his relations with people and things. As a formula: his virtue is the result of his happiness... A long life and many descendants are not the reward for virtue. Rather, virtue itself is that slowing down of metabolism which brings, among other things, a long life and many descendants—in short, Cornaro’s way of living.—The Church and morality say: “A family line, a people, is ruined by vice and luxury.” My restored reason says: when a people is going to ruin, degenerating physically, vice and luxury follow from this. That means the need for ever stronger and more frequent stimulation, familiar to every exhausted body. This young man turns pale and withered before his time. His friends say: this or that disease is to blame. I say: the fact that he got sick, that he could not resist the disease, was already the result of an impoverished life, an inherited exhaustion. The newspaper reader says: this party is ruining itself with a mistake like that. My higher politics says: a party that makes mistakes like that is finished—it no longer has dependable instincts. Every mistake, in every sense, results from instincts breaking down, from the will falling apart. That almost defines what is bad. Everything good is instinct—and therefore easy, necessary, free. Strenuous effort is an objection. The god is a different type from the hero. In my language: light feet are the first sign of divinity.

³ The error of false causation.—People have always believed they knew what a cause was. But where did we get our knowledge—or, more exactly, our belief that we knew something here? From the realm of those famous “inner facts,” not one of which has so far proved to be a fact. We believed that we ourselves caused things when we willed. Here, at least, we thought we had caught causation in the act. Nor did anyone doubt that everything preceding an action, its

causes, had to be sought in consciousness and would be found there if we looked—as “motives.” Otherwise, after all, we would not have been free to do it or responsible for it. Finally, who would have denied that a thought is caused? That the I causes the thought?... Of these three “inner facts,” which seemed to guarantee causation, the first and most convincing is the will as a cause. The idea of consciousness (“spirit”) as a cause, and later still the idea of the I (the “subject”) as a cause, came afterward. They came once causation by the will had been accepted as a given, as a fact of experience... Since then we have thought better of it. Today we no longer believe a word of any of this. The “inner world” is full of illusions and misleading lights: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, so it no longer explains anything either. It merely accompanies events, and it can also be absent. The so-called “motive”: another error. Merely something on the surface of consciousness, something accompanying the act that conceals what came before it rather than showing it. And the I, of all things! It has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words. It has completely stopped thinking, feeling, and willing!... What follows from this? There are no mental causes at all! All the supposed evidence from experience for them has gone to hell! That is what follows!—And we had made quite a misuse of that “experience.” On that basis we had created the world as a world of causes, a world of will, a world of spirits. The oldest and longest-lasting psychology was at work here. It did nothing else. To it, everything that happened was an action, and every action resulted from a will. The world became a multitude of doers. A doer—a “subject”—was slipped underneath everything that happened. Human beings projected their three “inner facts,” the things they believed in most firmly—the will, the spirit, the I—out of themselves. They first drew the idea of being from the idea of the I. They declared that “things” existed in their own image, on the model of their idea of the I as a cause. Is it any wonder that later they only ever found in things what they had put into them?—The thing itself, to say it again, the idea of a thing, is merely a reflection of the belief in the I as a cause... And even your atom, gentlemen of mechanics and physics—how much error, how much leftover primitive psychology, still survives in your

atom!—Not to mention the “thing in itself,” the metaphysicians’ horrible, shameful thing! The error of spirit as a cause confused with reality! And made the measure of reality! And called God!—

- ⁴ The error of imaginary causes.—Let’s start with dreams. A particular sensation—for example, one caused by a distant cannon shot—is afterward supplied with a cause. Often this is a whole little novel, with the dreamer himself as its main character. Meanwhile the sensation continues, like a kind of echo. It seems to wait until the drive to find a cause lets it come to the foreground—no longer as chance, but as “meaning.” The cannon shot appears as part of a causal sequence, with time apparently reversed. What comes later, the explanation, is experienced first, often with a hundred details that pass in a flash. The shot follows... What has happened? The images produced by a certain bodily state were mistaken for its cause.—In fact, we do the same thing when awake. Most of our general feelings—every kind of blockage, pressure, tension, or explosion in the action and counteraction of our organs, and especially the state of the sympathetic nerve—set off our drive to find causes. We want a reason for feeling this way or that—for feeling bad or feeling good. It never satisfies us simply to establish the fact that we feel this way or that. We only admit this fact—become conscious of it—once we have given it some kind of explanation.—In such a case, memory goes to work without our knowing it. It brings up earlier states of the same kind and the causal interpretations that have grown attached to them—not what actually caused those states. Of course, memory also brings up the belief that the images, the accompanying processes in consciousness, were the causes. This is how we become used to a particular interpretation of causes. In truth, that habit obstructs and even rules out any investigation of the cause.
- ⁵ The psychological explanation.—Tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar brings relief, reassurance, and satisfaction. It also gives a feeling of power. The unfamiliar brings danger, uneasiness, and worry. Our first instinct is to get rid of these painful states. First principle: any explanation is better than none. At bottom, we only want to get rid of oppressive ideas, so we are not very strict about how we get rid of them. The first idea that explains the unfamiliar

as something familiar feels so good that we “take it for true.” Pleasure as proof (“strength” as proof) becomes the test of truth.—So the drive to find causes depends on fear and is stirred up by it. If at all possible, the question “Why?” is meant to provide not so much the cause for its own sake as a particular kind of cause—a reassuring cause, one that frees us and brings relief. The first result of this need is that we assume the cause is something already familiar, something experienced before, something recorded in memory. What is new, unexperienced, or strange is ruled out as a cause.—So we are not merely looking for a kind of explanation to serve as a cause. We are looking for a selected, preferred kind: the explanations that have most quickly and most often removed the feeling of strangeness, novelty, and inexperience—the most usual explanations.—The result: one way of assigning causes becomes more and more dominant, comes together into a system, and finally takes control. That means it simply rules out other causes and explanations.—The banker immediately thinks of “business,” the Christian of “sin,” the girl of her love.

- 6 The whole realm of morality and religion comes under this heading of imaginary causes.—“Explanation” of unpleasant general feelings. They are caused by beings that are hostile to us. Evil spirits: the most famous case is the mistaken belief that hysterical women were witches. They are caused by actions we cannot approve of. The feeling of “sin,” of “sinfulness,” is slipped underneath a physical discomfort: we can always find reasons to be unhappy with ourselves. They are explained as punishments, as payment for something we should not have done or should not have been. Schopenhauer shamelessly turned this into a general statement in which morality appears as what it is: the true poisoner and slanderer of life. “Every great pain, whether physical or mental, tells us what we deserve; for it could not come to us if we did not deserve it.” *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 2, 666. They are explained as the results of thoughtless actions that end badly. The emotions and the senses are assumed to be the causes, the “guilty” parties. Physical distress is interpreted as “deserved” with the help of other kinds of distress.—“Explanation” of pleasant general feelings. They are caused by trust in God. They are caused by the awareness of good

actions: the so-called “good conscience,” a physical state that sometimes looks so much like good digestion that one could mistake the two. They are caused by the successful outcome of our undertakings. A naive false inference: a successful undertaking certainly does not give a hypochondriac—or a Pascal—pleasant general feelings. They are caused by faith, love, and hope—the Christian virtues.—In truth, all these supposed explanations are states that follow from feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and are like translations of those feelings into a false dialect. We are able to hope because our basic physical feeling is strong and rich again. We trust God because the feeling of fullness and strength gives us peace.—Morality and religion belong entirely to the psychology of error. In every single case, cause and effect are confused; or truth is confused with the effect of what is believed to be true; or a state of consciousness is confused with that state’s power to cause things.

- ⁷ The error of free will.—Today we have no sympathy left for the idea of “free will.” We know only too well what it is: the most disreputable trick theologians have, designed to make humanity “responsible” in their sense—that is, dependent on them... Here I am only giving the psychology behind all attempts to hold people responsible.—Wherever people look for responsibility, it is usually the instinct that wants to punish and judge that does the looking. The process of becoming is stripped of its innocence whenever being this way or that is traced back to a will, to intentions, to acts for which someone is responsible. The doctrine of the will was essentially invented for the purpose of punishment—that is, out of the desire to find someone guilty. The whole of the old psychology, the psychology of the will, rests on this premise: its creators, the priests at the head of ancient communities, wanted to give themselves a right to impose punishments—or to give God that right... People were imagined as “free” so that they could be judged and punished—so that they could become guilty. Consequently, every action had to be imagined as willed, and the origin of every action as lying in consciousness. This made the most fundamental falsification in psychology into the very principle of psychology... Today we have entered the opposite movement. We immoralists, in particular, are doing every-

thing we can to remove the ideas of guilt and punishment from the world again, and to cleanse psychology, history, nature, social institutions, and sanctions of them. In our eyes, no one is more radically opposed to us than the theologians, who keep using the idea of a “moral world order” to infect the innocence of becoming with “punishment” and “guilt.” Christianity is a hangman’s metaphysics...

- 8 What alone can our teaching be?—That no one gives human beings their qualities: not God, not society, not their parents and ancestors, and not they themselves. The nonsense of this last idea, which we reject here, was taught as “intelligible freedom” by Kant, and perhaps by Plato before him. No one is responsible for existing at all, for being constituted this way or that, for being in these circumstances, in this environment. The fate of a person’s being cannot be separated from the fate of everything that was and everything that will be. A person is not the result of any particular intention, will, or purpose. No attempt is being made through them to achieve an “ideal of humanity,” an “ideal of happiness,” or an “ideal of morality.” It is absurd to try to trace their being back to some purpose. We invented the idea of “purpose”: reality has no purpose... We are necessary, we are a piece of fate, we belong to the whole, we are in the whole. There is nothing that could judge, measure, compare, or condemn our being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, and condemning the whole... But there is nothing outside the whole!—That no one is held responsible anymore, that the way things are cannot be traced back to a first cause, that the world is not a unity either as a center of sensation or as “spirit”—this alone is the great liberation. Only this restores the innocence of becoming... Until now, the idea of “God” has been the greatest objection to existence... We deny God; we deny responsibility in God. Only through this do we free the world.—

The “Improvers” of Humanity



- ¹ People know my demand that the philosopher place himself beyond good and evil—that he put the illusion of moral judgment beneath him. This demand follows from an insight that I was the first to put into words: there are no moral facts at all. Moral judgment has this in common with religious judgment: it believes in realities that are not real. Morality is only an interpretation of certain phenomena—or, to be more precise, a misinterpretation. Like religious judgment, moral judgment belongs to a stage of ignorance that does not yet even have the idea of reality, the distinction between what is real and what is imaginary. At that stage, “truth” refers entirely to things we now call “fantasies.” So moral judgment must never be taken literally. Taken that way, it always contains nothing but nonsense. But it remains priceless as a system of signs. At least to someone who knows how to read it, it reveals the most valuable realities of cultures and inner lives that did not know enough to “understand” themselves. Morality is only a language of signs, only a system of symptoms. You have to know what is going on already to get any use out of it.
- ² A first, entirely preliminary example. In every age, people have wanted to “improve” human beings. Above all, this was what morality meant. But the same word hides the most widely different aims. Both taming the human beast and breeding a particular kind of human being have been called “improvement.” Only these terms from zoology express realities—realities that the typical “im-

prover,” the priest, knows nothing about—and wants to know nothing about... To our ears, calling the taming of an animal its “improvement” sounds almost like a joke. Anyone who knows what happens in menageries doubts that the beast is “improved” there. It is weakened, made less harmful. Through the depressing emotion of fear, through pain, wounds, and hunger, it becomes a sick beast.—It is no different with the tamed human being whom the priest has “improved.” In the early Middle Ages, when the Church really was above all a menagerie, people everywhere hunted down the finest specimens of the “blond beast.” They “improved” Germanic nobles, for example. But what did one of these “improved” Germanic men, lured into a monastery, look like afterward? Like a caricature of a human being, like a malformed creature. He had become a “sinner.” He was stuck in a cage; he had been locked up among nothing but terrifying ideas... There he lay, sick, miserable, spiteful toward himself, full of hatred for the drives toward life, full of suspicion toward everything that was still strong and happy. In short, a “Christian”... In physical terms: when fighting the beast, making it sick may be the only way to make it weak. The Church understood this. It ruined human beings, it weakened them—but it claimed to have “improved” them...

- ³ Let’s take the other case of so-called morality: breeding a particular race and type. Indian morality provides the grandest example. It was given religious authority as the “Law of Manu.” Here the task is to breed no fewer than four races at once: a priestly race, a warrior race, a race of traders and farmers, and finally a servant race, the Shudras. Clearly, we are no longer among animal tamers. It takes a kind of person a hundred times gentler and more reasonable even to conceive the plan for such breeding. We breathe more freely as we leave the Christian air of sickrooms and prisons and enter this healthier, higher, wider world. How pitiful the “New Testament” is beside Manu, how bad it smells!—But this organization, too, needed to be terrifying. This time it was fighting not the beast but the opposite idea: the unbred human being, the mixed-breed human being, the Chandala. And again, it had no other means of making him harmless, of making him weak, than making him sick. It was a

fight against the “great mass.” Perhaps nothing offends our feelings more than these protective measures of Indian morality. The third edict, for example (Avadana-Sastra 1), the one “on impure vegetables,” orders that the only food allowed to the Chandala is garlic and onions. The reason given is that sacred scripture forbids giving them grain, fruits that contain seeds, water, or fire. The same edict lays down that the water they need must not come from rivers, springs, or ponds. It may come only from the approaches to swamps and from holes made by animals’ footprints. They are also forbidden to wash their clothes or themselves, since the water granted to them out of mercy may be used only to quench thirst. Finally, Shudra women are forbidden to help Chandala women give birth, and Chandala women are also forbidden to help one another...—The results of such health policing were inevitable: deadly epidemics and hideous sexually transmitted diseases. These in turn led to the “law of the knife,” ordering circumcision for male children and removal of the inner labia for female children.—Manu himself says: “The Chandala are the fruit of adultery, incest, and crime”—this is the necessary consequence of the idea of breeding. “For clothes they shall have only rags from corpses, for dishes broken pots, for ornaments old iron, and for worship only evil spirits. They shall wander restlessly from one place to another. They are forbidden to write from left to right or to use their right hand for writing. The use of the right hand and of writing from left to right is reserved for the virtuous alone, for people of good stock.”—

- ⁴ These rules are instructive enough. Here, for once, we have Aryan humaneness, completely pure, in its original form. We learn that the idea of “pure blood” is the opposite of a harmless idea. On the other hand, it becomes clear among which people hatred—the Chandala’s hatred of this “humaneness”—has been made everlasting, where it has become religion, where it has become genius... From this point of view, the Gospels are a document of the first rank; the Book of Enoch even more so.—Christianity has Jewish roots and can only be understood as a growth from that soil. It represents the countermovement against every morality of breeding, race, and privilege. It is the anti-Aryan religion

above all others: Christianity as the revaluation of all Aryan values, the victory of Chandala values, the gospel preached to the poor and the lowly, the united revolt of all the downtrodden, the miserable, the malformed, and the disadvantaged against the “race”—the Chandala’s undying revenge as the religion of love...

- ⁵ The morality of breeding and the morality of taming are entirely worthy of each other in the means they use to establish themselves. We can state this as the highest principle: to make morality, you must have an unconditional will to its opposite. This is the great, disturbing problem I have pursued the longest: the psychology of the “improvers” of humanity. A small and basically modest fact, the so-called pious fraud, first gave me access to this problem: pious fraud, the inheritance of all the philosophers and priests who “improved” humanity. Neither Manu nor Plato nor Confucius nor the Jewish and Christian teachers ever doubted their right to lie. They had no doubts about quite different rights either... Put as a formula, we could say: all the means by which people have so far tried to make humanity moral were immoral from the ground up.—

What the Germans Lack



¹ Among Germans today, having a mind is not enough: you also have to claim it for yourself, take the liberty of using it...

Perhaps I know the Germans; perhaps I may even tell them a few truths. The new Germany represents a great store of ability, inherited and learned. For a while, it can even afford to spend its accumulated stock of strength wastefully. What has come to power with it is not a high culture, still less a delicate taste or a noble “beauty” of instincts. But it has more manly virtues than any other country in Europe can show. A great deal of courage and self-respect, a great deal of reliability in dealings with others and in mutual duties, a great deal of hard work and endurance—and an inherited moderation that needs a spur rather than a brake. I would add that people here still obey without being humiliated by obedience... And no one despises his opponent...

You can see that I want to be fair to the Germans. I would not want to be untrue to myself in this, so I must also state my objection to them. Coming to power costs dearly: power makes people stupid... The Germans—they were once called the people of thinkers: do they still think at all today?—The Germans are now bored by the intellect; the Germans now distrust the intellect. Politics swallows up all seriousness about truly intellectual matters. “Germany, Germany above everything”—I fear that was the end of German philosophy... “Are there German philosophers? Are there German poets? Are there

good German books?" people ask me abroad. I blush, but with the courage I have even in desperate cases, I answer: "Yes, Bismarck!"—Could I even admit what books people read today?... That damned instinct for mediocrity!—

2 —What the German mind could be—who has not had gloomy thoughts about that! But this people has deliberately made itself stupid for almost a thousand years. Nowhere have Europe's two great narcotics, alcohol and Christianity, been more viciously abused. Recently a third has even been added, one that can single-handedly finish off all the mind's delicate and daring agility: music, our clogged-up, clogging German music.—How much tiresome heaviness, lameness, dampness, lounging in dressing gowns, how much beer there is among German intellectuals! How is it actually possible for young men who dedicate their lives to the highest intellectual goals not to feel the first instinct of intellectual life, the mind's instinct for self-preservation—and to drink beer?... The alcoholism of young scholars may not yet cast doubt on their scholarship. You can even be a great scholar without having a mind. But in every other respect it remains a problem.—Where can you fail to find the gentle degeneration that beer produces in the mind! Once, in a case that has almost become famous, I put my finger on just such a degeneration: that of our foremost German free spirit, the clever David Strauss, into the author of a beer-bench gospel and a "new faith"... Not for nothing had he pledged himself in verse to the "lovely brown one"—faithful until death...

3 —I spoke of the German mind becoming coarser and more shallow. Is that enough?—At bottom, what frightens me is something quite different: how German seriousness, German depth, and German passion in intellectual matters are declining more and more. The emotional intensity has changed, not merely the intellect.—I come into contact with German universities here and there. What an atmosphere prevails among their scholars! What barren intellectual life, grown complacent and lukewarm! It would be a profound misunderstanding to hold up German scholarship against me here—and proof, besides, that you had not read a word of mine. For seventeen years I have never tired of exposing how our current system of scholarly work drains away the spirit.

Today, the enormous scope of the fields of knowledge condemns every individual to harsh servitude. This is a main reason why people whose natures are fuller, richer, and deeper no longer find the education and educators suited to them. Nothing harms our culture more than its surplus of arrogant street-corner loafers and fragments of human beings. Against their will, our universities are the real greenhouses for this kind of withering of the mind's instincts. And all Europe already has some idea of this—great-power politics fools no one... Germany is increasingly regarded as Europe's flatlands.—I am still looking for a German with whom I could be serious in my own way—how much more for one with whom I could be cheerful! Twilight of the Idols: ah, who today could understand the kind of seriousness from which a hermit is recovering here!—Our cheerfulness is the least understandable thing about us...

- ⁴ Take stock. It is not only obvious that German culture is declining; there is also no shortage of adequate reasons for it. In the end, no one can spend more than they have. This applies to individuals and to peoples. If you spend yourself on power, great-power politics, the economy, global trade, parliamentary government, and military interests—if you devote the store of understanding, seriousness, will, and self-overcoming that makes you who you are to those things—you do not have it left for the other side. Culture and the state—let's not deceive ourselves about this—are opponents. The "cultural state" is merely a modern idea. One lives off the other; one flourishes at the other's expense. All great ages of culture are ages of political decline. What was great in a cultural sense was nonpolitical, even antipolitical.—Goethe's heart opened at the phenomenon of Napoleon; it closed during the "Wars of Liberation"... At the very moment Germany rises as a great power, France gains a different importance as a cultural power. Already today, much new seriousness and much new intellectual passion have moved to Paris. The question of pessimism, for example, the question of Wagner, and almost all psychological and artistic questions are considered there with incomparably more subtlety and thoroughness than in Germany. The Germans are themselves incapable of this kind of seriousness.—In the history of European culture, the rise of the "Reich" means one thing

above all: a shift in the center of gravity. People everywhere already know it: in the main thing—and that remains culture—the Germans no longer count. People ask: can you point to even one mind that matters to Europe, as your Goethe, your Hegel, your Heinrich Heine, your Schopenhauer mattered?—There is no end to the astonishment that there is no longer a single German philosopher.—

- ⁵ The whole system of higher education in Germany has lost the main thing: both its purpose and the means to that purpose. People have forgotten that education, the development of culture, is itself the goal—not the “Reich”—and that this goal needs educators, not high school teachers and university scholars... We need educators who have themselves been educated: superior, noble minds, proving themselves at every moment, through speech and silence; mature cultures that have grown sweet—not the learned louts whom high school and university now offer the young as “higher nursemaids.” Apart from the rarest of exceptions, we lack educators, the first condition of education. Hence the decline of German culture.—One of these extremely rare exceptions is my deeply respected friend Jakob Burckhardt in Basel. More than anyone, he is the reason for Basel’s leading place in humanistic culture.—What Germany’s “higher schools” actually achieve is a brutal drilling designed to make countless young men useful—and exploitable—for state service, with as little loss of time as possible. “Higher education” and countless numbers contradict each other from the start. All higher education belongs only to the exception: you must be privileged to have a right to so high a privilege. Nothing great, nothing beautiful, can ever belong to everyone: beauty is for the few.—What causes the decline of German culture? The fact that “higher education” is no longer a privilege—the democratism of “universal” education, education that has become common... Nor should we forget that military privileges virtually force the higher schools to take too many students—that is, force their ruin.—In present-day Germany, no one is free anymore to give their children a noble education. All our “higher” schools are arranged for the most dubious mediocrity: in their teachers, their curricula, and their educational aims. And everywhere

there is an indecent hurry, as if something had been missed if a young man is not yet “finished” at 23, not yet able to answer the “main question”: what career?—A higher kind of person, if I may say so, does not love “careers,” precisely because he knows he has a calling... He has time, he takes his time, he has no thought of becoming “finished.” At thirty, in the sense of high culture, you are a beginner, a child.—Our overcrowded high schools and our overloaded, stupefied high school teachers are a scandal. There may be causes for defending these conditions, as the Heidelberg professors recently did—but there are no reasons for it.

- ⁶ —So as not to act against my nature, which says yes and deals with contradiction and criticism only indirectly, only unwillingly, I will immediately state the three tasks for which educators are needed. We have to learn to see; we have to learn to think; we have to learn to speak and write. In all three, the goal is a noble culture.—Learning to see: training the eye to be calm and patient, to let things come to it; putting off judgment, learning to walk around and take in an individual case from every side. This is the first preparatory training for intellectual life: not reacting to a stimulus at once, but gaining control of the instincts that hold us back and shut things out. Learning to see, as I understand it, is almost what unphilosophical language calls a strong will. The essential thing is precisely the ability not to “will,” to suspend a decision. All lack of intellect, all commonness, rests on the inability to resist a stimulus. You have to react; you follow every impulse. In many cases this compulsion is already sickness, decline, a symptom of exhaustion. Almost everything that unphilosophical crudity calls “vice” is merely this physical inability not to react.—One practical result of having learned to see: as a learner in general, you will have become slow, suspicious, and resistant. At first you will let anything strange or new approach with hostile calm—you will draw your hand back from it. Standing open with every door, lying submissively on your stomach before every little fact, always ready to spring into other people and other things, to plunge into them—in short, the famous modern “objectivity”—is bad taste, is as common and low as it gets.
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⁷ Learning to think: our schools no longer have any idea what that means. Even at universities, even among the actual scholars of philosophy, logic is beginning to die out—as theory, as practice, as a craft. Read German books: there is no longer the faintest memory that thinking needs a technique, a course of training, a will to mastery—that thinking has to be learned as dancing has to be learned, as a kind of dancing... Who among the Germans still knows from experience that delicate shiver which light feet in intellectual matters send through every muscle!—The stiff clumsiness of intellectual gestures, the heavy hand when grasping something—these are so German that abroad they are confused with the German character as a whole. The German has no fingers for nuances... The fact that the Germans have even put up with their philosophers, above all the most deformed conceptual cripple who ever lived, the great Kant, gives no small idea of German grace.—Dancing in every form cannot, in fact, be left out of a noble education: being able to dance with your feet, with ideas, with words. Do I still have to say that you must be able to do it with your pen too—that you must learn to write?—But here I would become a complete riddle to German readers...

Skirmishes of an Untimely Man



- ¹ People I can't stand.—Seneca: or the bullfighter of virtue.—Rousseau: or the return to nature in impure nakedness.—Schiller: or the moral trumpeter of Säckingen.—Dante: or the hyena writing poetry in graves.—Kant: or cant as an intelligible character.—Victor Hugo: or the lighthouse on the sea of nonsense.—Liszt: or the school of dexterity—in chasing women.—George Sand: or milky abundance, in plain language: the dairy cow with a “beautiful style.”—Michelet: or enthusiasm taking off its coat... Carlyle: or pessimism as a lunch that has backed up.—John Stuart Mill: or offensive clarity.—The Goncourt brothers: or the two Ajaxes fighting Homer. Music by Offenbach.—Zola: or the joy of stinking.—
- ² Renan.—Theology, or the corruption of reason by “original sin” (Christianity). Renan is evidence: whenever he risks a yes or no on any general issue, he gets it wrong with embarrassing regularity. For example, he wants to combine science and nobility into one. But science belongs to democracy; that is obvious enough to touch. He has no small ambition to represent an aristocracy of the mind. Yet at the same time he kneels before its opposite teaching, the gospel of the humble—and kneeling is not all he does... What good are all his free thinking, modern attitudes, mockery, and chameleon's flexibility if he has remained a

Christian, a Catholic, even a priest in his guts! Like a Jesuit and confessor, Renan puts his inventiveness into seduction. His intellectual qualities include the priest's broad smirk—like all priests, he becomes dangerous only when he loves. No one can match his way of worshiping that puts life at risk... Renan's kind of mind, a mind that drains people's strength, is one more disaster for poor, sick France, sick in its will.—

- ³ Sainte-Beuve.—Nothing of a man; full of petty bitterness against every manly mind. He wanders around, subtle, curious, bored, fishing for information—basically a woman, with a woman's vindictiveness and sensuality. As a psychologist, a genius at malicious gossip, with an inexhaustible supply of ways to do it. No one knows better how to mix poison into praise. His deepest instincts are common and base, related to Rousseau's resentment. So he is a Romantic—for underneath all Romanticism, Rousseau's instinct grunts and hungers for revenge. A revolutionary, but still reasonably restrained by fear. Not independent of anything that has strength: public opinion, the Academy, the court, even Port-Royal. Bitter toward everything great in people and things, toward everything that believes in itself. Enough of a poet and half a woman still to feel greatness as a power; always bent like that famous worm, because he always feels stepped on. As a critic he has no standard, stability, or backbone. He has the cosmopolitan libertine's tongue for many things, but not even the courage to admit his own free living. As a historian he has no philosophy, no power of philosophical insight. So he refuses the task of judging in any major matter, holding up "objectivity" as a mask. He is different with everything for which a delicate, worn-out taste is the final judge. There he really does have the courage to be himself and take pleasure in himself—there he is a master.—In some respects, an early form of Baudelaire.—

- ⁴ The *Imitation of Christ* is one of those books I cannot hold in my hands without a physical resistance. It gives off a perfume of the Eternal Feminine that you have to be French—or a Wagnerian—to appreciate... This saint has a way of talking about love that would make even the women of Paris curious.—I am

told that the cleverest of Jesuits, A. Comte, who wanted to lead his Frenchmen to Rome by the roundabout route of science, drew inspiration from this book. I believe it: “the religion of the heart” ...

- 5 G. Eliot.—They have got rid of the Christian God and now think they have all the more reason to hold on to Christian morality. That is English consistency; we won’t hold it against little moralizing women like Eliot. In England, for every small step away from theology, you have to regain your good name by showing yourself to be a frightening moral fanatic. That is the penance you pay there.—For the rest of us, things are different. When you give up Christian belief, you also pull the right to Christian morality out from under your feet. This morality is by no means self-evident. We have to keep bringing this point to light, despite the English blockheads. Christianity is a system, a connected and complete view of things. If you break a central idea out of it, the belief in God, you also break the whole thing apart. Nothing necessary remains in your hands. Christianity assumes that human beings do not know and cannot know what is good or evil for them. They believe in God, who alone knows it. Christian morality is a command. Its origin is beyond this world. It is beyond all criticism, beyond any right to criticize. It is true only if God is the truth—it stands or falls with belief in God.—If the English actually believe they know for themselves, “intuitively,” what is good and evil, and therefore think they no longer need Christianity to guarantee morality, that is itself only a consequence of the dominance of Christian value judgments. It shows how strong and deep this dominance is: the origin of English morality has been forgotten, and people no longer feel how much its right to exist depends on particular conditions. For the Englishman, morality is not yet a problem...
- 6 George Sand.—I read the first Letters of a Traveler: like everything that comes from Rousseau, false, contrived, puffed up like bellows, exaggerated. I cannot stand this colorful wallpaper of a style, or the commoner’s ambition to have generous feelings. The worst thing, though, remains this woman’s flirtation with masculine qualities, with the manners of ill-behaved boys.—How cold she must have been through all of it, this unbearable artist! She wound herself up

like a clock—and wrote... Cold, like Hugo, like Balzac, like all the Romantics as soon as they started writing literature! And how smugly she must have lain there, this fertile writing cow, who had something German about her in the bad sense, like Rousseau himself, her master, and who could only have become possible once French taste had declined!—But Renan worships her...

⁷ A rule for psychologists.—Don't practice cheap gossip psychology! Never observe just for the sake of observing! That gives you a false perspective, a squint, something forced and exaggerated. Trying to have experiences by wanting to have them—that doesn't work. You must not look at yourself while having an experience; every such look becomes the "evil eye." A born psychologist instinctively avoids looking just to look. The same is true of a born painter. He never works "from nature"—he leaves it to his instinct, his dark chamber, to sift and give expression to the "case," "nature," the "experience"... Only the general result enters his awareness: the conclusion, the outcome. He knows nothing of deliberately extracting an abstraction from an individual case.—What happens if you do it differently? For example, if you practice cheap gossip psychology like the Parisian novelists, great and small? You practically lie in wait for reality and bring home a handful of curiosities every evening... But just look at the final result—a heap of blotches, a mosaic at best, and in every case something pieced together, restless, with clashing colors. The Goncourts are the worst at this. They cannot put three sentences together without simply hurting the eye—the psychologist's eye.—Judged as art, nature is no model. It exaggerates, distorts, leaves gaps. Nature is chance. Studying "from nature" seems a bad sign to me: it reveals submission, weakness, fatalism. Groveling in the dust before little facts is unworthy of a complete artist. Seeing what is there—that belongs to another kind of mind, the unartistic, fact-minded kind. You have to know who you are...

⁸ On the artist's psychology.—For there to be art, for there to be any aesthetic activity or perception, one physical precondition is essential: intoxication. Intoxication must first have made the whole machine more excitable; otherwise no art results. Every kind of intoxication has this power, however different its

causes. Above all, the intoxication of sexual excitement, the oldest and most basic form of intoxication. Also the intoxication that follows every great desire, every strong emotion; the intoxication of festivals, competitions, daring feats, victory, any extreme movement; the intoxication of cruelty; intoxication in destruction; intoxication under certain weather conditions, such as spring fever; or under the influence of drugs; finally, intoxication of the will, of a will that is overflowing and swollen.—The essential thing in intoxication is the feeling of increased strength and fullness. Out of this feeling we give something to things, force them to take from us, overpower them—we call this process idealizing. Let's get rid of a prejudice here: idealizing does not consist, as people generally believe, in subtracting or discounting what is small or secondary. What matters instead is an enormous amplification of the main features, so that the others disappear beside them.

⁹ In this state a person enriches everything out of his own fullness: whatever he sees, whatever he wants, he sees swollen, compressed, strong, loaded with power. A person in this state transforms things until they mirror his power—until they are reflections of his perfection. This compulsion to transform things into something perfect is—art. Even everything he is not still becomes a delight in itself to him; in art a person enjoys himself as perfection.—We could imagine the opposite state: an instinct that is specifically anti-artistic, a way of being that makes everything poorer, thinner, consumptive. And in fact history is full of such anti-artists, people starved of life, who by necessity take things into themselves, drain them, and make them leaner. The genuine Christian is an example, Pascal for one: a Christian who was also an artist does not occur... Don't be childish and object with Raphael or some homeopathic Christians of the nineteenth century: Raphael said yes, Raphael did yes, so Raphael was not a Christian...

¹⁰ What do the opposing concepts Apollonian and Dionysian mean, which I introduced into aesthetics, both understood as kinds of intoxication?—Above all, Apollonian intoxication keeps the eye excited, so that it gains the power of vision. Painters, sculptors, and epic poets are visionaries in the fullest sense. In

the Dionysian state, by contrast, the whole system of emotions is excited and heightened. It discharges all its means of expression at once, and it drives out at the same time the power of representing, imitating, transfiguring, and transforming, every kind of mimicry and acting. What remains essential is the ease of transformation, the inability not to react (—much like certain hysterics, who also step into any role at the slightest hint). It is impossible for the Dionysian person to miss any suggestion; he overlooks no sign of emotion; he has the highest degree of the instinct for understanding and guessing, just as he has the highest degree of skill at communicating. He enters every skin, every emotion; he is constantly changing himself.—Music as we understand it today is likewise a total excitement and discharge of the emotions, but still only the leftover of a much fuller world of emotional expression, a mere remainder of Dionysian play-acting. To make music possible as a separate art, a number of senses have been shut down, above all the muscle sense (at least relatively; to a certain degree all rhythm still speaks to our muscles), so that a person no longer imitates and acts out in his body everything he feels right away. Even so, this is the truly Dionysian normal state, in any case the original state; music is the slowly achieved specialization of this state, at the expense of the most closely related abilities.

- ¹¹ The actor, the mime, the dancer, the musician, and the lyric poet are fundamentally related in their instincts and in themselves one, but they have gradually specialized and separated from each other—even to the point of contradiction. The lyric poet stayed united with the musician longest; the actor with the dancer.—The architect represents neither a Dionysian nor an Apollonian state. Here it is the great act of will, the will that moves mountains, the intoxication of great will, that calls for art. The most powerful people have always inspired the architects; the architect was always under the suggestion of power. A building is meant to make pride, victory over gravity, and the will to power visible; architecture is a kind of eloquence of power in forms, sometimes persuading, even flattering, sometimes simply commanding. The highest feeling of power and security is expressed in whatever has the grand style. Power that no longer

needs proof; that scorns to please; that is slow to answer; that feels no witness around it; that lives unaware that there is any opposition to it; that rests in itself, fatalistic, a law among laws: that is how the grand style speaks of itself.—

- 12 I read the life of Thomas Carlyle, a farce that happened without anyone knowing or meaning it, a heroic and moral interpretation of upset stomachs.—Carlyle, a man of strong words and poses, an orator by necessity, constantly irritated by the longing for a strong faith and the feeling that he is incapable of it (—in that a typical Romantic!). Longing for a strong faith is not proof of a strong faith; it is the opposite. If you have such a faith, you can allow yourself the fine luxury of skepticism: you are secure enough, firm enough, tied down enough for it. Carlyle numbs something in himself with the fortissimo of his reverence for people of strong faith and with his fury against the less simple-minded: he needs noise. A constant, passionate dishonesty toward himself—that is his distinguishing trait; that is what makes him interesting, and keeps him so.—Of course, in England he is admired precisely for his honesty... Well, that is English; and considering that the English are the people of perfect cant, it is even fair, and not just understandable. At bottom Carlyle is an English atheist who makes it a point of honor not to be one.

- 13 Emerson.—Much more enlightened, more wide-ranging, more many-sided, more refined than Carlyle, and above all happier... A man who instinctively feeds only on ambrosia, who leaves behind whatever is indigestible in things. Compared with Carlyle, a man of taste.—Carlyle, who was very fond of him, still said of him: “He doesn’t give us enough to bite on.” That may be rightly said, but it does not count against Emerson.—Emerson has that kind and witty cheerfulness which discourages all seriousness. He simply has no idea how old he already is and how young he will still be—he could say of himself, in words of Lope de Vega, “I succeed myself.” His mind always finds reasons to be content and even grateful; and sometimes he touches the cheerful transcendence of that decent fellow who came back from a lovers’ rendezvous as though the business had gone well. “Though strength may be lacking,” he said gratefully, “the pleasure still deserves praise.”—

- ¹⁴ Anti-Darwin.—As for the famous struggle for life, so far it seems to me more asserted than proved. It does occur, but as an exception. The overall look of life is not need or hunger but wealth, abundance, even absurd waste—where there is fighting, it is a fight for power... Don't confuse Malthus with nature.—But suppose this struggle exists—and in fact it does occur—then unfortunately it turns out the opposite of what Darwin's school wants, and perhaps of what one might want along with them: namely, it turns out to the disadvantage of the strong, the privileged, the fortunate exceptions. Species do not grow in perfection: the weak keep becoming master over the strong—the reason is that they are the great majority, and they are also cleverer... Darwin forgot intelligence (—that is English!); the weak have more intelligence... You have to need intelligence in order to get it—you lose it when you no longer need it. Whoever has strength gets rid of intelligence (—"let it go!" people think in Germany today, "the Empire must stay with us anyway"...). By intelligence, as you can see, I mean caution, patience, cunning, disguise, great self-control, and everything that counts as mimicry (a large part of so-called virtue belongs to the latter).
- ¹⁵ Case studies of psychologists.—This man is a judge of human nature: why does he actually study people? He wants to snatch small advantages over them, or big ones—he is a politician!... That man over there is also a judge of human nature, and you say he wants nothing for himself from it, that he is a great "impersonal one." Look closer! Maybe he wants an even worse advantage: to feel superior to people, to be able to look down on them, to no longer be mistaken for one of them. This "impersonal one" is a despiser of people; and the first man is the more humane type, whatever appearances may say. At least he puts himself on the same level; he puts himself in among them...
- ¹⁶ The Germans' psychological tact seems to me called into question by a whole series of cases, and my modesty keeps me from presenting the list. In one case I do have a big occasion to support my claim: I hold it against the Germans that they misjudged Kant and his "philosophy of back doors," as I call it—he was not the type of intellectual honesty.—The other thing I cannot stand to hear is

a notorious “and”: the Germans say “Goethe and Schiller”—I fear they say “Schiller and Goethe”... Don’t people know this Schiller yet?—There are even worse “ands”; I have heard with my own ears, though only among university professors, “Schopenhauer and Hartmann.”

- 17 The most intellectual people, provided they are also the most courageous, also experience by far the most painful tragedies. But for that very reason they honor life, because it sets its greatest opposition against them.
- 18 On “intellectual conscience.”—Nothing seems to me rarer today than real hypocrisy. I strongly suspect that the mild air of our culture is not good for this plant. Hypocrisy belongs to ages of strong belief, when even if you were forced to put on a show of some other belief, you did not let go of the belief you had. Today you let it go; or, more commonly still, you acquire a second belief as well—in either case you stay honest. Without doubt a much greater number of convictions is possible today than before: possible, that is, permitted, that is, harmless. Out of this comes tolerance toward oneself.—Tolerance toward oneself allows several convictions; these live together peacefully—they take care, like everyone today, not to compromise themselves. What compromises you today? Being consistent. Going in a straight line. Having fewer than five meanings. Being genuine... I am very afraid that modern people are simply too comfortable for some vices, so that these are dying out altogether. All evil that depends on a strong will—and perhaps there is no evil without strength of will—degenerates into virtue in our lukewarm air... The few hypocrites I got to know were imitating hypocrisy: they were actors, like almost every tenth person these days.—
- 19 Beautiful and ugly.—Nothing is more conditional, let us say more limited, than our sense of the beautiful. Anyone who wanted to think of it apart from people’s delight in people would immediately lose the ground under his feet. The “beautiful in itself” is merely a word, not even a concept. In the beautiful a person sets himself up as the measure of perfection; in select cases he worships himself in it. A species cannot do anything other than say yes to itself alone in

this way. Its lowest instinct, that of self-preservation and self-expansion, still radiates out even in such sublimities. A person believes that the world itself is heaped with beauty—he forgets that he is its cause. He alone has given it beauty—alas, only a very human, all-too-human beauty... At bottom a person mirrors himself in things; he considers everything beautiful that throws his image back at him. The judgment “beautiful” is the vanity of his species... A small suspicion may whisper this question in the skeptic’s ear: is the world really made more beautiful by the fact that humans take it to be beautiful? He has made it human: that is all. But nothing, nothing at all, guarantees us that humans should be the model of the beautiful. Who knows how he looks in the eyes of a higher judge of taste? Perhaps daring? Perhaps even amusing? Perhaps a little arbitrary?... “Oh Dionysus, divine one, why are you pulling me by the ears?” Ariadne once asked her philosopher lover in one of those famous dialogues on Naxos. “I find a kind of humor in your ears, Ariadne: why aren’t they even longer?”

- 20 Nothing is beautiful; only man is beautiful: all aesthetics rests on this naïveté; it is the first truth of aesthetics. Let us add its second truth right away: nothing is ugly except degenerating man—with that, the realm of aesthetic judgment is bounded.—Figured out physiologically, everything ugly weakens and saddens people. It reminds them of decay, danger, powerlessness; they actually lose strength from it. You can measure the effect of the ugly with a dynamometer. Wherever a person is pushed down at all, he senses that something “ugly” is near. His feeling of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride—these fall with the ugly and rise with the beautiful... In both cases we draw a conclusion; the premises for it are piled up in enormous quantity in instinct. The ugly is understood as a hint and symptom of degeneration; whatever reminds us of degeneration, even in the most distant way, produces in us the judgment “ugly.” Every sign of exhaustion, heaviness, age, tiredness; every kind of lack of freedom, such as cramp or paralysis; above all the smell, color, and form of dissolution and rot, even when diluted to a mere symbol—all of this calls up the same reaction, the value judgment “ugly.” A hatred leaps out there: whom does

man hate there? But there is no doubt: the decline of his own type. He hates there out of the deepest instinct of his species; in this hatred are shuddering, caution, depth, far-sightedness—it is the deepest hatred there is. Because of it, art is deep...

²¹ Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer, the last German who counts (who is a European event, like Goethe, like Hegel, like Heinrich Heine, and not merely a local, “national” one), is a case of the first rank for a psychologist: namely, as a maliciously brilliant attempt to bring into the field, in support of a nihilistic devaluation of life as a whole, precisely the opposing cases—the great self-affirmations of the “will to life,” the exuberant forms of life. One after another, he interpreted art, heroism, genius, beauty, great compassion, knowledge, the will to truth, and tragedy as consequences of the “denial” of the “will,” or of the will’s need for denial—the greatest psychological counterfeiting in history, apart from Christianity. Looked at more closely, in this he is only the heir of the Christian interpretation, except that he knew how to approve even what Christianity rejected, the great cultural facts of humanity, in a Christian, that is, nihilistic sense (namely as paths to “redemption,” as early forms of “redemption,” as stimulants of the need for “redemption” ...).

²² I will take one single case. Schopenhauer speaks of beauty with a melancholy fervor—why, ultimately? Because he sees in it a bridge on which one gets further, or gets thirsty to get further... For him it is redemption from the “will” for moments—it entices toward redemption forever... Above all he praises it as the redeemer from the “focal point of the will,” from sexuality—in beauty he sees the drive to procreate denied... Strange saint! Someone contradicts you, and I fear it is nature. Why is there beauty in nature at all, in sound, color, scent, rhythmic movement? What drives beauty out?—Fortunately a philosopher also contradicts him. No lesser authority than the divine Plato (Schopenhauer himself calls him that) maintains a different claim: that all beauty stimulates procreation—that this is precisely the distinctive feature of its effect, from the most sensual up to the most spiritual...

²³ Plato goes further. He says, with an innocence you need to be Greek to have, and not “Christian,” that there would be no Platonic philosophy at all if there were not such beautiful young men in Athens: it is only the sight of them that throws the philosopher’s soul into an erotic frenzy and gives it no rest until it has sunk the seed of all lofty things into such beautiful soil. Another strange saint!—you can’t believe your ears, even if you do trust Plato. At the very least you guess that philosophy was done differently in Athens, above all in public. Nothing is less Greek than the concept-cobweb-weaving of a hermit, the intellectual love of God in the manner of Spinoza. Philosophy in Plato’s style would be better defined as an erotic competition, as a further development and internalization of the old competitive gymnastics and what it presupposed... What finally grew out of Plato’s philosophical eroticism? A new art form of the Greek contest: dialectic.—I would also remind you, against Schopenhauer and in Plato’s honor, that the whole higher culture and literature of classical France also grew up on the soil of sexual interest. Everywhere in it you may look for gallantry, the senses, competition between the sexes, “woman”—you will never look in vain...

²⁴ Art for art’s sake.—The fight against purpose in art is always a fight against the moralizing tendency in art, against its subordination to morality. Art for art’s sake means: “To the devil with morality!”—But even this hostility still shows the overwhelming power of the prejudice. If you have excluded the purpose of preaching morals and improving people from art, it does not follow by a long way that art has no purpose at all, no aim, no meaning—in short, that it is art for art’s sake, a worm biting its own tail. “Better no purpose at all than a moral purpose!”—that is mere passion talking. A psychologist asks instead: what does all art do? Doesn’t it praise? Doesn’t it glorify? Doesn’t it select? Doesn’t it bring things forward? In doing all this it strengthens or weakens certain valuations... Is this only a side effect? An accident? Something in which the artist’s instinct was not involved at all? Or is it rather the precondition for the artist being able to do what he does...? Is his deepest instinct aimed at art, or rather at the point of art, which is life? At the desirability of life?—Art is the great stim-

ulant to life: how could anyone understand it as purposeless, aimless, art for art's sake?—One question remains: art also brings out much of life's ugliness, hardness, and questionable side—doesn't that seem to put us off life?—And in fact there were philosophers who gave it this meaning: Schopenhauer taught “getting free of the will” as the overall aim of art, and he honored “putting us in a mood of resignation” as the great usefulness of tragedy.—But this—I have already hinted at it—is the pessimist's way of seeing and an “evil eye”: we must appeal to the artists themselves. What does the tragic artist communicate of himself? Isn't it precisely the state of being without fear of the terrible and questionable things he shows?—This state is itself highly desirable; whoever knows it honors it with the highest honors. He communicates it, he has to communicate it, provided he is an artist, a genius of communication. The bravery and freedom of feeling in front of a powerful enemy, a sublime hardship, a problem that arouses dread—this victorious state is what the tragic artist selects and glorifies. Before tragedy the warlike part of our soul celebrates its Saturnalia; the person who is used to suffering, who seeks out suffering, the heroic person, praises his existence with tragedy—to him alone the tragic poet offers the drink of this sweetest cruelty.—

- 25 Taking people as they come, keeping open house with your heart—that is generous, but it is only generous. You recognize the hearts capable of noble hospitality by the many curtained windows and closed shutters: they keep their best rooms empty. Why? Because they are expecting guests with whom one does not “make do.”
- 26 We no longer value ourselves enough when we communicate ourselves. Our real experiences are not chatty at all. They could not communicate themselves even if they wanted to. The reason is that they lack the word. What we have words for, we have already moved past. There is a grain of contempt in all talking. Language, it seems, was invented only for what is average, middling, communicable. With language the speaker already makes himself vulgar.—From a morality for the deaf and mute, and other philosophers.

- 27 “This image is enchantingly beautiful!”... The literary woman, unsatisfied, agitated, empty in heart and belly, listening at all times with painful curiosity to the command that whispers “either children or books” from the depths of her body: the literary woman, educated enough to understand the voice of nature even when it speaks Latin, and on the other hand vain and enough of a silly goose to also say to herself in secret, in French: “I will see myself, I will read myself, I will go into ecstasies, and I will say: is it possible that I had so much wit?”
- 28 The “impersonal ones” get their say.—“Nothing is easier for us than to be wise, patient, superior. We drip with the oil of indulgence and sympathy; we are absurdly fair; we forgive everything. For that very reason we ought to be a little stricter with ourselves; for that very reason we ought to cultivate in ourselves, from time to time, a small emotion, a small vice of passion. It may go hard with us; and among ourselves we perhaps laugh at the picture we present that way. But what can we do! We have no other form of self-overcoming left: this is our asceticism, our penance”... Getting personal—the virtue of the “impersonal one”...
- 29 From a doctoral examination.—“What is the task of all higher education?”—To turn the person into a machine.—“What is the means?”—He has to learn to be bored.—“How is that achieved?”—Through the concept of duty.—“Who is his model for it?”—The philologist: he teaches cramming.—“Who is the perfect person?”—The civil servant.—“Which philosophy gives the highest formula for the civil servant?”—Kant’s: the civil servant as thing-in-itself, set up as judge over the civil servant as appearance.—
- 30 The right to stupidity.—The tired worker who breathes slowly, who looks good-natured, who lets things go as they go: this typical figure, whom one now meets in all classes of society in the age of work (and of the “Empire”!), claims art for himself today, books included, above all the newspaper—and how much more so beautiful nature, Italy... The evening person, with the “wild urges lulled to sleep” that Faust talks about, needs the summer resort, the

seaside, the glaciers, Bayreuth... In ages like these art has a right to pure foolishness, as a kind of vacation for mind, wit, and feeling. Wagner understood that. Pure foolishness restores...

- 31 Another problem of diet.—The means with which Julius Caesar defended himself against sickness and headaches: enormous marches, the simplest way of life, constant time outdoors, continual hardships—these are, on the large scale, the measures of preservation and protection in general against the extreme vulnerability of that subtle machine, working under the highest pressure, which is called genius.—
- 32 The immoralist speaks.—Nothing offends a philosopher's taste more than man insofar as he wishes... If the philosopher sees man only in his doing, sees this bravest, craftiest, most enduring animal lost even in labyrinthine predicaments, how admirable man seems to him! He still speaks encouragement to him... But the philosopher despises man the wisher, also the "desirable" man—and in general everything desirable, all of man's ideals. If a philosopher could be a nihilist, he would be one because he finds nothing behind all of man's ideals. Or not even nothing—only the worthless, the absurd, the sick, the cowardly, the tired, every kind of dregs from the drained cup of his life... Man, who as a reality is so worthy of reverence—how is it that he deserves no respect as soon as he wishes? Does he have to pay for being so capable as a reality? Does he have to make up for his doing, the strain of head and will in all doing, by stretching his limbs in the imaginary and absurd?—The history of his desirables has so far been the shameful private parts of man: one should take care not to read in it too long. What justifies man is his reality—it will justify him forever. How much more is the real man worth compared with any merely wished-for, dreamed-up, fabricated, lied-into-existence man? Compared with any ideal man?... And only the ideal man offends the philosopher's taste.
- 33 The natural value of egoism.—Selfishness is worth as much as the person who has it is worth physiologically: it can be worth a great deal, or it can be worthless and contemptible. Every individual can be looked at to see whether he repre-

sents the ascending or the descending line of life. Once you have decided that, you also have a standard for what his selfishness is worth. If he represents the rising line, then his value is indeed extraordinary—and for the sake of life as a whole, which takes a step forward with him, the care to preserve him and to create the best possible conditions for him may even be extreme. The single person, the “individual” as the people and philosophers have understood it so far, is after all an error: he is nothing in himself, no atom, no “link in the chain,” nothing merely inherited from the past—he is the whole one line of humanity all the way up to himself... If he represents the descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, sickness (—illnesses are, on the large scale, already results of decay, not its causes), then he has little value, and basic fairness demands that he take as little as possible away from those who have turned out well. He is only their parasite now...

- 34 Christian and anarchist.—When the anarchist, as mouthpiece of declining layers of society, demands “right,” “justice,” “equal rights” with fine indignation, he is only under the pressure of his lack of culture, which does not know how to grasp why he is actually suffering—what he is poor in: life... A drive to find causes is strong in him: someone must be to blame for his feeling bad... The “fine indignation” itself also does him good; it is a pleasure for all poor devils to grumble—it gives a small intoxication of power. Even complaint, complaining about oneself, can give life an appeal that makes it bearable: there is a subtler dose of revenge in every complaint. You reproach those who are different for your bad feeling—under some circumstances even for your own badness—as if it were a wrong, as if they enjoyed an illegitimate privilege. “If I am a scoundrel, you should be one too”: on this logic people make revolution.—Complaining is good for nothing in any case: it comes from weakness. Whether you blame others or yourself for your bad feeling—the socialist does the former, the Christian for example the latter—makes no real difference. What they have in common, let us also say the undignified part, is that someone is supposed to be to blame for one’s suffering—in short, that the sufferer prescribes himself the honey of revenge against his suffering. The objects of this need for revenge, as a

need for pleasure, are causes picked up as the occasion arises: the sufferer finds causes everywhere to cool his small revenge—if he is a Christian, to say it again, he finds them in himself... The Christian and the anarchist—both are decadents.—But even when the Christian condemns, slanders, and dirties the “world,” he does it out of the same instinct from which the socialist worker condemns, slanders, and dirties society: the “Last Judgment” itself is still the sweet comfort of revenge—the revolution, as the socialist worker also expects it, only imagined somewhat further off... The “beyond” itself—what is a beyond for, if not as a means of dirtying the here and now?...

- 35 A criticism of the morality of decadence. An “altruistic” morality, a morality in which self-interest wastes away, is always a bad sign. This applies to individuals, and especially to whole peoples. When self-interest starts to fail, the best thing is missing. Instinctively choosing what harms you, being drawn to “disinterested” motives, comes close to a formula for decadence. “Not looking out for your own advantage”—that is just the moral fig leaf covering a very different, physiological fact: “I no longer know how to find my own advantage.” The instincts are falling apart!—Once a person becomes altruistic, it is all over for him.—Instead of saying frankly, “I’m no longer worth anything,” the moral lie in the decadent person’s mouth says, “Nothing is worth anything—life is worth nothing”... Such a judgment is ultimately a great danger. It is contagious—across the whole diseased soil of society, it soon grows into a tropical jungle of concepts, now as religion (Christianity), now as philosophy (Schopenhauerism). Under some circumstances, the fumes of these poisonous trees, grown from decay, poison life far and wide, for thousands of years...
- 36 Morality for doctors.—A sick person is a parasite on society. In a certain condition, it is indecent to go on living. Continuing to vegetate in cowardly dependence on doctors and medical treatments, after the meaning of life and the right to live have been lost, should meet with deep contempt from society. Doctors, in turn, should communicate this contempt—not prescriptions, but a fresh dose of disgust at their patient every day... A new responsibility must be created, the doctor’s responsibility, for every case in which the highest interest

of life, of life on the rise, calls for the most ruthless suppression and pushing aside of degenerating life—for example, concerning the right to reproduce, the right to be born, the right to live... To die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly. Death freely chosen, death at the right time, carried out clearly and cheerfully, among children and witnesses: so that a real farewell is still possible, with the person saying goodbye still present; and likewise a real assessment of what has been achieved and wanted, a summing up of life—all in contrast to the pitiful, horrifying comedy Christianity has made of the hour of death. Christianity must never be forgiven for exploiting the dying person's weakness to rape his conscience, for misusing the very manner of his death to pass value judgments on the person and his past!—Here, in spite of all the cowardice of prejudice, the first task is to establish the right assessment—that is, the physiological assessment—of so-called natural death, which in the end is only an “unnatural” death too, a suicide. No one ever dies through anyone but himself. Only, this is death under the most contemptible conditions, an unfree death, a death at the wrong time, a coward's death. Out of love for life, we should want death differently: freely, consciously, not by chance, not by surprise... Finally, a piece of advice for the pessimists and other decadents. It is not in our power to prevent being born, but we can make up for this mistake—for sometimes it is a mistake. When you do away with yourself, you do the most respectable thing there is: you almost earn the right to live by doing it... Society—what am I saying! Life itself benefits more from this than from any “life” of self-denial, anemia, and other virtues—you have freed others from the sight of you, freed life from an objection to it... Pure, fresh pessimism proves itself only through the pessimists' refutation of themselves: they must go one step further in their logic, not just deny life with “will and representation,” as Schopenhauer did—they must first deny Schopenhauer... Incidentally, however contagious pessimism is, it still does not increase the total sickness of an age or a generation: it expresses that sickness. You fall victim to it as you fall victim to cholera: you must already have a sufficiently sickly disposition.

Pessimism itself does not produce a single additional decadent. I recall the statistical finding that the years in which cholera rages do not differ from other years in the total number of deaths.

- 37 Have we become more moral?—As might have been expected, all the ferocity of moral stupidity—which in Germany, as everyone knows, counts as morality itself—has thrown itself against my idea of “beyond good and evil.” I could tell some nice stories about that. Above all, people asked me to consider our age’s “undeniable superiority” in moral judgment, the real progress we have made here: compared with us, they said, Cesare Borgia certainly should not be presented as a “higher human being,” a kind of overman, as I present him... A Swiss editor at the “Bund” went so far as to “understand” my work as a proposal to abolish all decent feelings, while expressing his respect for the courage it took to dare such a thing. Much obliged!—In reply, I take the liberty of asking whether we really have become more moral. That everyone believes it is already an objection... We modern people, very delicate, very easily hurt, giving and receiving a hundred kinds of consideration, really do imagine that the tender humanity we embody, the agreement we have reached about sparing one another, helping one another, trusting one another, is a positive advance; that it puts us far above the people of the Renaissance. But every age thinks this way, has to think this way. What is certain is that we could not put ourselves into Renaissance conditions, or even imagine ourselves there: our nerves could not stand that reality, not to mention our muscles. But this inability proves no progress, only a different, later constitution, a weaker, more delicate, more vulnerable one, which necessarily produces a morality full of consideration. Imagine away our delicacy and lateness, our physiological aging, and our morality of “humanization” would immediately lose its value too—no morality has value in itself: it would make us despise ourselves. On the other hand, let us not doubt that we modern people, with our thickly padded humanity, which refuses to bump into a single stone, would give Cesare Borgia’s contemporaries a comedy to die laughing at. In fact, with our modern “virtues,” we are extraordinarily funny without meaning to be... The decline of hostile instincts,

instincts that arouse distrust—and that would be our “progress”—is only one consequence of the general decline in vitality: it takes a hundred times more effort, more caution, to maintain an existence so dependent on conditions, so late in life. People help one another; everyone is to some extent a patient, and everyone a nurse. Then they call that “virtue”—among people who knew life differently, fuller, more extravagant, more overflowing, it would have had another name, perhaps “cowardice,” “wretchedness,” “old women’s morality”... Our milder customs—this is my proposition, my new idea, if you like—are a consequence of decline; conversely, harsh and terrifying customs can result from an excess of life. For then much can be risked, much challenged, much wasted too. What once gave life its spice would be poison to us... We are also too old, too late, to be indifferent—that too is a form of strength. Our morality of sympathetic feeling, against which I was the first to warn, what could be called “moral impressionism,” is one more expression of the physiological oversensitivity characteristic of everything decadent. That movement which tried to present itself scientifically through Schopenhauer’s morality of pity—a very unsuccessful attempt!—is the real movement of decadence in morality. As such, it is deeply related to Christian morality. Strong ages, noble cultures, see something contemptible in pity, in “love of one’s neighbor,” in a lack of self and self-esteem.—Ages must be measured by their positive strengths—and by that measure, the Renaissance, so extravagant and so full of disastrous consequences, proves to be the last great age. And we, we modern people, with our anxious care for ourselves and love of our neighbors, with our virtues of hard work, modest expectations, honesty, and scientific method—collecting, economical, mechanical—prove to be a weak age... Our virtues are conditioned, are called for, by our weakness... “Equality,” a certain actual growing alike that merely finds expression in the theory of “equal rights,” essentially belongs to decline. The gap between one person and another, one class and another, the variety of types, the will to be oneself, to stand apart, what I call the passion of distance, belongs to every strong age. Today the tension, the distance spanned between the extremes, is growing smaller and smaller—the extremes themselves finally blur into similarity... All our political theories and constitutions, cer-

tainly including the “German Empire,” are conclusions, necessary consequences, of decline. The unconscious influence of decadence has gained control even over the ideals of particular sciences. My objection to all sociology in England and France remains that its experience is limited to the decaying forms of society, and that it quite innocently takes its own instincts of decay as the standard for sociological value judgments. Declining life, the decrease in all organizing power—that is, power that separates, opens gaps, puts some below and others above—is formulated as an ideal in today’s sociology... Our socialists are decadents, but Mr. Herbert Spencer is a decadent too—he sees the victory of altruism as something desirable!...

- ³⁸ My idea of freedom.—Sometimes a thing’s value lies not in what we achieve with it but in what we pay for it—what it costs us. Here is an example. Liberal institutions stop being liberal as soon as they have been achieved: after that, nothing harms freedom more badly or more thoroughly than liberal institutions. We know what they bring about: they undermine the will to power, they turn leveling mountains and valleys into a moral principle, they make people small, cowardly, and pleasure-seeking—with them, the herd animal always wins. Liberalism: in plain language, becoming herd animals... While these same institutions are still being fought for, they have quite different effects; then they really do promote freedom powerfully. Look more closely, and it is war that produces these effects, the war for liberal institutions, which, as war, keeps the illiberal instincts alive. And war teaches freedom. For what is freedom? Having the will to take responsibility for oneself. Maintaining the distance that separates us. Becoming more indifferent to hardship, severity, deprivation, even to life. Being ready to sacrifice people to one’s cause, oneself included. Freedom means that the masculine instincts, the instincts that delight in war and victory, rule over other instincts, for example the instincts of “happiness.” The person who has become free, and still more the spirit that has become free, tramples on the contemptible kind of comfort that shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats dream of. A free person is a warrior.—What measures freedom, in individuals as in peoples? The resistance that must be

overcome, the effort it takes to stay on top. The highest type of free person should be sought where the greatest resistance is constantly overcome: five steps away from tyranny, right on the threshold of the danger of slavery. This is true psychologically, if by “tyrants” we mean relentless and terrible instincts that call for the greatest possible authority and discipline against them—the finest example is Julius Caesar. It is also true politically: just take a walk through history. Peoples who were worth something, who became worth something, never did so under liberal institutions. Great danger made them into something deserving of reverence, danger that first teaches us what our resources, our virtues, our defenses and weapons, our minds are—danger that forces us to be strong... First principle: you must need to be strong; otherwise you never will be.—Those great hothouses for strong people, for the strongest kind of person there has ever been, the aristocratic communities of the kind found in Rome and Venice, understood freedom in exactly the sense in which I understand the word freedom: as something you have and do not have, something you want, something you conquer...

- ³⁹ A criticism of modernity.—Our institutions are no good anymore: everyone agrees on that. But that is our fault, not theirs. Now that we have lost all the instincts from which institutions grow, we are losing institutions altogether, because we are no longer fit for them. Democracy has always been the declining form of organizing power: already in “Human, All Too Human” 1, 318, I described modern democracy, along with its halfway forms such as the “German Empire,” as a form of the state’s decay. For institutions to exist, there must be a kind of will, instinct, command, anti-liberal to the point of viciousness: the will for tradition, for authority, for responsibility extending centuries ahead, for solidarity among chains of generations reaching forward and backward without end. Where this will exists, something like the Roman Empire is founded; or like Russia, the only power today that has endurance in its body, that can wait, that can still promise something—Russia, the opposite of Europe’s pitiful fragmentation into little states and its nervousness, which entered a critical phase with the founding of the German Empire... The whole

West no longer has the instincts from which institutions grow, from which a future grows: perhaps nothing goes so much against the grain of its “modern spirit.” People live for today, they live very fast—they live very irresponsibly: this is precisely what they call “freedom.” What makes institutions into institutions is despised, hated, rejected: people think they are in danger of a new slavery as soon as the word “authority” is even spoken. That is how far decadence has gone in our politicians’ and political parties’ instinct for values: they instinctively prefer what breaks things apart, what speeds up the end... Modern marriage is evidence. Clearly, all reason has disappeared from modern marriage: but that is no objection to marriage, only to modernity. The reason behind marriage lay in the man’s sole legal responsibility: that gave marriage weight, whereas today it limps on both legs. The reason behind marriage lay in its being indissoluble in principle: that gave it an emphasis that could make itself heard against the accidents of feeling, passion, and the moment. It also lay in families’ responsibility for choosing the partners. By growing more tolerant toward marriage for love, people have actually eliminated marriage’s foundation, what first makes it an institution. You never, ever base an institution on a personal peculiarity; as I said, you do not base marriage on “love.” You base it on the sexual drive, on the drive to own property (wife and child as property), on the drive to rule, which keeps organizing the smallest structure of rule for itself, the family; which needs children and heirs to maintain an achieved degree of power, influence, and wealth physiologically too, to prepare for long-term tasks, for solidarity of instinct across centuries. Marriage as an institution already includes affirmation of the greatest, most lasting form of organization: if society itself cannot, as a whole, stand guarantee for itself into the most distant generations, marriage has no meaning at all.—Modern marriage lost its meaning—so people abolish it.—

- 40 The worker question.—The stupidity—really the degeneration of instinct that causes all stupidity today—lies in the very existence of a worker question. You do not ask questions about certain things: the first command of instinct.—I cannot see at all what people intend to do with the European worker, now that

they have made him into a question. He is doing far too well not to ask for more, step by step, to make more immodest demands. In the end, he has the great weight of numbers on his side. The hope that a modest, self-sufficient kind of person, a Chinese type, might develop into a class here is completely gone; and that would have made sense, that would actually have been necessary. What have people done?—Everything to destroy even the conditions for it in the bud. With the most irresponsible thoughtlessness, they have utterly destroyed the instincts through which a worker becomes possible as a class, possible to himself. They have made the worker fit for military service, given him the right to organize and the right to vote politically: is it any wonder that the worker already feels his existence to be a state of distress—in moral terms, an injustice? But what do people want? I ask again. If you want an end, you must also want the means: if you want slaves, you are a fool to train them to be masters.—

⁴¹ “Freedom that I do not mean...” In times like ours, being left to your instincts is one more disaster. These instincts contradict, disrupt, and destroy one another; I have already defined modernity as physiological self-contradiction. A rational education would require that at least one of these systems of instinct be paralyzed under iron pressure, allowing another to gain strength, become strong, become master. Today the individual would first have to be made possible by being pruned: possible, that is, whole... The opposite happens: independence, free development, letting things take their course, are demanded most hotly by precisely those for whom no restraint would be too strict—this applies in politics and in art. But that is a symptom of decadence: our modern idea of “freedom” is one more proof of the degeneration of instinct.—

⁴² Where belief is needed.—Nothing is rarer among moralists and saints than honesty; perhaps they say the opposite, perhaps they believe it themselves. For when a belief is more useful, more effective, more convincing than conscious hypocrisy, instinct soon turns hypocrisy into innocence: the first principle for understanding great saints. With philosophers, another kind of saint, the whole trade likewise requires them to admit only certain truths: namely, those on

whose basis their trade has public approval—in Kant’s terms, truths of practical reason. They know what they have to prove; in that respect they are practical—they recognize one another by their agreement about “the truths.”—“You shall not lie”—in plain language: take care, Mr. Philosopher, not to tell the truth...

⁴³ A word in the conservatives’ ear.—What people did not know before, what they know today, or could know: regression, a return in any sense or to any degree, is not possible at all. We physiologists, at least, know this. But all priests and moralists have believed in it—they wanted to bring humanity back, screw it back, to an earlier level of virtue. Morality was always a bed of Procrustes. Even politicians have imitated the preachers of virtue here: even today there are parties whose dream and goal is for everything to move backward like a crab. But no one is free to be a crab. There is no help for it: we must go forward, which means step by step further into decadence (—this is my definition of modern “progress” ...). You can hold this development back and, by holding it back, dam up degeneration itself, let it accumulate, make it more violent and sudden: you can do no more.—

⁴⁴ My idea of genius.—Great men, like great ages, are explosives in which an enormous force has been stored up. Historically and physiologically, they always presuppose a long process of collecting, accumulating, saving, and preserving for their sake—a long time without an explosion. Once the tension in the mass has grown too great, the most accidental stimulus is enough to call “genius,” the “deed,” a great destiny into the world. What do surroundings, historical period, the “spirit of the age,” or “public opinion” matter then?—Take Napoleon’s case. The France of the Revolution, and even more the France before the Revolution, would have produced from itself the opposite type to Napoleon’s: it did produce that type. And because Napoleon was different, the heir of a stronger, longer, older civilization than the one going up in smoke and falling to pieces in France, he became master here; he alone was master here. Great people are necessary; the age in which they appear is accidental. They almost always become masters of their age simply because they are stronger,

because they are older, because the accumulation that prepared for them went on longer. The relation between a genius and his age is like that between strong and weak, also like that between old and young: comparatively, the age is always much younger, thinner, less mature, less sure of itself, more childish.—That people in France think very differently about this today (in Germany too, but that does not matter), that the theory of the social environment, a truly neurotic theory, has become sacred and almost scientific there, finding believers even among physiologists—that “doesn’t smell good,” it gives you sad thoughts.—People in England understand it no differently, but no one will be upset about that. The Englishman has only two ways of coming to terms with genius and the “great man”: either democratically, in Buckle’s manner, or religiously, in Carlyle’s.—The danger in great people and great ages is extraordinary; exhaustion of every kind, sterility, follows right on their heels. The great person is an end; the great age, the Renaissance for example, is an end. Genius—in work, in action—is necessarily a spendthrift: its greatness lies in spending itself... The instinct for self-preservation is, as it were, disconnected; the overwhelming pressure of the forces pouring out forbids any such care and caution. People call this “self-sacrifice”; they praise its “heroism,” its indifference to its own well-being, its devotion to an idea, a great cause, a fatherland: all misunderstandings... It pours out, it overflows, it uses itself up, it does not spare itself—inevitably, disastrously, involuntarily, as a river bursts its banks involuntarily. But because people owe so much to such explosives, they have given them much in return, for example a kind of higher morality... That is how human gratitude works: it misunderstands its benefactors.—

- 45 The criminal and related types.—The criminal type is the strong person under unfavorable conditions, a strong person made sick. He lacks the wilderness, a certain freer, more dangerous nature and way of life, in which everything that serves as a weapon or defense in the strong person’s instinct has its rightful place. Society has outlawed his virtues; the liveliest drives he brought with him soon grow together with depressing emotions, with suspicion, fear, dishonor. But this is almost a recipe for physiological degeneration. Someone who has to

do what he does best, what he most wants to do, in secret, with prolonged tension, caution, cunning, becomes anemic. And because his instincts never bring him anything but danger, persecution, disaster, his feeling toward these instincts also changes—he feels them as a doom. It is society, our tame, mediocre, castrated society, in which a naturally vigorous person coming from the mountains or the adventures of the sea necessarily degenerates into a criminal. Or almost necessarily: for there are cases in which such a person proves stronger than society: the Corsican Napoleon is the most famous case. Dostoevsky's testimony matters for the problem before us—Dostoevsky, incidentally the only psychologist from whom I had anything to learn: he is one of the happiest discoveries of my life, even more than my discovery of Stendhal. This deep man, who was ten times right to look down on the shallow Germans, experienced the Siberian convicts among whom he lived for a long time, all serious criminals with no way back to society, quite differently from what he himself expected—roughly, as carved from the best, hardest, most valuable wood that grows anywhere on Russian soil. Let us generalize the criminal's case: let us think of people who, for whatever reason, lack public approval, who know that they are not seen as doing good or being useful—that Chandala feeling of not being considered equal, but outcast, unworthy, polluting. All such people have the color of the underground on their thoughts and actions; everything about them becomes paler than in those whose lives rest in daylight. But almost all the ways of life we honor today once lived in this half-tomb atmosphere: the scientific character, the artist, the genius, the free spirit, the actor, the merchant, the great explorer... As long as the priest counted as the highest type, every valuable kind of person was devalued... The time is coming—I promise it—when he will count as the lowest, as our Chandala, as the most dishonest, most indecent kind of person... I draw attention to how, even now, under the mildest rule of custom that has ever prevailed on earth, at least in Europe, every standing apart, every long, all-too-long stay below, every unusual, hard-to-see-through way of life brings a person close to the type that the criminal completes. All innovators of the spirit wear the Chandala's pale, fatalistic mark on their foreheads for a time: not because others see them this way, but because they themselves feel the

terrible gulf separating them from everything traditional and honored. Almost every genius goes through a “Catilinarian existence” as one stage of his development: a feeling of hatred, revenge, and revolt against everything that already exists, that is no longer becoming... Catiline—the form in which every Caesar first exists.—

⁴⁶ Here the view is clear.—It can show greatness of soul when a philosopher stays silent; it can show love when he contradicts himself; a person seeking knowledge can practice a courtesy that lies. Someone said, not without subtlety, “It is unworthy of great hearts to spread the turmoil they feel”: we must only add that not fearing what is most unworthy can also show greatness of soul. A woman who loves sacrifices her honor; a person seeking knowledge who “loves” perhaps sacrifices his humanity; a god who loved became a Jew...

⁴⁷ Beauty is no accident.—The beauty of a race or family, too, its grace and goodness in every gesture, is achieved through work: like genius, it is the final result of the accumulated work of generations. Great sacrifices must have been made to good taste; much must have been done and much left undone for its sake—seventeenth-century France is admirable in both respects. It must have served as a principle of selection in company, place, dress, sexual satisfaction; beauty must have been preferred to advantage, habit, opinion, laziness. The highest guideline: you must not “let yourself go,” even in front of yourself.—Good things are extremely costly, and the rule always holds that the person who has them is different from the person who acquires them. Everything good is inherited: what is not inherited is imperfect, is a beginning... In Athens at the time of Cicero, who expresses his surprise at this, men and young men far surpassed women in beauty: but what work and effort the male sex there had demanded of itself for centuries in the service of beauty!—We must not choose the wrong method here: merely training feelings and thoughts amounts to almost nothing (—here lies the great misunderstanding of German education, which is entirely illusory). The body must be persuaded first. Strictly maintaining meaningful, well-chosen gestures, committing to live only with people who do not “let themselves go,” is quite enough to become meaningful and well-chosen: in two

or three generations everything has already been internalized. It is decisive for the fate of a people and of humanity that culture begin in the right place—not in the “soul” (as the disastrous superstition of priests and half-priests held): the right place is the body, gesture, diet, physiology; the rest follows from that... That is why the Greeks remain history’s first great cultural event—they knew, they did, what was needed. Christianity, which despised the body, has been humanity’s greatest misfortune so far.—

48 Progress as I understand it.—I too speak of a “return to nature,” though it is not really a going back but a climbing up—up into high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness, the kind that plays with great tasks, that is allowed to play with them... To put it in an image: Napoleon was a piece of “return to nature” as I understand it (for example in tactical matters, and even more, as military men know, in strategy).—But Rousseau—where did he actually want to return to? Rousseau, this first modern person, idealist and scoundrel in one, who needed moral “dignity” to bear the sight of himself; sick with unrestrained vanity and unrestrained self-contempt. This malformed creature who settled on the threshold of the modern age also wanted a “return to nature”—where, I ask again, did Rousseau want to return to?—I hate Rousseau even in the Revolution: it is the world-historical expression of this combination of idealist and scoundrel. The bloody farce in which this revolution played itself out, its “immorality,” concerns me little: what I hate is its Rousseau-style morality—the so-called “truths” of the Revolution, with which it still exerts its influence and wins over everything shallow and mediocre. The doctrine of equality!... But there is no poison more poisonous: for it seems to be preached by justice itself, while it is the end of justice... “Equal things to equals, unequal things to unequals—that would be justice’s true message; and, as follows from this, never make unequal things equal.”—The fact that this doctrine of equality was surrounded by such horror and blood has given this most “modern idea” a kind of glory and fiery glow, so that the Revolution as a spectacle has seduced even the noblest minds. In the end, that is no reason to respect it more.—I see only one person who felt about it as one must, with disgust—Goethe...

49 Goethe—not a German event but a European one: a grand attempt to overcome the eighteenth century by returning to nature, by climbing up to the naturalness of the Renaissance, a kind of self-overcoming on the part of that century.—He carried that century's strongest instincts in himself: sentimentality, the worship of nature, the anti-historical, the idealistic, the unreal and revolutionary (—the latter is only a form of the unreal). He called to his aid history, natural science, antiquity, and likewise Spinoza, and above all practical activity. He surrounded himself with nothing but closed horizons. He did not detach himself from life; he placed himself in it. He was not fainthearted, and he took as much as possible upon himself, over himself, into himself. What he wanted was totality. He fought the splitting apart of reason, senses, feeling, and will (—preached in the most repellent scholasticism by Kant, Goethe's opposite), he disciplined himself into wholeness, he created himself... In the middle of an age with an unreal outlook, Goethe was a convinced realist: he said yes to everything in this respect that was related to him—he had no greater experience than that most real of beings, called Napoleon. Goethe conceived of a person who is strong, highly cultivated, skilled in all physical things, holding himself in check, reverent toward himself, who may dare to allow himself the whole range and richness of naturalness, who is strong enough for this freedom; the person of tolerance, not out of weakness but out of strength, because he knows how to use for his own advantage even what would destroy the average nature; the person for whom nothing is forbidden anymore, except weakness, whether it is called vice or virtue... Such a spirit that has become free stands in the middle of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, believing that only the individual is reprehensible, that in the whole everything is redeemed and affirmed—he no longer denies... But such a belief is the highest of all possible beliefs: I have given it the name Dionysus.—

50 You could say that in a certain sense the nineteenth century also strove for all that Goethe strove for as a person: a universality in understanding and approving, letting everything come close to oneself, a bold realism, a reverence for everything factual. How does it happen that the overall result is not a Goethe

but a chaos, a nihilistic sigh, a not-knowing-which-way-to-turn, an instinct of fatigue that in practice keeps driving people to fall back on the eighteenth century? (—for example as the Romanticism of feeling, as altruism and hypersentimentality, as femininity in taste, as socialism in politics.) Isn't the nineteenth century, especially at its close, just a strengthened, coarsened eighteenth century, that is, a century of decadence? So that Goethe, not just for Germany but for all of Europe, would have been only an episode, a beautiful waste?—But you misunderstand great people if you look at them from the wretched perspective of public usefulness. That one does not know how to draw any use from them may itself be part of their greatness...

- ⁵¹ Goethe is the last German for whom I feel reverence: he would have felt three things that I feel—we also understand each other about the “cross”... People often ask me why I actually write in German: I would be read worse nowhere than in the fatherland. But who knows in the end whether I even wish to be read today?—To create things on which time tries its teeth in vain; to strive for a small immortality in form and in substance—I have never been modest enough to ask less of myself. The aphorism and the maxim, in which I am a master, the first among Germans, are the forms of “eternity”; my ambition is to say in ten sentences what everyone else says in a book—what everyone else does not say in a book...

I have given humanity the deepest book it possesses, my Zarathustra; before long I will give it the most independent one.—

What I Owe the Ancients



¹ A last word about the world I have looked for ways into, and to which I may have found a new way in: the ancient world. My taste may be the opposite of a tolerant taste. Even here it is far from saying yes to everything, wholesale. It does not much like saying yes at all. It would rather say no, and best of all it would say nothing... That is true of whole cultures. It is true of books. It is also true of places and landscapes. At bottom, only a very small number of ancient books count in my life, and the most famous are not among them. My sense of style, of the epigram as a style, woke almost the instant I came into contact with Sallust. I have not forgotten the astonishment of my revered teacher Corsen, when he had to give his worst Latin student the very top grade. At a single stroke I was fully formed. Compressed, severe, with as much substance as possible underneath, a cold spite toward the “beautiful word” and the “beautiful feeling” too—that is where I recognized myself. You will find in me, even in my Zarathustra, a very serious ambition for Roman style, for what is “more lasting than bronze” in style.—It was no different when I first came into contact with Horace. To this day no other poet has given me the artistic delight that a Horatian ode gave me from the start. In some languages you could not even want what is achieved here. This mosaic of words, in which every word—as sound, as position, as idea—sends its force out to the right and left and over the whole; this minimum in the size and number of signs, and the maximum in the

energy of the signs that it achieves—all of this is Roman and, if you will believe me, noble in the highest degree. All the rest of poetry, by comparison, becomes something too popular—mere chatter about feelings...

- ² I owe the Greeks no impressions nearly as strong. And to say it straight out, they cannot be for us what the Romans are. You do not learn from the Greeks. Their way is too foreign, and too fluid, to work as a command, to work as a “classic.” Who would ever have learned to write from a Greek! Who would ever have learned it without the Romans!... Do not bring up Plato against me. Where Plato is concerned I am a thorough skeptic. I have never been able to join in the admiration for Plato the artist that is customary among scholars. Here, in the end, I have the most refined judges of taste among the ancients themselves on my side. Plato, it seems to me, throws all the forms of style together. That makes him a first decadent of style. He has something on his conscience that is similar to what the Cynics have, who invented the Menippean satire. For the Platonic dialogue—this horribly smug and childish kind of dialectic—to seem attractive, you must never have read good French writers, Fontenelle for example. Plato is boring.—In the end my distrust of Plato goes deep. I find him so far astray from all the basic instincts of the Greeks, so moralized, so Christian before Christianity—he already has the concept “good” as the highest concept—that for the whole phenomenon of Plato I would rather use the harsh phrase “higher swindle,” or, if you prefer to hear it, idealism, than any other. People have paid dearly for the fact that this Athenian went to school with the Egyptians (—or with the Jews in Egypt?...). In the great calamity of Christianity, Plato is that ambiguity and fascination called the “ideal.” It made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and step onto the bridge that led to the “cross”... And how much Plato is still in the concept of the “church,” in the structure, system and practice of the church!—My relief, my favorite, my cure for all Platonism has always been Thucydides. Thucydides and, perhaps, Machiavelli’s Prince are closest to me, through their unconditional will not to fool themselves and to see reason in reality—not in “reason,” and even less in “morality”... Nothing cures you so

thoroughly as Thucydides of the pitiful prettying-up of the Greeks into an ideal, which the “classically educated” young man carries off into life as his reward for his high school drilling. You have to turn him over line by line and read his hidden thoughts as clearly as his words. There are few thinkers so rich in hidden thoughts. In him the culture of the Sophists, that is, the culture of realists, reaches its perfect expression: a priceless movement in the middle of the swindle of morality and ideals that was just then breaking out everywhere in the Socratic schools. Greek philosophy as the decadence of the Greek instinct; Thucydides as the great sum, the last revelation of that strong, strict, hard sense of fact that lay in the instincts of the older Greek. In the end, courage in the face of reality is what separates natures like Thucydides and Plato. Plato is a coward before reality—so he flees into the ideal. Thucydides has control of himself—so he also keeps control of things...

- ³ To sniff out “beautiful souls,” “golden means” and other perfections in the Greeks, or to admire in them, say, calm in greatness, the ideal turn of mind, lofty simplicity—from this “lofty simplicity,” a German silliness when all is said and done, I was protected by the psychologist I carried inside me. I saw their strongest instinct, the will to power. I saw them tremble before the unruly force of this drive. I saw all their institutions grow out of protective measures, meant to make them safe from one another against the explosive stuff inside them. The enormous tension within then discharged itself outward, in terrible and ruthless hostility. The city communities tore one another to pieces, so that the citizens of each could find peace from themselves. They needed to be strong. The danger was close—it lurked everywhere. The magnificently supple bodies, the daring realism and immoralism that belong to the Greek, were a matter of need, not of “nature.” That came later. It was not there from the start. And with festivals and arts they wanted nothing other than to feel on top and to show themselves on top. These are ways of glorifying themselves and, under some circumstances, of making themselves feared... To judge the Greeks the German way, by their philosophers, and to use, say, the honest-citizen respectability of the Socratic schools to find out what is basically Greek!... The

philosophers are, after all, the decadents of Greek culture. They are the counter-movement against the old, noble taste (—against the instinct for competition, against the city-state, against the value of race, against the authority of tradition). The Socratic virtues were preached because the Greeks had lost them. Irritable, fearful, unstable, all of them actors, they had a few reasons too many to let themselves be preached at about morals. Not that it helped at all. But big words and poses suit decadents so well...

- ⁴ I was the first to take seriously, as a way of understanding the older Greek instinct, which was still rich and even overflowing, that wonderful phenomenon that bears the name of Dionysus. It can be explained only by an excess of strength. Anyone who follows the Greeks closely—like the deepest expert on their culture alive today, Jakob Burckhardt in Basel—knew at once that something had been accomplished here. Burckhardt added to his “Culture of the Greeks” a section of its own on this phenomenon. If you want the opposite, look at the almost amusing poverty of instinct in German philologists when they come anywhere near the Dionysian. Above all the famous Lobeck, who crawled into this world of mysterious states with the venerable confidence of a worm dried out between books, and persuaded himself that he was being scholarly by being, to the point of disgust, frivolous and childish—Lobeck, with all the display of learning he could muster, gave us to understand that there is really nothing to any of these curiosities. In fact, the priests may have told the participants in such orgies a few things that were not worthless—for example, that wine arouses desire, that a person can at times live on fruit, that plants bloom in the spring and wither in the fall. As for that strangely rich store of rites, symbols and myths of orgiastic origin, with which the ancient world is quite literally overgrown, Lobeck finds in it a chance to become one notch cleverer still. “The Greeks,” he says in *Aglaophamus* I, 672, “if they had nothing else to do, laughed, jumped, and raged about, or, since a person sometimes feels like it, sat down and wept and wailed. Others then came along later and looked for some reason for this striking behavior; and so those countless festival legends and myths arose to explain those customs. On the other hand, people

believed that the comical goings-on that happened to take place on festival days necessarily belonged to the celebration too, and held on to them as an indispensable part of worship.”—That is contemptible chatter. You cannot take a Lobeck seriously for a moment. It strikes us very differently when we examine the idea of “Greek” that Winckelmann and Goethe formed for themselves, and find it incompatible with the element from which Dionysian art grows—with orgiastic frenzy. I really do not doubt that Goethe would have ruled out anything of the kind, on principle, from the possibilities of the Greek soul. So Goethe did not understand the Greeks. For only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, does the basic fact of the Greek instinct express itself: its “will to life.” What did the Greek assure himself of through these mysteries? Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and consecrated in the past; the triumphant yes to life beyond death and change; true life as the continuing life of the whole, through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. That is why the sexual symbol was, for the Greeks, the venerable symbol in itself, the real depth within all ancient piety. Every single detail in the act of procreation, in pregnancy, in birth, awakened the highest and most solemn feelings. In the teaching of the mysteries, pain is declared holy: the “labor pains of the woman giving birth” make pain holy in general—all becoming and growing, everything that guarantees the future, requires pain... For there to be the joy of creating, for the will to life to affirm itself eternally, there must also be, eternally, the “agony of the woman giving birth”... All of this is what the word Dionysus means. I know no higher symbolism than this Greek symbolism, that of the Dionysian festivals. In it the deepest instinct of life, the instinct toward the future of life, toward the eternity of life, is felt in a religious way—the road to life itself, procreation, as the holy road... Only Christianity, with its resentment against life at the bottom of it, made something unclean out of sexuality. It threw filth on the beginning, on the very precondition of our life...

⁵ The psychology of orgiastic frenzy as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, a feeling in which even pain works as a stimulant, gave me the key to the idea of the tragic feeling. It has been misunderstood by Aristotle and, above all, by our pessimists. Tragedy is so far from proving anything for the pessimism of the Greeks, in Schopenhauer's sense, that it has to count instead as its decisive rejection and counter-evidence. Saying yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life, delighting in its own inexhaustibility as it sacrifices its highest types—that is what I called Dionysian. That is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not to get free of fear and pity, not to purge oneself of a dangerous emotion by discharging it violently—that is how Aristotle understood it—but to be, beyond fear and pity, the eternal joy of becoming itself—that joy which also includes the joy of destroying... And with that I touch again the place I once set out from. "The Birth of Tragedy" was my first revaluation of all values. With that I place myself again on the ground from which my will and my ability grow—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the eternal return...

The Hammer Speaks



Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 3, 90.

“Why so hard!” the kitchen coal once said to the diamond. “Aren’t we close relatives, after all?”

Why so soft? Oh, my brothers, this is what I ask you: aren’t you—my brothers? Why so soft, so yielding and giving way? Why is there so much denying, so much disowning in your hearts? So little fate in your eyes?

And if you do not want to be fates and relentless ones, how could you one day win with me?

And if your hardness does not want to flash and cut and cut to pieces, how could you one day create with me?

For all creators are hard. And it must seem bliss to you to press your hand on thousands of years as on wax—

—bliss, to write on the will of thousands of years as on bronze—harder than bronze, nobler than bronze. Only what is completely hard is noblest.

I set this new tablet over you, oh, my brothers: become hard!—