

The illustrations on the preceding three pages show (1) the title page of the original edition of 1882 (the Emerson quotation is discussed in the Translator's Introduction), (2) the back cover of the same edition (a translation follows below), and (3) the title page of the second edition of 1887 (translated on the next page).

Here is what Nietzsche said on the back of the original edition:

This book marks the conclusion of a series of writings by FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE whose common goal it is to erect *a new image and ideal of the free spirit*. To this series belong:

Human, all too human. With Appendix: Mixed Opinions and Aphorisms.

The Wanderer and his Shadow.

Dawn: Thoughts about the prejudices of morality.

The Gay Science.

Earlier writings by the same author:

The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music.

Untimely Meditations. 1. David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer. 2. Of the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life. 3. Schopenhauer as Educator. 4. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth.

THE GAY SCIENCE

("la gaya scienza")

BY
Friedrich Nietzsche

*I live in my own place,
have never copied nobody even half,
and at any master who lacks the grace
to laugh at himself—I laugh.*

OVER THE DOOR TO MY HOUSE

NEW EDITION
WITH AN APPENDIX:
Songs of Prince Vogelfrei

LEIPZIG
E. W. Fritsch
1887

3

Noble and common.— Common natures consider all noble, magnanimous feelings inexpedient and therefore first of all incredible. They blink when they hear of such things and seem to feel like saying: "Surely, there must be some advantage involved; one cannot see through everything." They are suspicious of the noble person, as if he surreptitiously sought his advantage. When they are irresistibly persuaded of the absence of selfish intentions and gains, they see the noble person as a kind of fool; they despise him in his joy and laugh at his shining eyes. "How can one enjoy being at a disadvantage? How could one desire with one's eyes open to be disadvantaged? Some disease of reason must be associated with the noble affection." Thus they think and sneer, as they sneer at the pleasure that a madman derives from his fixed idea. What distinguishes the common type is that it never loses sight of its advantage, and that this thought of purpose and advantage is even stronger than the strongest instincts; not to allow these instincts to lead one astray to perform inexpedient acts—that is their wisdom and pride.

Compared to them, the higher type is more *unreasonable*, for those who are noble, magnanimous, and self-sacrificial do succumb to their instincts, and when they are at their best, their reason *pauses*. An animal that protects its young at the risk of its life, or that during the mating period follows the female even into death, does not think of danger and death; its reason also pauses, because the pleasure in its young or in the female and the fear of being deprived of this pleasure dominate it totally: the animal becomes more stupid than usual—just like those who are noble and magnanimous. They have some feel-

³ Many interpretations of Nietzsche's thought are invalidated by this very important and characteristic section. Nietzsche never renounced it. Cf. sections 319, 335, 344, and *The Antichrist*, sections 50–55.

ings of pleasure and displeasure that are so strong that they reduce the intellect to silence or to servitude: at that point their heart displaces the head, and one speaks of "passion." (Now and then we also encounter the opposite and, as it were, the "reversal of passion"; for example, somebody once laid his hand on Fontenelle's heart, saying to him, "What you have there, dear sir, is another brain."⁴)

The unreason or counterreason of passion is what the common type despises in the noble, especially when this passion is directed toward objects whose value seems quite fantastic and arbitrary. One is annoyed with those who succumb to the passion of the belly, but at least one comprehends the attraction that plays the tyrant in such cases. But one cannot comprehend how anyone could risk his health and honor for the sake of a passion for knowledge. The taste of the higher type is for exceptions, for things that leave most people cold and seem to lack sweetness; the higher type has a singular value standard. Moreover, it usually believes that the idiosyncrasy of its taste is *not* a singular value standard; rather, it posits its values and disvalues as generally valid and thus becomes incomprehensible and impractical. Very rarely does a higher nature retain sufficient reason for understanding and treating everyday people as such; for the most part, this type assumes that its own passion is present but kept concealed in all men, and this belief even becomes an ardent and eloquent faith. But when such exceptional people do not see themselves as the exception, how can they ever understand the common type and arrive at a fair evaluation of the rule? Thus they, too, speak of the folly, inexpediency, and fantasies of humanity, stunned that the course of the world should be so insane, and puzzled that it won't own up to what "is needful."—This is the eternal injustice of those who are noble.⁵

⁴ Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757; *sic!*). For the anecdote, cf. A. Laborde-Milaà, *Fontenelle*, Paris, 1905, p. 53: "Ce n'est pas un coeur que vous avez là, lui disait un jour Mme de Tencien en lui mettant la main sur la poitrine: c'est de la cervelle, comme dans la tête. Et il souriait, sans dire non." For Fontenelle, cf. section 94.

⁵ Cf. the conclusion of section 2.

What preserves the species.— The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: again and again they relumed the passions that were going to sleep—all ordered society puts the passions to sleep—and they re-awakened again and again the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of the pleasure in what is new, daring, untried; they compelled men to pit opinion against opinion, model against model. Usually by force of arms, by toppling boundary markers, by violating pieties—but also by means of new religions and moralities. In every teacher and preacher of what is *new* we encounter the same "wickedness" that makes conquerors notorious, even if its expression is subtler and it does not immediately set the muscles in motion, and therefore also does not make one that notorious. What is new, however, is always *evil*, being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary markers and the old pieties; and only what is old is good. The good men are in all ages those who dig the old thoughts, digging deep and getting them to bear fruit—the farmers of the spirit. But eventually all land is exploited, and the ploughshare of evil must come again and again.

Nowadays there is a profoundly erroneous moral doctrine that is celebrated especially in England: this holds that judgments of "good" and "evil" sum up experiences of what is "expedient" and "inexpedient." One holds that what is called good preserves the species, while what is called evil harms the species. In truth, however, the evil instincts are expedient, species-preserving, and indispensable to as high a degree as the good ones; their function is merely different.⁶

⁶ This section illuminates Nietzsche's "immoralism" as well as his consistent opposition to utilitarianism.

Nietzsche's refusal to accept any simplistic contrast of good and evil is one of the central motifs of his philosophy. All interpretations that overlook this anti-Manichaeian subtlety and assume that he simply reverses traditional valuations are untenably crude. A commentary could call attention to this theme again and again, but it may suffice to list here a very few of the following sections that illustrate it especially well: 14, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 35–37, 49.

5

Unconditional duties.— All those who feel they need the strongest words and sounds, the most eloquent gestures and postures, in order to be effective *at all*—such as revolutionary politicians, socialists, preachers of repentance with or without Christianity, all of whom cannot tolerate semisuccesses—talk of “duties,” and actually always of duties that are supposed to be unconditional. Without that they would lack the justification for their great pathos, and they understand this very well. Thus they reach for moral philosophies that preach some categorical imperative, or they ingest a goodly piece of religion, as Mazzini did,⁷ for example. Because they desire the unconditional confidence of others, they need first of all to develop unconditional self-confidence on the basis of some ultimate and indisputable commandment that is inherently sublime; and they want to feel like, and be accepted as, its servants and instruments.

Here we have the most natural and usually very influential opponents of moral enlightenment and skepticism; but they are rare. Yet a very comprehensive class of such opponents is to be found wherever self-interest requires submission while reputation and honor seem to prohibit submission. Whoever feels that his dignity is incompatible with the thought of being the *instrument* of a prince or a party or sect or, even worse, of a financial power—say, because he is after all the descendant of an old and proud family—but who nevertheless wants to or must be such an instrument before himself and before the public, requires pompous principles that can be mouthed at any time; principles of some unconditional obligation to which one may submit

⁷ There is a large literature on Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72), the Italian revolutionist. He hoped at one time to write a history of Italy “to enable the working class to apprehend . . . the ‘mission’ of Italy in God’s providential ordering of the world.” The work remained unwritten; “no one, however, can read even the briefest and most occasional writing of Mazzini without gaining some impression of the simple grandeur of the man, the lofty elevation of his moral tone, his unwavering faith in the living God, who is ever revealing Himself in the progressive development of humanity.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 17, p. 945).

without shame. Refined servility clings to the categorical imperative and is the mortal enemy of those who wish to deprive duty of its unconditional character; that is what decency demands of them, and not only decency.

6

Loss of dignity.— Reflecting has lost all the dignity of its form: the ceremony and solemn gestures of reflecting have become ridiculous, and an old-style wise man would be considered intolerable. We think too fast, even while walking or on the way, or while engaged in other things, no matter how serious the subject. We require little preparation, not even much silence: it is as if we carried in our heads an unstoppable machine that keeps working even under the most unfavorable circumstances. Formerly, one could tell simply by looking at a person that he wanted to think—it was probably a rare occurrence—that he now wished to become wiser and prepared himself for a thought: he set his face as for prayer and stopped walking; yes, one even stood still for hours in the middle of the road when the thought arrived—on one leg or two legs. That seemed to be required by the dignity of the matter.

7

Something for the industrious.— Anyone who now wishes to make a study of moral matters opens up for himself an immense field for work. All kinds of individual passions have to be thought through and pursued through different ages, peoples, and great and small individuals; all their reason and all their evaluations and perspectives on things have to be brought into the light. So far, all that has given color to existence still lacks a history. Where could you find a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of pious respect for tradition, or of cruelty? Even a comparative history of law or at least of punishment is so far lacking completely. Has anyone made a study of different ways of dividing up the day or of the consequences of a regular schedule of work, festivals, and rest? What is known of the moral effects of different foods? Is there any philosophy of

nutrition? (The constant revival of noisy agitation for and against vegetarianism proves that there is no such philosophy.) Has anyone collected men's experiences of living together—in monasteries, for example? Has the dialectic of marriage and friendship ever been explicated? Have the manners of scholars, of businessmen, artists, or artisans been studied and thought about? There is so much in them to think about.

Whatever men have so far viewed as the conditions of their existence—and all the reason, passion, and superstition involved in such a view—has this been researched exhaustively? The most industrious people will find that it involves too much work simply to observe how differently men's instincts have grown, and might yet grow, depending on different moral climates. It would require whole generations, and generations of scholars who would collaborate systematically, to exhaust the points of view and the material. The same applies to the demonstration of the reasons for the differences between moral climates ("why is it that the sun of one fundamental moral judgment and main standard of value shines here and another one there?"). And it would be yet another job to determine the erroneousness of all these reasons and the whole nature of moral judgments to date.

If all these jobs were done, the most insidious question of all would emerge into the foreground: whether science can furnish goals of action after it has proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them; and then experimentation would be in order that would allow every kind of heroism to find satisfaction—centuries of experimentation that might eclipse all the great projects and sacrifices of history to date. So far, science has not yet built its cyclopic buildings; but the time for that, too, will come.

8

Unconscious virtues.— All the human qualities of which we are conscious—and especially those whose visibility and obviousness for others, too, we take for granted—are subject to altogether different laws of development than are those qualities which we know either badly or not at all and which also con-

ceal themselves by means of their subtlety even from very subtle observers, knowing how to hide, as it were, behind nothing at all. It is similar with the subtle sculptures on the scales of reptiles: it would be wrong to take them for ornaments or weapons, for they become visible only under a microscope, under an artificially sharpened eye that similar animals for which these little sculptures might signify ornaments or weapons simply lack.

Our visible moral qualities, and especially those we *believe* to be visible, follow their own course; and the invisible ones that have the same names but are in relation to other men neither ornaments nor weapons, also follow their own course—probably, a wholly different course; and they probably have lines, subtleties, and sculptures that might give pleasure to a god with a divine microscope. Thus we have, for example, our industry, our ambition, our acuteness—all the world knows about that—but in addition to all that we probably also have *our* industry, *our* ambition, *our* acuteness; but for these reptile scales no microscope has been invented as yet.

At this point the friends of instinctive morality will say: "Bravo! At least he considers unconscious virtues possible—and that suffices us." O, you are satisfied with so little!

11

Consciousness.— Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong. Consciousness gives rise to countless errors that lead an animal or man to perish sooner than necessary, "exceeding destiny," as Homer puts it. If the conserving association of the instincts were not so very much more powerful, and if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would

12

have to perish of its misjudgments and its fantasies with open eyes, of its lack of thoroughness and its credulity—in short, of its consciousness; rather, without the former, humanity would long have disappeared.

Before a function is fully developed and mature it constitutes a danger for the organism, and it is good if during the interval it is subjected to some tyranny. Thus consciousness is tyrannized—not least by our pride in it. One thinks that it constitutes the *kernel* of man; what is abiding, eternal, ultimate, and most original in him. One takes consciousness for a determinate magnitude. One denies its growth and its intermittences. One takes it for the "unity of the organism."

This ridiculous overestimation and misunderstanding of consciousness has the very useful consequence that it prevents an all too fast development of consciousness. Believing that they possess consciousness, men have not exerted themselves very much to acquire it; and things haven't changed much in this respect. To this day the task of *incorporating* knowledge and making it instinctive is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is not yet clearly discernible; it is a task that is seen only by those who have comprehended that so far we have incorporated only our errors and that all our consciousness relates to errors.

On the aim of science.— What? The aim of science should be to give men as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible? But what if pleasure and displeasure were so tied together that whoever *wanted* to have as much as possible of one *must* also have as much as possible of the other—that whoever wanted to learn to "jubilate up to the heavens" would also have to be prepared for "depression unto death"?⁹ And that is how things may well be. At least the Stoics believed that this was how things were, and they were consistent when they also desired as little pleasure as possible, in order to get as

⁹ An allusion to Clärchen's song in Goethe's *Egmont*, Act III, Scene 2, set to music by Beethoven.

little displeasure as possible out of life. (When they kept saying "The virtuous man is the happiest man," this was both the school's eye-catching sign for the great mass and a casuistic subtlety for the subtle.)

To this day you have the choice: either *as little displeasure as possible*, painlessness in brief—and in the last analysis socialists and politicians of all parties have no right to promise their people more than that—or *as much displeasure as possible* as the price for the growth of an abundance of subtle pleasures and joys that have rarely been relished yet. If you decide for the former and desire to diminish and lower the level of human pain, you also have to diminish and lower the level of their *capacity for joy*. Actually, *science* can promote either goal. So far it may still be better known for its power of depriving man of his joys and making him colder, more like a statue, more stoic. But it might yet be found to be the *great dispenser of pain*. And then its counterforce might be found at the same time: its immense capacity for making new galaxies of joy flare up.

25

Not predestined for knowledge.— There is a stupid humility that is not at all rare, and those afflicted with it are altogether unfit to become devotees of knowledge. As soon as a person of this type perceives something striking, he turns on his heel, as if it were, and says to himself: "You have made a mistake. What is the matter with your senses? This cannot, may not, be the truth." And then, instead of looking and listening again, more carefully, he runs away from the striking thing, as if he had been intimidated, and tries to remove it from his mind as fast as he can. For his inner canon says: "I do not want to see anything that contradicts the prevalent opinion. Am I called to discover new truths? There are too many old ones, as it is."

26

What is life?— Life—that is: continually shedding something that wants to die. Life—that is: being cruel and inexorable against everything about us that is growing old and weak—and not only about *us*. Life—that is, then: being without reverence for those who are dying, who are wretched, who are ancient? Constantly being a murderer? —And yet old Moses said: "Thou shalt not kill."

27

*The man of renunciation.*²³— What does the man of renunciation do? He strives for a higher world, he wants to fly further and higher than all men of affirmation—he throws away much that would encumber his flight, including not a little that he esteems and likes; he sacrifices it to his desire for the heights. This sacrificing, this throwing away, however, is precisely what alone becomes visible and leads people to call him the man of renunciation: it is as such that he confronts us, shrouded in his hood, as if he were the soul of a hairshirt. But he is quite satisfied with the impression he makes on us: he wants to con-

ceal from us his desire, his pride, his intention to soar *beyond* us. —Yes, he is cleverer than we thought and so polite to us—this man of affirmation. For that is what he is, no less than we, even in his renunciation.

²³ *Der Entsagende*. Cf section 285.

The consciousness of appearance.—How wonderful and new and yet how gruesome and ironic I find my position vis-à-vis the whole of existence in the light of my insight! I have discovered for myself that the human and animal past, indeed the whole primal age and past of all sentient being continues in me to invent, to love, to hate, and to infer. I suddenly woke up in the midst of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish—as a somnambulist must go on dreaming lest he fall. What is “appearance” for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown x or remove from it!

Appearance is for me that which lives and is effective and goes so far in its self-mockery that it makes me feel that this is appearance and will-o'-the-wisp and a dance of spirits and nothing more—that among all these dreamers, I, too, who “know,” am dancing my dance; that the knower is a means for prolonging the earthly dance and thus belongs to the masters of ceremony of existence; and that the sublime consistency and inter-relatedness of all knowledge perhaps is and will be the highest means to *preserve* the universality of dreaming and the mutual comprehension of all dreamers and thus also *the continuation of the dream.*⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In other words: The world of our experience is shaped by our pre-rational past and may be likened to a dream. But even when we realize how the world of our experience lacks objectivity and independent reality, we still “must go on dreaming.” What we experience is “appearance”; but there is no “essence” behind it that is somehow falsified. “Appearance” is not a mask that we might hope to remove from the face of an unknown x . There is no objective reality, no thing-in-itself; there is only appearance in one or another perspective.

These ideas are developed further in sections 57–59, then in Book III, and much later in the third and fourth chapters of *Twilight of the Idols* (VPN, 484–86). There are also many relevant notes in *The Will to Power*.

To the realists.— You sober people who feel well armed against passion and fantasies and would like to turn your emptiness into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you only, and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it—O you beloved images of Sais!¹ But in your unveiled state are not even you still very passionate and dark creatures compared to fish, and still far too similar to an artist in love? And what is “reality” for an artist in love? You are still burdened with those estimates of things that have their origin in the passions and loves of former centuries. Your sobriety still contains a secret and inextinguishable drunkenness. Your love of “reality,” for example—oh, that is a primeval “love.” Every feeling and sensation contains a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some unreason, some ignorance, some fear, and ever so much else has contributed to it and worked on it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What is “real” in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you *can*! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training—all of your humanity and animality. There is no “reality” for us—not for you either, my sober friends. We are not nearly as different as you think, and perhaps our good will to transcend intoxication is as respectable as your faith that you are altogether incapable of intoxication.

Only as creators!— This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing,

¹ Another allusion to Schiller's great ballad, “The Veiled Image at Sais.” (Cf. the final section of Nietzsche's Preface, above.)

what it counts for—originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin—all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out this origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called "*reality*." We can destroy only as creators. —But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new "things."

The greatest danger.— If the majority of men had not always considered the discipline of their minds—their “rationality”—a matter of pride, an obligation, and a virtue, feeling insulted or embarrassed by all fantasies and debaucheries of thought because they saw themselves as friends of “healthy common sense,” humanity would have perished long ago. The greatest danger that always hovered over humanity and still hovers over it is the eruption of madness—which means the eruption of arbitrariness in feeling, seeing, and hearing, the enjoyment of the mind’s lack of discipline, the joy in human unreason.¹² Not truth and certainty are the opposite of the world of the madman, but the universality and the universal binding force of a faith; in sum, the non-arbitrary character of judgments. And man’s greatest labor so far has been to reach agreement about very many things and to submit to a *law of agreement*—regardless of whether these things are true or false. This is the discipline of the mind that mankind has received; but the contrary impulses are still so powerful that at bottom we cannot

¹² Aristotle actually says: “Greatness of soul implies greatness, as beauty implies a good-sized body, and small people may be neat and well-proportioned but cannot be beautiful” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b). For the influence of Aristotle’s discussion of the great-souled man on Nietzsche’s ethics see Kaufmann, 382–84.

With this absurd aphorism the pages on women (sections 60–75) reach their nadir and end. The rest of Book II (through section 107) deals with art.

¹³ *Menschen-Unverstand* is contrasted with *gesunder Menschenverstand* (healthy common sense).

speaking of the future of mankind with much confidence. The image of things still shifts and shuffles continually, and perhaps even more so and faster from now on than ever before. Continually, precisely the most select spirits bristle at this universal binding force—the explorers of *truth* above all. Continually this faith, as *everybody’s* faith, arouses nausea and a new lust in subtler minds; and the slow tempo that is here demanded for all spiritual processes, this imitation of the tortoise, which is here recognized as the norm, would be quite enough to turn artists and thinkers into apostates:¹⁴ It is in these impatient spirits that a veritable delight in madness erupts because madness has such a cheerful tempo. Thus the virtuous intellects are needed—oh, let me use the most unambiguous word—what is needed is *virtuous stupidity*, stolid metronomes for the slow spirit, to make sure that the faithful of the great shared faith stay together and continue their dance. It is a first-rate need that commands and demands this. *We others are the exception and the danger*—and we need eternally to be defended. —Well, there actually are things to be said in favor of the exception, *provided that it never wants to become the rule.*¹⁵

New struggles.— After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead;¹ but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. —And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.

Let us beware.— Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed? How could it grow and multiply? We have some notion of the nature of the organic; and we should not reinterpret the exceedingly derivative, late, rare, accidental, that we perceive only on the crust of the earth and make of it something essential, universal, and eternal, which is what those people do who call the universe an organism. This nauseates me. Let us even beware of believing that the universe is a machine: it is certainly not constructed for one purpose, and calling it a “machine” does it far too much honor.

Let us beware of positing generally and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars;

¹ This is the first occurrence of this famous formulation in Nietzsche's books. We encounter it again in section 125 below, which has been anthologized again and again after it was quoted in the chapter on “The Death of God and the Revaluation” in the first edition of Kaufmann (1950), and then included in *The Portable Nietzsche*. It even brought into being a predictably stillborn movement in Christian theology that created a short-lived sensation in the United States. But most of those who have made so much of Nietzsche's pronouncement that “God is dead” have failed to take note of its other occurrences in his works which obviously furnish the best clues to his meaning. The most important passages include section 343 below and seven passages in *Zarathustra* (VPN, pp. 124f., 191, 202, 294, 371–79, 398f., and 426). This list includes only places in which death or dying are mentioned expressly. No less important are sections 109–56.

even a glance into the Milky Way raises doubts whether there are not far coarser and more contradictory movements there, as well as stars with eternally linear paths, etc. The astral order in which we live is an exception; this order and the relative duration that depends on it have again made possible an exception of exceptions: the formation of the organic. The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms. Judged from the point of view of our reason, unsuccessful attempts are by all odds the rule, the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune² which may never be called a melody—and ultimately even the phrase “unsuccessful attempt” is too anthropomorphic and reproachful. But how could we reproach or praise the universe? Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness and unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man. None of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it. Nor does it have any instinct for self-preservation or any other instinct; and it does not observe any laws either. Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purposes that the word “accident” has meaning. Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.

Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics.³ But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will

² This is an allusion to the doctrine of the eternal recurrence (see sections 285 and 341 below).

³ A group of early Greek philosophers who lived in Southern Italy. The most famous among them, Parmenides, was born about 510 B.C.

all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds?⁴ When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to “naturalize” humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?⁵

110

Origin of knowledge.— Over immense periods of time the intellect produced nothing but errors. A few of these proved to be useful and helped to preserve the species: those who hit upon or inherited these had better luck in their struggle for themselves and their progeny. Such erroneous articles of faith, which were continually inherited, until they became almost part of the basic endowment of the species, include the following: that there are enduring things; that there are equal things; that there are things, substances, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in itself. It was only very late that such propositions were denied and doubted; it was only very late that truth emerged—as the weakest form of knowledge. It seemed that one was unable to live with it: our organism was prepared for the opposite; all its higher functions, sense perception and every kind of sensation worked with those basic errors which had been incorporated since time immemorial. Indeed, even in the realm of knowledge these propositions became the norms according to which “true” and “untrue” were determined—down to the most remote regions of logic.

Thus the *strength* of knowledge does not depend on its degree of truth but on its age, on the degree to which it has been incorporated, on its character as a condition of life. Where life and knowledge seemed to be at odds there was never any real fight, but denial and doubt were simply considered madness. Those exceptional thinkers, like the Eleatics, who never-

⁴ Here, if not earlier, it becomes clear how continuous this section is with 108 and what has been the *central motif of section 109*: what Nietzsche goes on to call the “de-deification” of nature.

⁵ “Naturalize” is here used in the sense of naturalism, as opposed to supernaturalism. Man is to be reintegrated into nature.

theless posited and clung to the opposites of the natural errors, believed that it was possible to *live* in accordance with these opposites: they invented the sage as the man who was unchangeable and impersonal, the man of the universality of intuition who was One and All at the same time, with a special capacity for his inverted knowledge: they had the faith that their knowledge was also the principle of *life*. But in order to claim all of this, they had to *deceive* themselves about their own state: they had to attribute to themselves, fictitiously, impersonality and changeless duration; they had to misapprehend the nature of the knower; they had to deny the role of the impulses in knowledge; and quite generally they had to conceive of reason as a completely free and spontaneous activity. They shut their eyes to the fact that they, too, had arrived at their propositions through opposition to common sense, or owing to a desire for tranquillity, for sole possession, or for dominion. The subtler development of honesty and skepticism eventually made these people, too, impossible; their ways of living and judging were seen to be also dependent upon the primeval impulses and basic errors of all sentient existence.

This subtler honesty and skepticism came into being wherever two contradictory sentences appeared to be *applicable* to life because *both* were compatible with the basic errors, and it was therefore possible to argue about the higher or lower degree of *utility* for life; also wherever new propositions, though not useful for life, were also evidently not harmful to life: in such cases there was room for the expression of an intellectual play impulse, and honesty and skepticism were innocent and happy like all play. Gradually, the human brain became full of such judgments and convictions, and a ferment, struggle, and lust for power⁶ developed in this tangle. Not only utility and delight but every kind of impulse took sides in this fight about "truths." The intellectual fight became an occupation, an attraction, a profession, a duty, something dignified—and eventually knowledge and the striving for the true found their place as a need among other needs. Henceforth not only faith and conviction

⁶ *Machtgelüst*. Written before Nietzsche's proclamation of "the will to power."

but also scrutiny, denial, mistrust, and contradiction became a *power*; all "evil" instincts were subordinated to knowledge, employed in her service, and acquired the splendor of what is permitted, honored, and useful—and eventually even the eye and innocence of the *good*.

Thus knowledge became a piece of life itself, and hence a continually growing power—until eventually knowledge collided with those primeval basic errors: two lives, two powers, both in the same human being. A thinker is now that being in whom the impulse for truth and those life-preserving errors clash for their first fight, after the impulse for truth has proved to be also a life-preserving power. Compared to the significance of this fight, everything else is a matter of indifference: the ultimate question about the conditions of life has been posed here, and we confront the first attempt to answer this question by experiment. To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment.

111

Origin of the logical.—How did logic come into existence in man's head? Certainly out of illogic, whose realm originally must have been immense. Innumerable beings who made inferences in a way different from ours perished; for all that, their ways might have been truer. Those, for example, who did not know how to find often enough what is "equal" as regards both nourishment and hostile animals—those, in other words, who subsumed things too slowly and cautiously—were favored with a lesser probability of survival than those who guessed immediately upon encountering similar instances that they must be equal. The dominant tendency, however, to treat as equal what is merely similar—an illogical tendency, for nothing is really equal—is what first created any basis for logic.

In order that the concept of substance could originate—which is indispensable for logic although in the strictest sense nothing real corresponds to it—it was likewise necessary that for a long time one did not see nor perceive the changes in things. The beings that did not see so precisely had an advantage over those that saw everything "in flux." At bottom, every

high degree of caution in making inferences and every skeptical tendency constitute a great danger for life. No living beings would have survived if the opposite tendency—to affirm rather than suspend judgment, to err and *make up* things rather than wait, to assent rather than negate, to pass judgment rather than be just—had not been bred to the point where it became extraordinarily strong.⁷

The course of logical ideas and inferences in our brain today corresponds to a process and a struggle among impulses that are, taken singly, very illogical and unjust. We generally experience only the result of this struggle because this primeval mechanism now runs its course so quickly and is so well concealed.

112

Cause and effect.—“Explanation” is what we call it, but it is “description” that distinguishes us from older stages of knowledge and science. Our descriptions are better—we do not explain any more than our predecessors. We have uncovered a manifold one-after-another where the naive man and inquirer of older cultures saw only two separate things. “Cause” and “effect” is what one says; but we have merely perfected the image of becoming without reaching beyond the image or behind it. In every case the series of “causes” confronts us much more completely, and we infer: first, this and that has to precede in order that this or that may then follow—but this does not involve any *comprehension*. In every chemical process, for example, quality appears as a “miracle,” as ever; also, every locomotion; nobody has “explained” a push. But how could we possibly explain anything? We operate only with things that do not exist: lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces. How should explanations be at all possible when we first turn everything into an *image*, our image!

It will do to consider science as an attempt to humanize

⁷ This section illuminates Nietzsche's insistence that, as he put it in an often quoted note in *The Will to Power* (#493), “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species could not live.”

things as faithfully as possible; as we describe things and their one-after-another, we learn how to describe ourselves more and more precisely. Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists; in truth we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces, just as we perceive motion only as isolated points and then infer it without ever actually seeing it. The suddenness with which many effects stand out misleads us; actually, it is sudden only for us. In this moment of suddenness there is an infinite number of processes that elude us. An intellect that could see cause and effect as a continuum and a flux and not, as we do, in terms of an arbitrary division and dismemberment, would repudiate the concept of cause and effect and deny all conditionality.

113

On the doctrine of poisons.— So many things have to come together for scientific thinking to originate; and all these necessary strengths had to be invented, practiced, and cultivated separately. As long as they were still separate, however, they frequently had an altogether different effect than they do now that they are integrated into scientific thinking and hold each other in check. Their effect was that of poisons; for example, that of the impulse to doubt, to negate, to wait, to collect, to dissolve. Many hecatombs of human beings were sacrificed before these impulses learned to comprehend their coexistence and to feel that they were all functions of one organizing force within one human being. And even now the time seems remote when artistic energies and the practical wisdom of life will join with scientific thinking to form a higher organic system in relation to which scholars, physicians, artists, and legislators—as we know them at present—would have to look like paltry relics of ancient times.

114

How far the moral sphere extends.— As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences, *depending on the degree* of our honesty

and justice. All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense perception.⁸

115

*The four errors.*⁹— Man has been educated by his errors. First, he always saw himself only incompletely; second, he endowed himself with fictitious attributes; third, he placed himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature; fourth, he invented ever new tables of goods and always accepted them for a time as eternal and unconditional: as a result of this, now one and now another human impulse and state held first place and was ennobled because it was esteemed so highly. If we removed the effects of these four errors, we should also remove humanity, humaneness, and “human dignity.”

116

Herd instinct.— Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd: whatever benefits it most—and second most, and third most—that is also considered the first standard for the value of all individuals. Morality trains the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function. The conditions for the preservation of different communities were very different; hence there were very different moralities. Considering essential changes in the forms of future herds and communi-

⁸ This is the transition from the first part of Book III, which is cosmological-epistemological, to the second part, which deals with morality. Section 108 is best seen as a prologue to Book III. But it should be noted how the final sentences of sections 109, 110, and 113 point to Nietzsche's central concern with what is to become of man—a concern that is moral in the broad sense of that word although Nietzsche's views may seem “immoral” to some apologists for traditional morality.

⁹ *Twilight of the Idols* contains a chapter with the title, “The Four Great Errors” (VPN, 492–501). Nietzsche does not repeat himself there, but there is a striking continuity in his thought.

ties, states and societies, we can prophesy that there will yet be very divergent moralities. Morality is herd instinct in the individual.

Life no argument.— We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error.¹⁴

¹² *Seele* was the word also used by Freud where translators speak of the soul, the *psyche* or, in compounds, use "psychic."

¹³ Freud's quest for self-knowledge may furnish an even more obvious example than Nietzsche's of the fact that such a search is typically prompted by a sickness of the soul, at least in the case of the great pioneers.

¹⁴ Cf. the first sections of *Beyond Good and Evil*, especially "untruth as a condition of life" in section 4. What kind of error is meant is explained in section 110 (first paragraph) and in sections 111, 112, and

Knowledge as more than a mere means.— Without this new passion—I mean the passion to know—science would still be promoted; after all, science has grown and matured without it

¹⁵ François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80) whose *Maxims* are among the treasures of French literature. Their literary form and perfection as well as their unsentimental psychological penetration clearly made an impression on Nietzsche. Most of them (there are about seven hundred in all) are no more than two or three lines long; few, more than half a page. Without being at all mechanical or even deductive in manner, the author continually calls attention to the motive of human self-interest

until now. The good faith in science, the prejudice in its favor that dominates the modern state (and formerly dominated even the church) is actually based on the fact that this unconditional urge and passion has manifested itself so rarely and that science is considered *not* a passion but a mere condition or an “ethos.” Often mere *amour-plaisir*¹⁶ of knowledge (curiosity) is felt to be quite sufficient, or *amour-vanité*,¹⁷ being accustomed to it with the ulterior motive of honors and sustenance; for many people it is actually quite enough that they have too much leisure and do not know what to do with it except to read, collect, arrange, observe, and recount—their “scientific impulse” is their boredom.

Pope Leo X once sang the praises of science (in his brief to Beroaldo¹⁸): he called it the most beautiful ornament and the

¹⁶ Love based on pleasure.

¹⁷ Loved based on vanity.

¹⁸ Having purchased a manuscript of the hitherto unpublished first five books of Tacitus’s *Annals* (later divided into six) as well as a copy of a printed volume that contained the last six books and the first five books of Tacitus’s *History*, Pope Leo X “determined to give to the world as complete an edition as possible; for which purpose he entrusted the manuscript to the younger Filippo Beroaldo, with directions to correct the text, and to superintend the printing of it in an elegant and useful form. In order to reward the editor for his trouble on this occasion, Leo proposed to grant to him an exclusive privilege for the reprinting and sale of the work; and . . . the brief in which this privilege is conceded contains a kind of justification on the part of the pontiff for devoting so much of his attention to the promotion of profane learning . . .

“we have considered those pursuits as not the least important which lead to the promotion of literature and useful arts; for we have been accustomed even from our early years to think, that nothing more excellent or more useful has been given by the Creator to mankind, if we except only the knowledge and true worship of himself, than these studies, which not only lead to the ornament and guidance of human life, but are applicable and useful to every particular situation; in adversity consolatory, in prosperity pleasing and honourable; insomuch, that without them we should be deprived of all the grace of life and all the polish of society.” (William Roscoe, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth*, 5th ed., London 1846, vol. I, p. 355f.).

It will be noted that Nietzsche’s “quotation” is rather free, and that the pope did not really keep silent about “the knowledge and true worship” of God. But these criticisms do not undermine Nietzsche’s point which he actually understates.

greatest pride of our life and a noble occupation in times of happiness as well as unhappiness; and finally he said: "without it all human endeavors would lack any firm foothold—and even with it things are changeable and insecure enough." But this tolerably skeptical pope keeps silent, like all other ecclesiastical eulogists of science, about his ultimate judgment. From his words one might infer, although this is strange enough for such a friend of the arts, that he places science above art; but in the end it is nothing but good manners when he does not speak at this point of what he places high above all of the sciences, too: "revealed truth" and the "eternal salvation of the soul." Compared to that, what are ornaments, pride, entertainment, and the security of life to him? "Science is something second-class, not anything ultimate, unconditional, not an object of passion"—this judgment Leo retained in his soul: the truly Christian judgment about science.

In antiquity the dignity and recognition of science were diminished by the fact that even her most zealous disciples placed the striving for *virtue* first, and one felt that knowledge had received the highest praise when one celebrated it as the best means to virtue. It is something new in history that knowledge wants to be more than a mere means.

124

In the horizon of the infinite.— We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity.¹⁹ Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel

¹⁹ Cf. the poem "Toward New Seas" in the Appendix.

Here the conclusion of the immediately preceding section is seen in a new light. The attempt to vanquish the shadow of God, heralded in section 108, is felt to be awesome—and in the next section the terror is spelled out more fully.

homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*—and there is no longer any "land."

125

The madman.— Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" —As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? —Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves."

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"²⁰

293

Our air.— We know very well how science strikes those who merely glance at it in passing, as if they were walking by, as women do and unfortunately also many artists: the severity of its service, its inexorability in small as in great matters, and the speed of weighing and judging matters and passing judgment makes them feel dizzy and afraid. Above all they are terrified to see how the most difficult is demanded and the best is done without praise and decorations. Indeed, what one hears is, as among soldiers, mostly reproaches and harsh rebukes; for doing things well is considered the rule, and failure is the exception; but the rule always tends to keep quiet. This "severity of science" has the same effect as the forms and good manners of the best society: it is frightening for the uninitiated. But those who are used to it would never wish to live anywhere else than in this bright, transparent, vigorous, electrified air—in this *virile* air. Anywhere else things are not clean and airy enough for them; they suspect that elsewhere their best art would not really profit others nor give real delight to themselves; that among misunderstandings half of their lives would slip through their fingers; that they would be required to exercise a great deal of caution, conceal things, be inhibited—so many ways of

Preludes of science.— Do you really believe that the sciences would ever have originated and grown if the way had not been prepared by magicians, alchemists, astrologers, and witches whose promises and pretensions first had to create a thirst, a hunger, a taste for *hidden* and *forbidden* powers? Indeed,²³ infinitely more had to be *promised* than could ever be fulfilled in order that anything at all might be fulfilled in the realm of knowledge.

Even as these preludes and preliminary exercises of sciences were not by any means practiced and experienced as such, the whole of *religion* might yet appear as a prelude and exercise to some distant age. Perhaps religion could have been the strange means to make it possible for a few single individuals to enjoy the whole self-sufficiency of a god and his whole power of self-redemption. Indeed—one might ask—would man ever have learned without the benefit of such a religious training and pre-history to experience a hunger and thirst for *himself*, and to find satisfaction and fullness in *himself*? Did Prometheus have to *fancy* first that he had *stolen* the light and then pay for that—before he finally discovered that he had created the light *by coveting the light* and that not only man but also the *god* was the work of his own hands and had been mere clay in his

²³ I am omitting "that" at this point as well as a question mark at the end of this sentence because the original construction in German is illogical. The answer to the first question is clearly meant to be: no. But the answer to this second question, which I have not cast in the form of a question, would have to be: yes. See also section 23.

hands? All mere images of the maker—no less than the fancy, the theft, the Caucasus, the vulture, and the whole tragic *Prometheia* of all seekers after knowledge?²⁴

319

As interpreters of our experiences.— One sort of honesty has been alien to all founders of religions and their kind: They have never made their experiences a matter of conscience for knowledge. “What did I really experience? What happened in me and around me at that time? Was my reason bright enough? Was my will opposed to all deceptions of the senses and bold in resisting the fantastic?” None of them has asked such questions, nor do any of our dear religious people ask them even now. On the contrary, they thirst after things that *go against reason*, and they do not wish to make it too hard for themselves to satisfy it. So they experience “miracles” and “rebirths” and hear the voices of little angels! But we, we others who thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment—hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The theme of contempt for comfortableness and “this sort of happiness” receives its classical statement in the Prologue of *Zarathustra*, section 3ff.

⁴⁵ This is quintessential Nietzsche. Those who ignore this theme, which is introduced in section 2 above and developed further in Book V below and in *The Antichrist*, sections 50–55, misunderstand him.

The above section is relevant not only to the interpretation of Nietzsche and the evaluation of *religious* experiences but also to non-religious, non-denominational “mystical” experiences.

For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself. Only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt. But I suppose that these instincts which are here contending against one another understand very well how to make themselves felt by, and how to hurt, *one another*. This may well be the source of that sudden and violent exhaustion that afflicts all thinkers (it is the exhaustion on a battlefield). Indeed, there may be occasions of concealed *heroism* in our warring depths, but certainly nothing divine that eternally rests in itself, as Spinoza supposed. *Conscious* thinking, especially that of the philosopher, is the least vigorous and therefore also the relatively mildest and calmest form of thinking; and thus precisely philosophers are most apt to be led astray about the nature of knowledge.

Long live physics!—How many people know how to observe something? Of the few who do, how many observe themselves? "Everybody is farthest away—from himself";⁶³ all who try the reins know this to their chagrin, and the maxim "know thyself!" addressed to human beings by a god, is almost malicious. That the case of self-observation is indeed as desperate as that is attested best of all by the manner in which *almost everybody* talks about the essence of moral actions—this quick, eager, convinced, and garrulous manner with its expression, its smile, and its obliging ardor! One seems to have the wish to say to you: "But my dear friend, precisely this is my specialty. You have directed your question to the one person who is entitled to answer you. As it happens, there is nothing about which I am as wise as about this. To come to the point: when a human being judges '*this is right*' and then infers '*therefore it must be done*,' and then proceeds to *do* what he has thus recognized as right and designated as necessary—then the essence of his action is *moral*."

But my friend, you are speaking of three actions instead of one. When you judge "this is right," that is an action, too. Might it not be possible that one could judge in a moral and in an immoral manner? *Why* do you consider this, precisely this, right?

"Because this is what my conscience tells me; and the voice of conscience is never immoral, for it alone determines what is to be moral."

But why do you *listen* to the voice of your conscience? And what gives you the right to consider such a judgment true and infallible? For this *faith*—is there no conscience for that? Have you never heard of an intellectual conscience?⁶⁴ A conscience behind your "conscience"? Your judgment "this is right" has a pre-history in your instincts, likes, dislikes, experiences, and

⁶³ "Jeder ist sich selber der Fernste." *Der Fernste* (the farthest) is the opposite of *der Nächste* (the nearest), which is the word used in the German Bible where the English versions have the "neighbor."

⁶⁴ Cf. sections 2, 319, and 344.

lack of experiences. "How did it originate there?" you must ask, and then also: "What is it that impels me to listen to it?" You can listen to its commands like a good soldier who hears his officer's command. Or like a woman who loves the man who commands. Or like a flatterer and coward who is afraid of the commander. Or like a dunderhead who obeys because no objection occurs to him. In short, there are a hundred ways in which you can listen to your conscience. But that you take this or that judgment for the voice of conscience—in other words, that you feel something to be right—may be due to the fact that you have never thought much about yourself and simply have accepted blindly that what you had been *told* ever since your childhood was right; or it may be due to the fact that what you call your duty has up to this point brought you sustenance and honors—and you consider it "right" because it appears to you as your own "condition of existence" (and that you have a *right* to existence seems irrefutable to you).

For all that, the *firmness* of your moral judgment could be evidence of your personal abjectness, of impersonality; your "moral strength" might have its source in your stubbornness—or in your inability to envisage new ideals. And, briefly, if you had thought more subtly, observed better, and learned more, you certainly would not go on calling this "duty" of yours and this "conscience" of yours duty and conscience. Your understanding of the manner in which moral judgments have originated would spoil these grand words for you, just as other grand words, like "sin" and "salvation of the soul" and "redemption" have been spoiled for you. —And now don't cite the categorical imperative, my friend! This term tickles my ear and makes me laugh despite your serious presence. It makes me think of the old Kant who had obtained the "thing in itself" by *stealth*—another very ridiculous thing!—and was punished for this when the "categorical imperative" crept stealthily into his heart and led him *astray*—back to "God," "soul," "freedom," and "immortality," like a fox who loses his way and goes astray back into his cage. Yet it had been *his* strength and cleverness that had *broken open* the cage!⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Like most philosophers after Kant, Nietzsche believes that Kant was not entitled to the "thing in itself" and that this notion contradicts the

What? You admire the categorical imperative within you? This "firmness" of your so-called moral judgment? This "unconditional" feeling that "here everyone must judge as I do"? Rather admire your *selfishness* at this point. And the blindness, pettiness, and frugality of your selfishness. For it is selfish to experience one's own judgment as a universal law; and this selfishness is blind, petty, and frugal because it betrays that you have not yet discovered yourself nor created for yourself an ideal of your own, your very own—for that could never be somebody else's and much less that of all, all!

Anyone who still judges "in this case everybody would have to act like this" has not yet taken five steps toward self-knowledge. Otherwise he would know that there neither are nor can be actions that are the same; that every action that has ever been done was done in an altogether unique and irretrievable way, and that this will be equally true of every future action; that all regulations about actions relate only to their coarse exterior (even the most inward and subtle regulations of all moralities so far); that these regulations may lead to some semblance of sameness, *but really only to some semblance*; that as one contemplates or looks back upon *any* action at all, it is and remains impenetrable; that our opinions about "good" and "noble" and "great" can never be *proved true* by our actions because every action is unknowable; that our opinions, valuations, and tables of what is good certainly belong among the most powerful levers in the involved mechanism of our actions, but that in any particular case the law of their mechanism is indemonstrable.

Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and valuations and to the *creation of our own new*

central tenets of Kant's theory of knowledge. Most philosophers since Kant would also agree with Nietzsche that the doctrine of the categorical imperative, the core of Kant's ethics, is untenable; and in his ethics—specifically, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*—Kant "postulates" God, freedom, and immortality, after having shown in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that all three are indemonstrable. While few philosophers have followed Kant at these points, Nietzsche's discussion is distinguished by its irreverent wit, which recalls the tone of Heine's *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (German 1st ed. 1835, 2nd ed. 1852).

tables of what is good, and let us stop brooding about the "moral value of our actions"! Yes, my friends, regarding all the moral chatter of some about others it is time to feel nauseous. Sitting in moral judgment should offend our taste. Let us leave such chatter and such bad taste to those who have nothing else to do but drag the past a few steps further through time and who never live in the present—which is to say the many, the great majority. We, however, *want to become those we are*⁶⁶—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves. To that end we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order to be able to be *creators* in this sense—while hitherto all valuations and ideals have been based on *ignorance* of physics or were constructed so as to *contradict* it. Therefore: long live physics! And even more so that which *compels* us to turn to physics—our honesty!⁶⁷

344

How we, too, are still pious.— In science convictions have no rights of citizenship, as one says with good reason. Only when they decide to descend to the modesty of hypotheses, of a provisional experimental point of view, of a regulative fiction, they may be granted admission and even a certain value in the realm of knowledge—though always with the restriction that they remain under police supervision, under the police of mistrust. —But does this not mean, if you consider it more precisely, that a conviction may obtain admission to science only when it *ceases* to be a conviction? Would it not be the first step in the discipline of the scientific spirit that one would not permit oneself any more convictions?

Probably this is so; only we still have to ask: *To make it possible for this discipline to begin*, must there not be some prior conviction—even one that is so commanding and uncon-

⁷ A gloss on the title of Book V.

⁸ Note how section 125 above was introduced by 124, and cf. also 283, 289, 291.

ditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself? We see that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science “without presuppositions.” The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: “*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value.”

This unconditional will to truth—what is it? Is it the will *not to allow oneself to be deceived*? Or is it the will *not to deceive*? For the will to truth could be interpreted in the second way, too—if only the special case “I do not want to deceive myself” is subsumed under the generalization “I do not want to deceive.” But why not deceive? But why not allow oneself to be deceived?

Note that the reasons for the former principle belong to an altogether different realm from those for the second. One does not want to allow oneself to be deceived because one assumes that it is harmful, dangerous, calamitous to be deceived. In this sense, science would be a long-range prudence, a caution, a utility; but one could object in all fairness: How is that? Is wanting not to allow oneself to be deceived really less harmful, less dangerous, less calamitous? What do you know in advance of the character of existence to be able to decide whether the greater advantage is on the side of the unconditionally mistrustful or of the unconditionally trusting? But if both should be required, much trust *as well as* much mistrust, from where would science then be permitted to take its unconditional faith or conviction on which it rests, that truth is more important than any other thing, including every other conviction? Precisely this conviction could never have come into being if both truth and untruth constantly proved to be useful, which is the case. Thus—the faith in science, which after all exists undeniably, cannot owe its origin to such a calculus of utility; it must have originated *in spite of* the fact that the disutility and dangerousness of “the will to truth,” of “truth at any price” is proved to it constantly. “At any price”: how well we understand these words once we have offered and slaughtered one faith after another on this altar!

Consequently, “will to truth” does *not* mean “I will not allow

myself to be deceived" but—there is no alternative—"I will not deceive, not even myself"; and with that we stand on moral ground. For you only have to ask yourself carefully, "Why do you not want to deceive?" especially if it should seem—and it does seem!—as if life aimed at semblance, meaning error, deception, simulation, delusion, self-delusion, and when the great sweep of life has actually always shown itself to be on the side of the most unscrupulous *polytropoi*.⁹ Charitably interpreted, such a resolve might perhaps be a quixotism,¹⁰ a minor slightly mad enthusiasm; but it might also be something more serious, namely, a principle that is hostile to life and destructive.—"Will to truth"—that might be a concealed will to death.¹¹

Thus the question "Why science?" leads back to the moral problem: *Why have morality at all* when life, nature, and history are "not moral"? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this "other

⁹ This Greek word (Nietzsche uses the Greek characters) is applied to Odysseus in the first line of the *Odyssey*.

There is no English equivalent. The meaning ranges from much turned to much traveled, versatile, wily, and manifold. In German there are two good ways of rendering it: *den vielgewandten* and, better yet, *den vielverschlagenen*. *Viel* is much; *gewandt*, turned, skilled, dexterous; *verschlagen*, driven off course, shipwrecked or stranded—and crafty.

Nietzsche's point is, of course, that Odysseus owed his survival on many occasions to his virtuosity in deception: At this point we should remember the arguments in sections 110 and 111 above.

If life often depends on deception—on deceiving oneself as well as others—then the unconditional desire for truth, truth at any price, depends on a standard independent of our survival—a standard to which we willingly sacrifice ourselves. To that extent we are still "pious."

Without a doubt, Nietzsche includes himself when he says, a few lines later, "we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians." Cf. his impassioned insistence on the intellectual conscience in sections 2, 319, and 335.

¹⁰ It is relevant that Nietzsche loved Don Quixote and tended to identify himself with him. See Kaufmann, 71.

¹¹ The notion of a will to death was resurrected by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in 1920.

world"—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our world*?—But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine. —But what if this should become more and more incredible, if nothing should prove to be divine any more unless it were error, blindness, the lie—if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie?—¹²

345

Morality as a problem.—The lack of personality always takes its revenge: A weakened, thin, extinguished personality that denies itself is no longer fit for anything good—least of all for philosophy. "Selflessness" has no value either in heaven or on earth. All great problems demand *great love*, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grip on themselves are capable. It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an "impersonal" one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought. In the latter case nothing will come of it; that much one can promise in advance, for even if great problems should allow themselves to be *grasped* by them they would not permit frogs and weaklings to *hold on* to them; such has been their taste from time immemorial—a taste, incidentally, that they share with all redoubtable females.

Why is it then that I have never yet encountered anybody,

¹² Nietzsche quotes from this section in the third essay of his *Genealogy of Morals*, section 24 (BWN, 588), and says at the end of section 24: "Whoever feels that this has been stated too briefly should read the section of *The Gay Science* entitled 'How we, too, are still pious' (section 344), or preferably the entire fifth book . . ."

not even in books, who approached morality in this personal way and who knew morality as a problem, and this problem as his own personal distress, torment, voluptuousness, and passion? It is evident that up to now morality was no problem at all but, on the contrary, precisely that on which after all mistrust, discord, and contradiction one could agree—the hallowed place of peace where our thinkers took a rest even from themselves, took a deep breath, and felt revived. I see nobody who ventured a *critique* of moral valuations; I miss even the slightest attempts of scientific curiosity, of the refined, experimental imagination of psychologists and historians that readily anticipates a problem and catches it in flight without quite knowing what it has caught. I have scarcely detected a few meager preliminary efforts to explore the *history of the origins* of these feelings and valuations (which is something quite different from a critique and again different from a history of ethical systems). In one particular case I have done everything to encourage a sympathy and talent for this kind of history—in vain, as it seems to me today.¹³

These historians of morality (mostly Englishmen) do not amount to much. Usually they themselves are still quite unsuspectingly obedient to one particular morality and, without knowing it, serve that as shield-bearers and followers—for example, by sharing that popular superstition of Christian Europe which people keep mouthing so guilelessly to this day, that what is characteristic of moral actions is selflessness, self-sacrifice, or sympathy and pity. Their usual mistaken premise

¹³ The preface to the *Genealogy of Morals* (BWN, 453f. and 457) shows that Nietzsche is alluding to Paul Rée, the author of *Der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindungen* (1877) and *Die Entstehung des Gewissens* (1885). Cf. Kaufmann, 48–64, taking note of 50n.

Binion, p. 137n, confirms that Rée is meant in the passage above but mistakenly assigns it to the Preface and not to section 345. Binion says that in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche “mentioned only Rée’s *Ursprung* but meant rather Rée’s *Entstehung*, alone purportedly a derivation of conscience.” Actually, Nietzsche describes his reactions to Rée’s *Ursprung* without commenting on the derivation of conscience; and Binion also overlooks that the second section of Rée’s *Ursprung* is entitled “*Der Ursprung des Gewissens*” (The Origin of Conscience).

is that they affirm some consensus of the nations, at least of tame nations, concerning certain principles of morals, and then they infer from this that these principles must be unconditionally binding also for you and me; or, conversely, they see the truth that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different and then infer from this that *no* morality is at all binding. Both procedures are equally childish.

The mistake made by the more refined among them is that they uncover and criticize the perhaps foolish opinions of a people about their morality, or of humanity about all human morality—opinions about its origin, religious sanction, the superstition of free will,¹⁴ and things of that sort—and then suppose that they have criticized the morality itself. But the value of a command “thou shalt” is still fundamentally different from and independent of such opinions about it and the weeds of error that may have overgrown it—just as certainly as the value of a medication for a sick person is completely independent of whether he thinks about medicine scientifically or the way old women do. Even if a morality has grown out of an error, the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value.¹⁵

Thus nobody up to now has examined the *value* of that most famous of all medicines which is called morality; and the first step would be—for once to *question* it. Well then, precisely this is our task.—¹⁶