

1844-1900  
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1966)

October 18, 23, 25, 2001

[page numbers refer to Modern Library / Vintage editions of Kaufmann's translation]

## Announcements:

### I. Three questions about Marx

A. Q: Are there politics in a communist society? (i.e. the collective and participatory engagement of citizens in those affairs that effect their daily life?) Or in the absence of class struggle will politics "whither away" with the state, leaving nothing but administrative functions (i.e. Lenin's post office metaphor).

B. Q: Is the Commune an authoritarian government or a democratic one? If the latter, how have Marx's ideas devolved into the USSR, China, and North Korea?

C. Q: Would communism eliminate ambition and lead to mediocrity?

## Preface and First Essay

### I. Method and objectives

A. Q: What is this first essay about? What is Nietzsche arguing?

B. Q: Why does Nietzsche write in an aphoristic style? [see BG&E notes for more]

1. **Most philosophers tried to develop a system**, a coherent framework that could explain all the important phenomena of the world. But Nietzsche argues that **all systems are based on a set of assumptions** from which the philosopher deduces the rest of his system. **No philosopher, however, can establish the truth of these assumptions.** They have to just assume they are true. In this sense, the philosopher's basic assumptions are arbitrary and subjective, and therefore the whole system is, too.

a. **Example:** Locke's theory of government is based on the notion that humans are "by nature" free and equal. But he can't prove this. It's an assumption, and he tries to build an entire philosophical system on an unproven assumption. It renders the rest of his philosophy subjective.

2. **Nietzsche refuses to construct a system of his own, and his aphoristic style reflects that.** Nietzsche wants to question all assumptions, even his own, but if he developed a system he couldn't do that.

3. Nietzsche is a **problem-thinker, not a system-thinker.** He's like Socrates in that respect.

4. Think of each aphorism as a sort of "thought experiment," something that may eventually be shown to be wrong. Nietzsche doesn't want to rely on one system for finding truth, but many. The more "eyes" the better. In a sense, **the aphoristic style represents a new way to think.**

5. Nietzsche called his method the "**gay science**" of fearless experiment and the good will to accept new evidence and to abandon old positions. (Kaufmann 86)

6. But also think of the aphorisms not as a disjointed set of clever sayings but as **connecting into a complete work** as well.

C. **Example:**

1. An army commander walks past 100 captured enemy soldiers, whom his soldiers are about to slaughter rather than to imprison. He does nothing to stop the slaughter. Q: Is this act good or evil?

2. One of the enemy soldiers survives. A second commander runs up to him, protects him from the soldiers, and begs forgiveness for what his troops have done. Q: Is this act good or evil?

3. Q: What makes the first act evil and the second one good?

D. Figuring this out is Nietzsche's objective. **His question is not "What is moral?" but "What is the origin and function of morality?"** How did man invent good and evil, and why?

1. Read 453/17

E. Philosophers have only tried to explain the "rational foundations" of morality. They have tried to answer the question, "What grounds our morality—God, reason, the categorical imperative, the forms?"

1. Example: **the golden rule**. Most philosophers have assumed it to be the ultimate moral ideal, and have spent their time trying to find what grounds the golden rule has been based on. But instead of asking what is the foundation of the golden rule we should ask **why do we need the golden rule?** Why does it define our moral system? And **what does the golden rule tell us about us as a culture?**

2. These are questions that moral philosophers have never asked, much less answered. **We need to question morality itself**, not just its "rational foundations."

3. **Nietzsche's definition of morals**: "the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of 'life' comes to be." 217/27 (BG&E)

F. **Genealogy as a method**

1. **Q**: What is a genealogy? Why does Nietzsche propose to do a genealogy of morals rather than a history of morals?

2. **Genea** (breed, race) + **logy** (study of) Literally, it's the study of a peoples, the study of the descent of individuals or family from its ancestors.

3. **Genealogy of Morals** is literally a **study of the descent of Western moral values from an originating point**. It's the study of the downbreeding of humanity from a noble race to herd animals, from people whose goal was excellence to those who are sated by mediocrity. **Genealogy implies a negative evolution**.

4. **Morals do not emanate from a transcendental source**: God, Satan, nature, reason, etc. They are the products of humans, and thus need to be studied concretely and conceptually through an analysis of linguistics, culture, psychology and an anti-philosophical (transcendental) viewpoint. However, they don't imply an abstract alienation of ourselves, as Marx argues.

5. Nietzsche proposes to historicize "universal" concepts such as "good," "bad," and "evil" because **examining the genealogy of moral values reveals the key to changing them**.

6. Read 456/20

7. **Q**: How does morality undermine "the highest power and splendor" of humanity? How is it that modern morality is safe but it kills the future? Answering this Q is key to understanding Nietzsche's project.

bio of H →  
II. **"Good and Bad" and "Good and Evil"**

A. Nietzsche asks how is it that Christian values such as modesty, pity, self-denial, humility, and meekness came to be defined as "good"?

B. Nietzsche argues there are two "stages" in history: pre-moral and moral

C. **The pre-moral period** (prehistoric era): This era had no conception of good and bad. Life and death were the only standards of moral valuation, if you can call it that. The consequences of an action determined its value (i.e. whether it enabled you to survive or to die).

1. **Utilitarians** are the modern example of this primitive stage of morality.

D. **The moral period** (historical era) shifts the emphasis from the consequences of an action (e.g. life or death) to the **intentions** behind it. Moral values lie in the intentions of an action.

1. There are two different sets of moral valuation in the moral period: good and bad and, later, good and evil. The transition is very important to Nietzsche.

dict of the Greeks - see initial cover, p. 41  
2

E. **“Good and bad”: the knightly caste**

1. In the early stages of the historical era, **“good” meant all that was noble and great**: health, strength, beauty, wit, imagination, cunning, endurance, passion, vigor, etc. These were the natural characteristics of the nobility, hence they were “good.” The mighty and powerful in a society—those who had these traits—declared themselves to be good.

2. **“Bad” was simply the lack of these qualities.** It reflected the ordinary person. “Badness” was almost an afterthought to the aristocrats.

3. E.g. the etymology of the German word of good is noble, while the etymology of the German word for bad is simple, plain. 464-67/28-31

4. In other words, **“good” and “bad” were social-political terms** that distinguished the elites of a society (the aristocracy, nobles, knights, citizens) from the mass (herd, slaves, plebians, the people).

5. “Good” defined the duality; “bad” is a lack of the good.

F. **“Good and evil”: the priestly caste**

1. The other part of the aristocracy was the “priestly caste.” This includes not only religious figures but philosophers, artists, saints, and women. The priestly caste is in opposition to the knightly caste. It can’t defeat the warrior caste on its own terms. **The priests are impotent.**

2. The priestly and knightly castes come into conflict. The priestly caste unites with the common people (i.e. the herd) to defeat the knightly caste. But they don’t defeat them in Marx’s sense of a social revolution. Instead, they defeat them through a **total revaluation of moral values. Powerlessness transforms into a hatred of the strong.** “The truly great haters in world history have always been priests...” (469/33).

3. This leads to the rise of a **slave morality**: It negates all that the knightly caste deems good, beautiful, and happy. **It redefines these things from being good to being evil.**

4. Now the new distinction is not good and bad but good and evil. All that was noble and good is now deemed “evil”: cunning, power, vigor, passion, etc. *leisure*

5. Further, **now it’s evil that defines the duality**: “good” is simply what is not evil: submission, meekness, weakness, humility, etc. It was Good and Other, now it’s Evil and Other. *toil*

G. Under slave morality, **the strong are encouraged to become weak.**

1. The lamb has triumphed over the bird of prey. 480-81/44-45

H. **Aristocracy** → knightly

↓ → priestly

**Plebian**

1. The priests and their slave morality win out over the nobles and their master morality.

2. **“You are evil; I am good”: the fundamental formula of slave morality.**

### III. The slave revolt in morality

#### A. Q: Who are Nietzsche's slaves?

1. They are not necessarily literally slaves, the lower class, or even oppressed. The "slaves" are the collectivity of the untalented, ungifted, and powerless—the "sickly." Those who lack health, energy, attractiveness. They are "those who are weary."

#### B. The role of the Jews

1. Q: How did this transformation come about?

2. **The Jews inverted aristocratic morality.** Rather than desiring the strength and prowess of the Romans they turned against envy and declared the Roman's virtues evil. This is how evil was conceived, "out of the code of rancor of the slave."

3. Read 469-70/33-34

4. Q: Is this an anti-Semitic argument?

C. **The Jews' values then are Christian values today.** Jesus is the embodiment of Old Testament heroism and vengeance transformed into the love and humility of the New Testament. Jesus links Judaism and Christianity together.

1. In Nietzsche's time, Christianity distinguished itself from Judaism. It blamed Jews for killing Jesus. Nietzsche is rejecting this anti-Semitism by saying that Christianity and Judaism are not contradictory but are connected through the nexus of Jesus. 471/35

2. Jesus, then, is the ultimate slave moralist.

3. Thus you have "Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome." 488/52 The proof of who won this battle is answered by asking yourself who sits in the center of Rome today? The pope!

5. Read if time 488, 489 / 52, 53

D. The Jews defeated Rome, the weak vanquished the powerful, the herd rules the master by subjecting everyone to its morality. Now the whole world is dominated by slave morality. **Everything has become "Judaized, Christianized, mob-ized!"** (472/36). Christianity, Judaism, liberalism, communism, anarchism, democracy: all have adopted and embraced slave morality. It's a poison spreading through mankind.

# Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

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by Joel Olson

Nietzsche was born in Röcken, Prussia in 1844. The men on both sides of his family were Lutheran ministers, and he grew up in a devoutly religious home. His father died when he was only 4, and he grew up with his mother, sister, grandma, and two aunts.

Nietzsche received his Ph.D. from the University of Bonn in philology (the study of languages). He briefly served in the Prussian military twice (1867 and 1870). He taught at the university of Basel for ten years (1869-1879), retiring at the age of 35 due to his poor health. He spent the next ten years publishing his most important works, including *Genealogy of Morals* (1887).

In January 1889, Nietzsche collapsed on the streets of Turin, Italy, after throwing his arms around a horse to protect it from a coachman, who had just flogged it. He recovered consciousness but never his sanity, and he lived the last ten years of his life that way. He probably went insane due to a syphilis infection. He was generally pleasant and sometimes lucid during his insanity, but he would never discuss any of his works or ideas. He died in 1900.

Nietzsche's books sold extremely poorly in his lifetime. For example, he sold only 40 copies of book I of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He paid to publish *Beyond Good and Evil* out of his own pocket, needing to sell 300 copies to break even. However, he could only sell just over 100. His reputation quickly grew in the later years of his life and shortly after his death.

After Nietzsche went insane, his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, took it upon herself to become the caretaker and editor of his works. Förster-Nietzsche was a German nationalist and a virulent anti-Semite. She twisted and distorted Nietzsche's books to make him look like an anti-Semite&mdash;which he was not (he called himself an "incorrigible anti-anti-Semite")&mdash;and a German nationalist&mdash;which he was not. She is the one responsible for making Nietzsche's philosophy popular among the Nazis and for perpetuating the once-common view that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi.

## Source:

- Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York: Vintage, 1968).

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October 24, 2000

### Announcements:

- go over 2nd essay assignment
- hand out 446 flier again
- RP #9 will be due on Oct. 31, i.e. next Tuesday. I'll post on Thurs.

### I. Central concern of Nietzsche

A. Locke was concerned with the origins and <sup>purpose</sup> justification of government. Marx placed the economy (capitalism) at the center of his study of our modern condition. **Questions of morality and culture** are central to N's study of modernity.

### II. *Ressentiment*

A. What makes this reversal of morals possible is *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* is the prime mover of slave morality.

1. **Ressentiment**: Stored-up resentment that poisons the soul. (Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 42) It is a resentment that migrates to places where its existence is hidden and denied.

B. *Ressentiment* gives birth to moral values by placing **revenge** at the base of slave morality. It assumes a hostile external world and feeds off of fear of the other. 472-73 / 36-37

C. A person infected with *ressentiment* never forgets the sins committed against him. He is always, in some way, seeking revenge.

1. But for Nietzsche, **forgetting is a good thing**. The knightly man is never bothered by what people do to him. He lets it pass through him like a meal. If he sometimes does not forgive those who have wronged him it's not out of revenge, it's simply because he forgot they wronged him in the first place. He is **above revenge**.

2. The priestly man, however, has **dyspepsia**, i.e. **he can't digest psychologically**. (494/58) He can't forget and lets it burn inside of him. He disguises his hatred as compassion and pity, but pity is really "hatred posing as love."

3. *Ressentiment* blooms best in anarchists and anti-Semites, because both sanctify revenge as "justice." 509/73

### III. *Mediocrity*

A. The result of the rule of slave morality is **the mediocrity of man**.

1. **Modern morality serves to sanction and elevate herd virtues as universal virtues for all humankind. But in so doing it suppresses greatness and pushes those of an aristocratic constitution back down into the mass. Modern morality thus breeds mediocrity and suppresses excellence.**

2. Nietzsche fears the mass and its herd morality because it is imposing its will on everyone. It's threatening individuality, particularly the individuality of great human beings: Socrates, Napoleon, da Vinci, Jesus, the Greeks, etc..

3. **The purpose of morality is to brand the passions and desires of great individuals as evil** (and hence these people as evil), because they are a threat to the herd community. Those actions that break from the herd are defined as "evil," while humble and sheeplike actions are defined as "good."

B. Thus, **all Europe has become one giant herd.**

1. **Christian morality** is one of the principal promoters of mediocrity, by branding what is good "evil" and by trying to abolish rank and distinctions among men.

2. **Utilitarianism** promotes "pleasure" above "pain"—as if greatness didn't require suffering and agony.

3. **Politics** promotes it: Democracy, liberty, equality are all slogans of the herd, not a commander. Liberalism, socialism, and anarchism are all one in their elevation of the herd and their desire to create a mediocre mass society.

4. **Science** promotes mediocrity: E.g. Darwin's theory of evolution and "survival of the fittest," as if mere survival is the goal of mankind. Look at wimps like Socrates, Jesus, Goethe and Nietzsche himself! Most of them were sickly men who left no heirs. They should have been wiped out by Darwinism (social Darwinism, actually), but they were immensely powerful!

C. **"Bad air! Bad air"** he cries. The entire atmosphere of the modern world is poisoned with mediocrity. 479/43 The lowly and meek rule while great minds and heroes are suppressed. In fact, they're so suppressed we can't even find them any more.

1. **Read 480/44.**

2. **Q:** Does modern democracy breed mediocrity? [TV? media? Pop music?]

D. **The will to power**

1. The goal of life is not ~~survival~~ to be good (Christianity) nor to treat all others as equals (modern politics) nor to survive (Darwin). The essence of life is **the will to power.**

2. The will to power is the fundamental drive of all human efforts. It is a combination of reason and unacknowledged passions, desires, and drives. It is a **psychological drive**, conscious and unconscious, a **desire to dominate.**

3. **Everyone, even the lowly, has a will to power.** This is evident in that Christianity triumphed over Greek and Roman cultures. Greek and Roman cultures were cultures of elitism: an aristocracy of citizens ruled while a barely-acknowledged class of slaves and women did the work. The rise of Christianity was a silent revolt of the slaves. Their will to power led them to *invert* Greek and Roman values. They defeated their masters by subjugating them to *their* morality.

4. While the will to power is the drive behind all human action, N doesn't believe that we should simply succumb to it. If we just succumb to our impulses we are little better than animals, for animals are driven by the w2p, too. Rather, we should strive to master the will to power, ~~to "sublimate" or "overcome" it.~~

5. It's not about achieving "worldly power," i.e. friends, influence, wealth, pleasure, "success." It's the weak man who settles for worldly power. (or gives up on power in this world entirely.) (Kaufmann, 191, 180, 185, 280)

6. Mastering the will to power requires self-control and the disciplining of one's inclinations. Nietzsche defines it as **sublimation**: We should sublimate or

channel or direct our impulses toward more important things. Rather than money or greed we should strive for excellence, for growth, for the enhancement of life. Mastering the will to power is a **striving for immortality**, to perfect oneself. In order to control others we must be able to control ourselves. **Self-control**.

a. Think in terms of **arete**, the will to outdo, excel, overpower, and "overcome" another. (Kaufmann 192-93) Nietzsche also refers to it as an "instinct of freedom." *or "overcome"*

b. "The Good Life is the powerful life, the life of those who are in full control of their impulses and need not weaken them, and *the good man is for Nietzsche the passionate man who is the master of his passions.*" Kaufmann 280

c. This self-control often involves **suffering**. The goal is to control yourself rather than be controlled by the moral codes of others.

7. Those who are able to overcome their impulses, often at great personal pain and suffering, are truly human. They are not just men, they are super men, in a sense, or **overmen**. [explain here?]

8. This is not a "Great Men" view of history. If there is any "goal" to humanity it doesn't lie in its achievements or its progress but in its greatest humans. Nietzsche doesn't appreciate Napoleon for ending revolutionary anarchy, he appreciates the revolutionary anarchy for making Napoleon possible. (Kaufmann 314, 319)

9. For Nietzsche, life is activity, life is striving to dominate others. Democracy tries to repress this inherent drive of humans (indeed, of all life). Even science has been captured by this democratic ethos: life "adapts" to change rather than seeks to dominate other species, society and people "evolve," "progress," etc. **Read 514-15/78-79 if time.**

*is there a way to have democracy w/out repressing? ← →*

## Second Essay

[didn't get to finish these notes cos I left 'em at home! Edit them into a final version]

### I. Promising, contract, conscience

x. **Q:** Nietzsche argues that when we look at contractual relationships, we find "a great deal of severity, cruelty, and pain." (500/64) This is very different from Locke's notion of the contract. Why does Nietzsche say that?

x. A contract is a promise. You give me X and I'll do Y. Promising requires a regular, calculating, predictable, responsible mankind. In other words, it requires a **conscience**.

x. **Conscience** is the **instinct to be responsible**. Conscience implies "acquiring a memory." It requires that we lose our "active forgetfulness," our ability to shrug off wrongs done to us because we are so powerful that they are ultimately meaningless to us. (498/62)

x. If you break your end of the contract, the "conscience" of man requires that the creditor extract revenge or punishment from you. He remembers your promises and will keep you to them. The creditor has the right to extract his "pound of flesh" (often literally) in lieu of payment for a debt. Thus torture and the social contract go hand-in-hand. The dark underbelly of the contract is "blood and cruelty." (498/62)

*- Conscience is not "the voice of God in man." It is the instinct of cruelty. (Ecclesiastes)*  
*- Cruelty is a basic element of human culture*  
*- "I remember your debt, & I will exact punishment for it."*

*will 2 parts of instinct (for freedom) → bad conscience (when the instinct is suppressed & only able to vent on itself)*

*The "joy in cruelty"*

*of desire, too. See 61-62 again*



a master, a commander by nature has no need of contracts. 86

x. Isn't that what collateral is all about? If you miss one lousy home payment they take away your entire home? There's cruelty in that contract.

x. In ancient times, then, the right to be cruel to one who has failed to pay a debt was a right and a form of pleasure. Further, no one felt guilty about it. Hence you not only had public executions and public tortures, these events were festivals. (500-503/64-67) **Read 503/67**

x. There was a certain "joy in cruelty" back then. Further, Nietzsche doesn't necessarily see anything wrong in this. "...let me declare expressly that in the days when mankind was not yet ashamed of its cruelty, life on earth was more cheerful than it is now..." 503/67

x. Guilt and bad conscience emerge out of this relationship between contract and cruelty. Bad conscience is the consciousness of guilt. It emerged when people began to see cruelty as a bad thing rather than a right of the creditor and a form of pleasure.

x. Marx also exposes the power relations in the contract (i.e. "right vs. right") and its inherent cruelty, but Nietzsche's criticism doesn't condemn the cruelty like Marx does. Instead, he condemns the guilt or bad conscience that cruelty produces today. It's a reflection of the mediocrity of modern society.

x. Justice and the law

x. The law is also a form of contract. The community or the state is the creditor, the debtor is the individual. When the individual breaks the law, he owes the community.

x. The purpose of law is to contain the *ressentiment* of the weaker peoples. It partially restricts the will to power, especially among the weak. 511-12/75-76

x. The law defines what is just and unjust. There is no universal notion of justice. "Justice" is a product of the law, the law is not a product or application of justice.

x. **Read if time 512/76.**

x. Punishment and the origins of bad conscience

x. Punishment today is supposed to evoke feelings of guilt and repentance on the part of the perpetrator. It's supposed to evoke a bad conscience. But few prisoners ever feel guilty, only alienated and angry. And why should he feel guilty? The state commits all the same infractions he does: murder, theft, extortion, etc. In fact, criminals in an earlier age never felt guilty, nor were they expected to. Punishment was something you suffered for being caught. 517-19/81-83

x. Punishment wasn't originally designed for punishing (i.e. revenge or deterrence).

x. Instead, the origins of "bad conscience" lie not in punishment but in the domestication of man, his entrance into what Locke calls "civil society."

x.

x. Thus, the origins of the state lie in power, not contract. Locke is wrong. **Read 522/**

x. But Nietzsche does not condemn this fact or fret over it, he only condemns those who deny it.

x. The need for a new morality and new men

x. **Q:** What is Nietzsche doing, "erecting an ideal or knocking one down?" 531/95

x. His goal is to create a new morality, but first he has to destroy the old one. "If a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed." 531/95

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Marx on  
the contract

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x. folk used to say "something was unexpectedly wrong," NOT "I didn't want to have done that!"  
= divides vs. "I forgot"

x. **Q:** Consider for next class: What would Nietzsche's new morality consist of?

x. **Nietzsche doesn't believe in universal human equality.** A just and proper ordering of society is a society that reflects these fundamental human inequalities, in which the masters rule and the slaves serve the master. His main criticism of modern society is that it doesn't recognize this natural order of things. Xians, democrats, socialists, anarchists—all of these otherwise diverse ideologies all assume that people are fundamentally equal.

x. **The only way such equality can be created is to suppress the people who should otherwise be the masters of society.** Religious ideals do just that: solitude, fasting, abstinence, humility, poverty: these are the virtues of the elite of this society? That's crazy, sez Nietzsche. Real virtues such as strength, power, manliness, heroism, glory: these are the virtues of the masters, and they are the virtues that should define society. But with the help of modern religion, humanity has managed to flip the proper order of virtues around so that the slave's morality rules and the master's morality is suppressed.

x. **Christianity creates a mass society, a mediocre society, a society of herd animals.**

x. God is the antithesis of the will to power and our instinct for freedom.

2. For example, look at the *power* of the Old Testament! Look at what man used to be! Then look at the wimpy New Testament and the virtues it subscribes to man.

x. The Greek gods thought humans foolish, but not sinful. Compare that with Christianity, guilt, penance, etc.

x. Herd morality is appropriate for the herd. In this sense, while he might agree with Marx that Christianity is the "opiate of the masses," it serves a useful function for Nietzsche by keeping the masses doped up. Marx believes religion must be abolished, Nietzsche believes its influence must be limited to the masses. The problem is that its morality has spread throughout society, preventing the emergence of "free spirits" and breeding mediocrity. The danger of religion is that it's never satisfied just to keep the herd in line—it wants the herd to rule. Thus, it inverts moral virtues (humility over prowess, etc.), it eliminates rank and distinction, etc.

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October 26, 2000

### Announcements

- RP #9 due next Tuesday, on Du Bois: What is double consciousness? What is the role of the Talented Tenth?
- Any Q's on the paper?

### Third Essay

#### I. The ascetic ideal

A. Q: What are "ascetic ideals"? *What is their value?*

1. **Ascetic:** To practice strict denial as a measure of self-discipline.
2. An ascetic ideal, then, is an ideal that encourages self-discipline.
3. The "three great slogans of the ascetic ideal": **poverty, humility, chastity.**

544/108

#### B. Philosophy requires some degree of asceticism

1. In order to achieve the highest spirituality, the greatest excellence, one must discipline oneself to the point of suffering. Thus, all great spirits have embraced these three ideals to a degree.

2. Few of the great philosophers ever married, few of them were ever happy, most of them were poor. Poverty, humility, and chastity are required, in some degree, in order to achieve greatness. 543-44/107-8

3. Nietzsche argues that **all truly worthwhile human achievements** (including art, philosophy, and religion) **have involved asceticism and thus required man to suffer and be cruel to himself.** In order to master one's impulses, one's will to power and to use it for greatness, one must be harsh with oneself. The lessons that we learn easily today were paid for in death, torture, and blood by heretics, martyrs, and enemies of the state. All we have to do is accept Jesus as our savior, but Jesus had to be tortured physically and tested mentally. One pays dearly for being the Lord's prophet. (Kauf 245)

#### C. The ascetic priest

1. Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo* that the ascetic ideal is the moral philosophy of the priest. He also says that *Genealogy* "contains the first psychology of the priest." (*Ecce Homo*, 769/313)

2. Q: Who is the ascetic priest and what's his function?

3. The ascetic priest is the artist, the philosopher, the religious figure. [right?]

#### D. Q: What is the value of ascetic ideals?

1. Nietzsche doesn't condemn the ascetic ideal entirely. A "certain asceticism" is good because the self-discipline it provides helps produce greatness. (548/112) Like I said above, suffering is inherent to greatness: "whoever has at some time build a 'new heaven' has found the power to do so only in his *own hell*." 551/115

- a. Philosophy has to adopt some asceticism; it provides a "cocoon" from which its ideas can develop. (551/115) Without asceticism, man would just be an animal, consumed by the "multicolored beast" of Plato.

4. Free spirits are ascetics not as they think self-denial & suffering are virtues, but out of pessimism for life. Their obsession with their 10 work leads them to abandon or neglect or suppress other aspects of life 115-116

In + L is using the priest serves a useful function.

add  
L  
2. The ascetic priest **paves the way for something greater**. "he becomes a tool for the creation of more favorable conditions for being here and being man..." (556/120). He paves the way for overmen.

3. **The ascetic priest's job is to segregate the healthy from the sick.**

a. **Q:** What does it mean to be "sick" for Nietzsche? Healthy?

b. **The sickness is the mediocrity of the herd.** This sickness is like a plague; it spreads throughout humanity, infecting everyone it comes in contact with.

c. **The healthy are the free spirits, the overmen, the "new psychologists."** They are those who "wrench the human soul from its moorings, to immerse it in terror, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom and depression as by a flash of lightning..."  
575/139

d. The sicker mankind becomes, the greater the need to protect the healthy, the overmen. Thus, the former must be segregated from the latter. **Read 560/124-125**

e. **The ascetic priest paves the way for greatness, in part, by keeping the sick away from the healthy.** The healthy must not take care of the sick; that distracts them from what they need to do. The ascetic priest, on the other hand, should act as a shepherd over the herd, caring for them. His asceticism enables him to do that. 561-62/125-26

f. The ascetic priest "alters the direction of *ressentiment*" inward so that the herd doesn't blame the healthy for their sickness, but themselves. Hence the value of Christianity and "sin," ~~which he defines as "cruelty directed backward."~~ **Sin enables the sick to understand his suffering as punishment for his own actions.** (563-64/127-28, 576/140)

the sick must not infect the healthy, their medocr.

4. **Yet life gets interesting with the emergence of the sinner.**

(577/141; 598/162). It shows that man has a will, and that he wants to use it. It's just that this will has been made sick by catering to the herd, to unhealthy ideals.

a. The value of the ascetic ideal is that it **provides meaning to our suffering.** Unfortunately, it turns that suffering into guilt.

b. It's better to will something (or rather, "nothingness," in his words) than not will. Any meaning is better than no meaning at all (i.e. nihilism). The problem is that the ascetic ideal lacks a rival. That's his task.

E. **Old vs. New Testament:** 580/144

## II. The critique of truth

A. **Q:** What is the danger of ascetic ideals?

B. The problem is that the ascetic priest's quest for knowledge leads him to not question truth itself. But there is no such thing as an objective truth. **Read 555/119**

1. **Q:** What does he mean by knowledge as "an eye turned in no particular direction"? Why does he disagree with that?

2. **Truth always comes from a particular perspective. All science is based on certain presuppositions, or philosophies or faiths:** a faith in reason, in the scientific method, etc. Thus, there can be no such thing as an objective knowledge.

Critique of individual autonomy + 2) rationality  
(world is rational)

C. This is why, Nietzsche argues, science is not an “objective” alternative to the “subjective” ideals of the artist or philosopher or the priest. **Scientists and atheists may lack faith in God, but they still have faith—in the truth.** They do not question this faith, either. Science, therefore, is not an alternative to asceticism. Truth only comes from a particular direction, but **the ascetic ideal hides this fact.** It assumes an objective truth/God. **It doesn’t let truth become a problem.**

1. Read 584-86/148-50

2. **Q:** Does this mean that Nietzsche doesn’t believe in knowledge or truth?

3. **No. It means you have to question everything,** including and especially the very foundations of your beliefs, whether its religious faith, reason, or “empirical science.” The search for knowledge means that all must be questioned.

4. Even truth can be a limit on man.

5. **Q:** Can you think of any examples of this? [space travel? rejection of the supernatural or spiritual? Refusal to consider evolution? Creation?]

D. **Just as we have to ask, what is the value of our morals, we also have to ask, what is the value of the truth?** Why do we believe in the truth? **Truth must become a problem in itself.** However, the ascetic ideal doesn’t permit it to become one. It doesn’t question faith, whether religious or scientific.

E. “All theory is autobiography.” There is no solace, no distance, no ability to “step back” and rise above it all with Nietzsche. Machiavelli said the role of the philosopher is to view the lowlands from above and the mountains from below, like a painter surveys the landscape. Nietzsche argues that there is no way for the philosopher to stand outside of the landscape; you’re always necessarily implicated in it. **No such thing as “neutral” or “objective” observation is possible.** The price of this closeness can be madness—it was for Nietzsche.

F. The only way to defeat the ascetic ideal is to mock it, to laugh at it. 596/160 Thus, is Nietzsche a comedian?

### III. Nietzsche, democracy, ~~women~~

A. **Q:** Is N a misogynist? If so, why has he been so influential among feminist and postmodernist theorists?

1. Much in Nietzsche is straight-up misogyny. Feminism or women’s equality seems to Nietzsche as the ultimate expression of the tendency of the herd mentality to make everyone equal: Women’s equality undermines femininity—like Saxonhouse argues about Machiavelli, it’s no longer possible to tell who’s a woman and who’s a man. **Women’s equality feminizes the entire society,** and thus undermines rank and difference. The herd would make the master equal to the slave, and now the woman equal to the man! 356-57/166-67 (BG&E)

B. **Q:** How do we respond to Nietzsche’s misogyny? Is Nietzsche’s misogyny his own unquestioned “truth” that he shared with the dogmatists?

1. Kaufmann appears to apologize for it, saying it’s an unfortunate part of N’s thought but it’s just a reflection of the times and it has no general relation to the larger body of Nietzsche’s thought.

2. But Marx, Mill, Douglass and other philosophers had championed women's equality by that time, so it seems more like a product of N's elitist philosophy than a capitulation to social prejudices.

C. Q: What in Nietzsche's thought is useful for feminists? Likewise, what is useful for those interested in furthering democracy and equality?

1. **He challenges our certainties:** about religion, progress, democracy, objective truth/reason, etc. If we push this just a little bit, we can use Nietzsche to challenge our certainties about the "natures" of men and women, too. Like Socrates, he encourages us to be "a stinging gadfly on the neck of man."

2. **His analysis of power.** He shows us how there is no objective ~~truth~~ knowledge and that a power motive is always behind how we define truth. Foucault is going to pick up Nietzsche's analysis of power and do new things with it, though he will drop Nietzsche's concept of the will to power and instead concentrate on **networks of power relations** among people. This will prove very useful to feminists who want to study not just the division between the public and the private, but how the "personal is political," too.

3. **His passion for life.** Nietzsche is opposed to organizing society according to the principle of selfishness/self-interests, survival of the fittest, or the lowest common denominator (democracy, socialism, etc.). Individuals should strive for *arete* a la the ancient Greeks or Socrates.

#### IV. Questions on Nietzsche

A. Q: What would Nietzsche's new morality consist of? Does he have a sufficient positive theory? Does a "revaluation of all values" do it?

B. Q: And what is specifically *political* about Nietzsche's vision? Is he merely trying to create a "gold class" of philosopher kings without a Noble Lie? If so, then isn't he subject to the same criticisms as Plato for advocating that philosophers should be kings?

C. Q: Is Nietzsche's theory of the will to power *itself* an unexamined truth? Is the will to power his own unexamined faith?

D. Q: Does equality <sup>denigrate</sup> produce mediocrity? Is he right? And if so, does that mean we have to reject Locke and Marx? Democracy?

E. Q: do we need new social structures (Marx) or a new morality, a "revaluation of all values" (Nietzsche)? Which produces the other?

F. Q: How is Nietzsche's conception of power different from Machiavelli, Locke, or Marx? What new contributions has he made to the study of power? These contributions will be picked up on and expanded by Foucault.

G. Nietzsche is a Lamarckian. He believes that acquired human characteristics and behaviors are hereditary. This partly explains his misogyny and his strange comments on the hybridity of classes and races: woman have a basic nature that the egalitarianism of the herd violates; races and classes have basic characters that are muddled and weakened (and sometimes strengthened) by mixture. However, it also explains his aristocratic political philosophy: certain people are inherently, by birth, incapable of ruling in a manner that frees the will of geniuses, while others are inherently capable of doing so, so long as herd morality and

+ critique of truth (see Conson)

course, intelligence, will/desire, etc.

society doesn't tamp them down. In fact, his basic philosophy on the will to power and human "instincts" rest on this faulty science.

x. "It is simply not possible that a human being should *not* have the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors in his body, whatever appearances may suggest to the contrary. This is the problem of race." Education can at best cover up or deceive others about one's true (inherited) traits and characteristics.

404/214 BG+E

## V. Nietzsche, the future, and politics

A. Q: Does Nietzsche want to go back to the days of knightly morality?

1. No, he wants to create something new.

2. He says that only with the slave revolt in morality does life get interesting. (468-69/32-33). Evil gives humans depth; it's what makes them superior to animals. Further, he says on p. 479/43 that we may not want to go back to the nobles' morality, but anything is better than what we've got now.

3. He argues that bad conscience, by giving rise to a soul that is "turned against itself," gives rise to a future, to hope. Such a soul is "pregnant with a future." (521/85) That future is not man, though, like it is for Marx. Man is "not a goal but only a way, an episode, a bridge, a great promise." 521 He also argues in the third essay that it's better to will something (even ascetic ideals) than to not will at all.

4. He's looking for new philosophers, "free spirits" (BG&E) that can forge a new set of moral values. These new philosophers or overmen are the goal, the end of human society. Those who are able to overcome their impulses, who can master the will to power, often at great personal pain and suffering, are truly human. They are not just men, they are super men, in a sense. These overmen do not evolve from man, they "overcome" man. They burst forth like flowers from manure.

5. He's looking forward, not backward. Herd morality is not the only morality. Other moralities are possible. **The political task is how to create these alternative moralities.** Humanity's best hope lies with new people, "free spirits," "new philosophers" and new commanders who can break out of the mass. **The problem for N is how to create the historical conditions that can allow these new men to develop and prosper without becoming ruined,** for present day herd morality certainly doesn't produce them, or produces them only very rarely (hence N's inability to find any "assistants" to help him with his work).  
307/117

B. **The task of the new philosophers is to create new values.** They are "attempters." [see Kauffmann for details]

1. Q: This sounds kind of like Plato's task, doesn't it? Is N trying to create his own philosopher kings?

C. **Nietzsche's political theory** (from BG&E)

1. Since men are divided according to order and rank and difference, government should be shaped accordingly. Thus, **Nietzsche advocates an aristocratic form of governance** (which requires slavery of some sort as well). Keeping the different classes and strata of people apart and in their place is necessary for the development of the human soul. 391/201

2. The function of society is not to ensure the well-being of its members but to create a fertile soil for the growth of free spirits. **Read 392/202.** The herd exists to hold up the free spirits. <sup>↑ & RGE</sup>

3. Life is essentially power, injury, suffering, and exploitation. These things are not bad nor good, they just are. ("life simply *is* will to power.") Morality and politics should reflect that. Not hurting others, not exploiting others, moral equality with others—this kind of morality can only apply among *equals*. Regarding relations among different classes and races of people, such morality cannot apply. When it is applied, you end up with a society run by a herd/slave morality. 393/203

4. **Q:** Does this sound more and more like Plato's *kallipolis*? Or, if not, then like the Greek polis, in which the citizens were aristocrats.

### Not addressed

- The question of human suffering and its role in N's thought.
- The death of the subject. 481

### To read next time:

- Ecce Homo
- Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"
- Kauffman: take notes
- Zarathustra

- The aesthetic ideal
- The value of aesthetic ideals
- What is N's <sup>crit</sup> of objective truth?
- A new morality?
- N's <sup>crit</sup> for *den* / *Erinitia*
- Does *sit* / *den* produce *reality*?
- In what ways does N. admire ancient Greece?
- *Revaluation of values* / *et den ac*  
Contra James