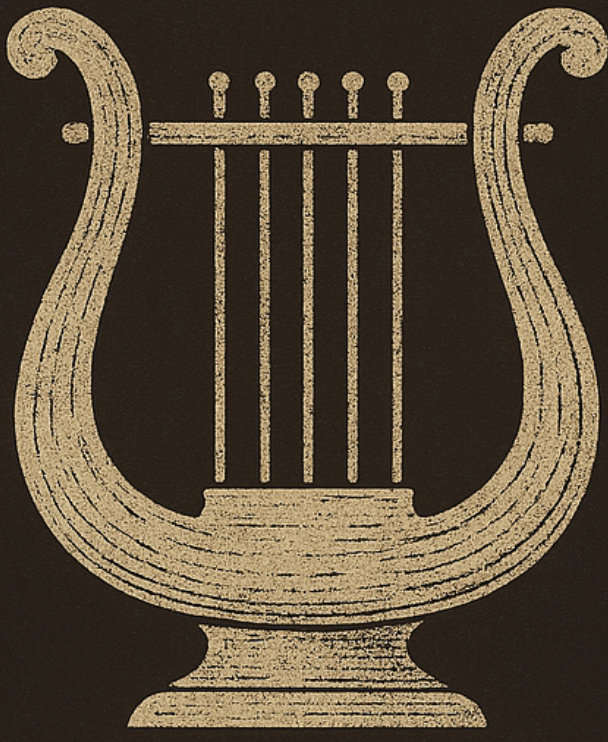
THE TWILIGHT OF IDOLS



FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

ABBÉ'S LIBRARY

The Twilight of the Idols

By Friedrich Nietzsche

(Abbé's Library)

CONTENTS

Preface

Maintaining a cheerful attitude while dealing with a difficult and highly responsible task is no easy feat. But what could be more important than cheerfulness? Nothing ever succeeds without the help of positive energy. The only proof of real strength is the surplus of energy itself.

A complete revaluation of all values—this question mark that is so dark and enormous it even casts a shadow on the one who raises it—represents a task of such immense significance that anyone who takes it on has to occasionally step outside into the sunlight just to release themselves from an intensity that becomes suffocating, far too suffocating. The end justifies any means, and every event along the way is a gift. Especially war. War has always been the preferred method of those who have delved too deeply into themselves or grown too complex; a wound stimulates the body's ability to recover.

For years, I've followed a principle—whose origin I will not share with scholarly curiosity—that has been my guiding motto:

"The spirit grows stronger through wounds."

Sometimes, though, I prefer a different way to recover: challenging idols. There are more idols than realities in the world, and this is my "evil eye" for the world; it's also my "evil ear." To knock on this world with a hammer and hear the hollow sound of deflated illusions—it's such a pleasure for someone like me, who has ears even behind his ears, for an old psychologist and Pied Piper like myself. In my presence, the very things that try to remain silent are forced to reveal themselves.

Even this work—its title says it all—is above all a form of play, a ray of sunshine, a playful leap by a psychologist during his free time. Perhaps it's also a new kind of war? Are we questioning new idols again? This little piece is a grand declaration of war, and regarding the challenge of idols, this time it's not the idols of the age that are being tested, but the eternal idols. These idols are struck with a hammer like a tuning fork—there are no idols older, more self-assured, or more inflated. And yet, they are believed in more than any others. What's more, they are never called idols—at least not the most exalted among them.

Maxims and Missiles

1

Idleness is the root of all psychology. Does that mean psychology is a vice?

2

Even the bravest among us rarely have the courage to act on what they truly know.

3

Aristotle says that to live alone, one must either be an animal or a god. There's no third option: one must be both, a philosopher.

4

"All truth is simple." Isn't that a complete falsehood?

5

I want to be blind to many things. Wisdom even limits what we can know.

6

A person recovers best from their intellectual nature by embracing their basic instincts.

7

Is man just a mistake of God? Or is God just a mistake of man?

8

From life's tough lessons: what doesn't kill me makes me stronger.

9

Help yourself, and others will help you. This is the principle of loving your neighbor.

10

A person shouldn't back away from their actions. Once done, they shouldn't deny them. Guilt is inappropriate.

11

Can a donkey experience tragedy? To die under a burden one can't bear or discard? That's what a philosopher faces.

12

If a person understands the purpose of their life, the details will fall into place. People don't seek happiness—only the English do.

13

Man created woman—from what? From a rib of his god, of his "ideal."

14

What? Are you looking for something? Do you want to multiply yourself by ten, a hundred? Seek nothingness!

15

People who come after their time, like me, are not easily understood but are respected more. Simply put: we are never understood, and that gives us authority.

16

Among women: "Truth? Oh, you don't understand truth! Isn't it offensive to all our modesty?"

17

There's an artist I admire, modest in his desires: he only wants two things, his bread and his art—bread and circuses.

18

He who can't impose his will on things, at least gives them meaning—he believes that a will is already there. (A principle of faith.)

19

What? You choose virtue and purity, but you envy the advantages of the unscrupulous? With virtue, you renounce those "advantages."

20

The perfect woman treats writing as a small vice: an experiment on the side, constantly checking if anyone notices her, hoping that someone will.

21

One should only embrace situations where false virtues aren't needed, but rather, like a tightrope walker, where you must either fall, stand, or escape.

22

"Evil men have no songs." How is it that the Russians have songs?

23

"German intellect"; for eighteen years, this has been a contradiction in terms.

24

By seeking the origins of things, a person becomes like a crab. A historian looks backward, and in the end, believes backward.

25

Contentment can even protect you from catching a cold. Has a woman who knew she looked good ever caught a cold? No, not even when she had hardly any clothes on.

26

I distrust those who try to systematize things and avoid them. The desire for a system shows a lack of honesty.

27

Man thinks woman is deep—why? Because he can't understand her. Woman isn't even shallow.

28

When a woman has masculine virtues, she's enough to make you flee. When she lacks them, she runs away herself.

29

"How often conscience had to bite in the past! What strong teeth it must have had! And today, what's the matter?" A dentist's question.

30

Mistakes made in haste are rarely the only ones. The first time, a person does too much. Because of that, they make a second mistake and do too little.

31

The worm that's stepped on curls up. This shows its caution. It reduces its chances of being stepped on again. In moral terms: Humility.

32

There's a hatred of lies and deceit that comes from a refined sense of humor; but there's also the same hatred from cowardice, as falsehood is forbidden by divine law. Too scared to lie...

33

What small things make up happiness! The sound of a bagpipe. Without music, life would be a mistake. The German even imagines God as a singer.

34

One can only think and write while sitting. Gotcha, nihilist! A sedentary life is the real sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts that come while walking have value.

35

Sometimes, we psychologists are like horses and get restless. We see our own shadow moving before us. A psychologist must look away from himself if he wants to see anything clearly.

36

Do immoralists harm virtue? Just as much as anarchists harm royalty. Only after being shot at do princes sit firmly on their thrones again. Moral: Morality must be challenged.

37

You're running ahead? Are you doing so as a leader or as an exception? A third possibility is the fugitive… First question of conscience.

38

Are you genuine or just pretending? Are you the representative or the thing itself? Finally, are you just a copy of an actor? Second question of conscience.

39

The disappointed man says: I looked for great men, but all I found were imitators of their ideals.

40

Are you someone who watches, or someone who gets involved? Or are you someone who looks away or turns aside? Third question of conscience.

41

Will you go with others, lead, or go alone? A person should know what they want and know that they want something. Fourth question of conscience.

42

They were just steps on my ladder, I used them to climb higher, and to do so I had to move beyond them. But they thought I wanted to settle there.

43

What does it matter if I'm acknowledged as right? I'm far too right. And the one who laughs the loudest today will also laugh last.

44

The formula for my happiness: a Yes, a No, a straight line, and a goal.

The Problem of Socrates

1

In every age, the wisest people have always agreed on one thing about life: it is not worth living. At all times, the same words have been on their lips—words full of doubt, melancholy, weariness, and hostility toward life. Even Socrates' last words were: "To live is to be ill for a long time: I owe a cock to the god Æsculapius." Even Socrates had had enough of life. What does this prove? What does it point to? In the past, people would have said (and it was said loudly, especially by our pessimists): "There must be some truth in this! The consensus of the wise is proof of truth." Should we say the same today? Can we? We reply, "In any case, there must be some sickness here." These great sages should be examined more closely! Could it be that they were all a bit shaky, effete, decadent? Does wisdom appear on Earth like a crow drawn to the smell of carrion?

2

This irreverent belief that the great sages were decadent types first came to me regarding a case in which both learned and common opinion opposed my view. I saw Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decline, instruments in the disintegration of Greece, as pseudo-Greek, as anti-Greek ("The Birth of Tragedy," 1872). That consensus of the wise, I realized more and more clearly, did not prove their correctness. It rather showed that these sages must have shared some physiological similarity to adopt the same negative stance toward life—they were bound to hold that view. Judgments of life, whether for or against, cannot be true; their only value is as symptoms. They can only be considered as symptoms—these judgments themselves are nonsense. Therefore, you must grasp this subtle axiom: the value of life cannot be assessed. A living person can't do it, because they are a part of the dispute, not the judge; nor can a dead person judge it—for other reasons. For a philosopher to question the value of life is nearly an objection against him, a mark of ignorance—a lack of wisdom. What? Could all these sages not only have been decadents, but not even wise? Let me return to the problem of Socrates.

3

Socrates, judging by his origins, belonged to the lowest classes. Socrates was the mob. You can still see for yourself how ugly he was. But ugliness, which is in itself an objection, was almost a refutation among the Greeks. Was Socrates really Greek? Ugliness is often the result of thwarted development or arrested growth. In some cases, it signifies decadent development. Anthropologists among criminal specialists argue that the typical criminal is ugly: a "monstrum" in body and soul. Was Socrates a typical criminal?—At any rate, this wouldn't contradict the judgment of a certain famous physiognomist, who was not a fool in judging appearances. While walking through Athens, a foreigner told Socrates that he was a monster, that his body carried all the worst vices and passions. Socrates simply replied, "You know me, sir!"

4

Not only were Socrates' wildness and anarchic instincts indicative of decadence, but also his excessive reliance on logic and the malignity of his misshapen nature. We should not forget the auditory hallucinations that were religiously interpreted as "the demon of Socrates." Everything in him was exaggerated, comical, caricatured; his nature was full of concealment, ulterior motives, and hidden currents. I try to understand the idiosyncrasy that led to the Socratic equation: Reason = Virtue = Happiness, perhaps the weirdest equation ever seen, and one that was fundamentally opposed to the instincts of the older Greeks.

5

With Socrates, Greek taste shifted toward dialectics. What happened? First, a noble taste was defeated: with dialectics, the mob rose to the top. Before Socrates, dialectical methods were avoided in good society; they were considered bad manners, compromising. Young men were warned against them. Offering one's reasons was regarded with suspicion. Honest things, like honest men, do not display their reasons openly. It's not good form to show everything. If something needs to be proven, it's probably not worth much. Wherever authority still rested on tradition, wherever men didn't prove but commanded, the dialectician was considered a clown. People laughed at him, not taking him seriously. Socrates was a clown who managed to make people take him seriously: what was going on?

6

A man resorts to dialectics only when he has no other means available. People know it excites suspicion and isn't very convincing. Nothing is easier to dismiss than a dialectical argument. It is the last defense for those who have no other weapons. One must demand one's right to argue, or else it's not worth using it. That's why the Jews were dialecticians. Reynard the Fox was a dialectician: was Socrates one too?

7

Is Socratic irony an expression of revolt, of mob resentment? Did Socrates, as a creature suffering under oppression, enjoy his innate ferocity through the knife-thrusts of the syllogism? Did he take revenge on the noblemen he captivated? As a dialectician, a man wields a merciless tool; he can tyrannize with it: he compromises when he conquers. The dialectician leaves it to his opponent to prove they're not an idiot: he enrages and paralyzes. The dialectician cripples the intellect of his opponent. Could dialectics have been a form of revenge for Socrates?

8

I've explained how Socrates repelled others; now it's necessary to explain how he fascinated. One reason is that he discovered a new kind of contest and became the first

fencing-master in the best circles of Athens. He fascinated by appealing to the combative instinct of the Greeks—he introduced a variation into the contests between men and youths. Socrates was also a great erotic.

9

But Socrates understood something even deeper. He saw right through his noble Athenian contemporaries; he realized his peculiar case wasn't unique—similar degeneracy was silently preparing everywhere. Ancient Athens was dying out. Socrates understood that the whole world needed him—his means, his remedy, his unique technique for self-preservation. Everywhere the instincts were in a state of anarchy; everywhere people were on the brink of excess: the "monstrum in animo" was the general danger. "The instincts would become tyrants; we must find a counter-tyrant stronger than they." When the physiognomist exposed Socrates, calling him a crater full of evil desires, the great Master of Irony replied, "This is true, but I overcame them all." How did Socrates manage to master himself? His case was just the extreme and most visible example of a widespread crisis: the state where no one could control their instincts, and they turned on each other. As the extreme example of this state, he fascinated—his terrifying ugliness made him stand out to everyone. It's clear that he fascinated even more as a response, a solution, a supposed cure for this condition.

10

When a man finds it necessary, as Socrates did, to create a tyrant out of reason, there's a danger that something else will wish to become the tyrant. Reason was discovered as a savior; neither Socrates nor his "patients" were free to be rational or not, as they pleased; at that time, it was mandatory, a last resort. The fanaticism with which Greek thought plunged into reason reveals a critical condition: men were in danger; there were only two options: either perish or be absurdly rational. The moral direction of Greek philosophy from Plato onward was the result of a pathological condition, as was their appreciation of dialectics. Reason = Virtue = Happiness simply means: we must imitate Socrates and confront the dark passions with the light of reason. We must, at all costs, be clever, precise, and clear: yielding to instincts, to the unconscious, leads downward.

11

I've explained how Socrates fascinated: he seemed like a doctor, a Savior. Is it necessary to expose the errors in his belief in "reason at all costs"? It's self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists to think they can escape degeneration by simply waging war against it. They can't escape it; the means they choose, the road to salvation, is itself just another expression of degeneration—they only modify how it manifests; they don't eliminate it. Socrates was a misunderstanding. The entire morality of improvement—Christianity as well—was a misunderstanding. The brightest light of day: reason at all costs; life made clear, cold, cautious,

conscious, without instincts, opposed to instincts, was itself a disease, another form of sickness—and by no means a return to "virtue," to "health," and to happiness. To have to fight the instincts—this is the formula of degeneration: as long as life is ascending, happiness is the same as instinct.

12

Did Socrates understand this himself, this most intelligent self-deceiver? Did he confess this to himself in the end, with courage before death? Socrates wished to die. Not Athens, but his own hand gave him the hemlock; he led Athens to the poisoned cup. "Socrates is not a doctor," he whispered to himself, "death alone can be a doctor here… Socrates himself has only been ill a long while."

"Reason" in Philosophy

What is idiosyncratic about philosophers? For instance, their lack of historical sense, their hatred of change, and their attachment to the idea of permanence. They think they honor something by separating it from history and treating it as if it's eternal—turning it into a mummy. All the ideas philosophers have worked with for thousands of years are like mummified concepts—nothing real ever comes out of their work alive. These idolaters of concepts just kill and preserve things when they worship—they stifle the life of everything they adore. They see death, change, aging, reproduction, and growth as problems—maybe even contradictions. They believe that what is cannot change, and what changes isn't real. Yet they all desperately believe in Being. But since they can't grasp it, they try to find reasons for why it's withheld from them. "It must be some deceptive quality, some trickery that prevents us from understanding Being: where's the deceiver?" "We've found it!" they shout with joy, "It's our senses!" These senses, which are immoral in many ways, deceive us about the true world. The lesson: we must rid ourselves of the deception of the senses, of change, of history, of falsehood. History is just the belief in the senses, the belief in lies. The lesson: we must reject everything the senses believe, all that belongs to "the people." Let us be philosophers, mummies, monothematic theists, grave-diggers! And above all, let's reject the body, this miserable obsession of the senses, full of all the flaws of logic, refuted, even impossible, yet bold enough to pretend it's real.

2

With great reverence, I make an exception for Heraclitus. While the rest of the philosophers rejected the evidence of the senses because they saw it as chaotic and ever-changing, Heraclitus rejected it for the opposite reason—it made things seem permanent and unified. Even Heraclitus did an injustice to the senses. The senses don't lie, as the Eleatics thought, nor as Heraclitus thought—they simply don't lie at all. The falsehood comes from the interpretations we make of what the senses reveal—for example, the false idea of unity, the falsehood of matter, substance, and permanence. Reason is what leads us to distort the evidence of the senses. As far as the senses show us a world of becoming, of impermanence, and change, they are not lying. But in declaring Being to be an illusion, Heraclitus is eternally right. The "apparent" world is the only world: the "true world" is just a false addition to it.

3

Our senses are such delicate instruments of observation! Take the human nose, for example—no philosopher has yet spoken with the reverence and gratitude it deserves. Right now, it's the most finely tuned instrument we have. It can detect even the slightest changes in movement that a spectroscope couldn't capture. Our scientific achievements today have advanced as far as we've trusted and sharpened our senses, learning to follow them to the end. What hasn't advanced is still incomplete science—that's metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology, formal science, or symbolic systems like logic and applied mathematics. In these

areas, reality doesn't even come into play as a problem, just as little as the question of the value of logical symbols.

4

Another dangerous idiosyncrasy of philosophers is their confusion between the last and first things. They take what should be the last thing—the "highest concept," the most general, the emptiest, the last trace of reality evaporating into nothing—and place it at the beginning as the starting point. This is just another way for them to express their reverence: the highest thing must not have grown from the lowest; it must not have evolved at all. The idea that the highest concepts—Being, the Absolute, Goodness, Truth, Perfection—must be self-created (causa sui) and not derived from anything else is a central belief. If something comes from elsewhere, it raises doubts about its value. So these concepts must not evolve, they must be self-created. But they can't contradict each other or be opposed to one another, so they create the concept of "God," the most attenuated, empty idea, which they then claim to be the first and the absolute cause of everything. Imagine humanity taking the mental illnesses of delusional thinkers seriously—it has paid dearly for doing so.

5

Let's contrast this with the way we (and by "we," I'm being polite) think about error and the deceptive nature of things. In the past, people viewed change and evolution as proof of illusion, suggesting that something must be misleading us. Today, we realize that when we force ourselves to believe in unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, materiality, and being, we are actually caught in error—though we may feel certain about it after careful examination. It's like the motion of the sun—our eyes misled us before; with these concepts, it's our language that constantly supports them. Language originated in a time of primitive psychology: when we try to understand the origins of metaphysical concepts—reason itself—we find that it's based on fetishism. In this system, the doer and his deed are always linked, and we believe the will is a cause—this idea of the "ego" as real substance is projected onto everything, creating the concept of "thing." Being is thought into everything as cause; the concept of "Being" comes from the concept of the "ego." The fatal error is thinking the will is a faculty that actuates things. Now we know it's just a word. Later, in a much more enlightened world, philosophers were surprised to realize that the categories of reason couldn't be derived from experience. On the contrary, experience contradicts them. Where do they come from, then? In both India and Greece, the same mistake was made: "We must have lived in a higher world (instead of a much lower one, which would have been the truth!), we must have been divine, for we have reason!" The error of Being, as formulated by the Eleatics, has had a powerful persuasive effect. Every word and sentence we speak supports it. Even those opposing the Eleatics fell prey to the seductive power of the concept of Being, including Democritus with his discovery of the atom. "Reason" in

language—oh, how deceiving it has been! I fear we will never be rid of God as long as we continue to believe in grammar.

6

Proposition One. The reasons supporting the apparent nature of the "this" world actually strengthen its reality—any other form of reality is impossible to demonstrate.

Proposition Two. The characteristics that humans have assigned to the "true Being" of things are actually characteristics of non-existence. The "true world" is based on a contradiction to the real world and is, in fact, merely an optical and moral illusion.

Proposition Three. It makes no sense to create stories about another world, unless we have a strong instinct that compels us to criticize, devalue, and cast suspicion on this life. In that case, we might be using the fantasy of another, better life as a way to take revenge on this one.

Proposition Four. To divide the world into a "true" and "apparent" world, as Christianity or Kant (who is essentially a Christian in disguise) does, is a sign of decline—an indication of life in decay. The fact that an artist values the appearance of something more than its reality does not contradict this. "Appearance" here represents reality again, but in a refined, enhanced, and corrected form. The tragic artist is not a pessimist—he affirms everything, even the questionable and the terrible; he is Dionysian.

How the "True World" Ultimately Became a Fable

The History of an Error

1. The true world, attainable by the sage, the pious, and the virtuous man—he lives in it, he *is* it.
   (The original idea was quite clever, simple, and convincing. It was essentially a paraphrase of the statement "I, Plato, am the truth.")

2. The true world, which is unattainable for now, is promised to the sage, the pious man, and the virtuous man ("to the sinner who repents").
   (As the idea progresses, it becomes more complex, more deceitful, and more elusive—it becomes like a woman, it becomes Christian.)

3. The true world is unattainable, it cannot be proven, it cannot promise anything, but as a thought alone, it remains a comfort, an obligation, a command.
   (Basically, this is still the old idea, but viewed through mist and skepticism: the idea has become sublime, pale, northern, Königsbergian.)

4. The true world— is it unattainable? At least, it is unachieved. And as unachieved, it is also unknown. Therefore, it no longer comforts, saves, or constrains. What could something unknown force us to do?
   (The grey of dawn. Reason stretches and yawns for the first time. The crowing of positivism.)

5. The "true world"—an idea that no longer serves any purpose, that no longer compels us— a useless idea that has become entirely redundant, therefore an exploded idea: let's abolish it!
   (Bright daylight; breakfast; the return of common sense and cheerfulness; Plato blushes with shame, and all free spirits are causing a ruckus.)

6. We have abolished the true world: what world remains? The apparent world, perhaps? Certainly not! In abolishing the true world, we have also abolished the world of appearance!

Morality as the Enemy of Nature

1

There comes a time when all passions are simply destructive in their actions, when they ruin their victims with the weight of their foolishness—and then there's a much later time when these passions merge with the spirit and "spiritualize" themselves. In the past, because of the ignorance that comes with passion, people fought against passion itself. They committed to eliminating it—this was a common stance among ancient moralists, who all agreed: "You must kill the passions." One of the most famous expressions of this appears in the New Testament, in the Sermon on the Mount, where, by the way, things are not seen from an elevated perspective. For example, regarding sexuality, it says: "If your eye offends you, pluck it out." Fortunately, no Christian actually follows this advice. The idea of destroying the passions and desires simply because they are foolish, in order to avoid the unpleasant consequences of their foolishness, now seems to us like an even greater form of stupidity. We no longer admire dentists who pull out teeth just to stop them from hurting.

On the other hand, it is fair to admit that in the environment from which Christianity emerged, the idea of the "spiritualization of passion" would have been unimaginable. As we know, the early Church definitely fought in favor of the "poor in spirit" against the "intelligent." In this context, how could the passions be fought against intelligently? The Church combats passion through various forms of excision: its approach, its "remedy," is castration. It never asks, "How can a desire be spiritualized, beautified, or deified?" Throughout history, it has focused its discipline on extirpation—eliminating sensuality, pride, the desire for power, the desire for property, and revenge. But attacking the passions at their roots means attacking life itself at its core: the Church's method is hostile to life.

2

The same methods, castration and eradication, are instinctively chosen to wage war against a passion by those who are too weak-willed, too degenerate, to impose some moderation on it. These are the types of people who, to speak metaphorically (and without metaphor), need something extreme, like a Trappist lifestyle, or some final ultimatum—a sharp separation between themselves and the passion. Only degenerates find radical methods necessary: weakness of will, or more precisely, the inability to refrain from reacting to a stimulus, is itself another form of degeneration. Radical and total hostility toward sensuality remains a suspicious sign: it gives us reason to be wary of the general state of someone who goes to such extremes. Furthermore, that hostility and hatred peak only when such people no longer have the strength of character to adopt the radical remedy or to renounce their inner "Satan." Look at the history of priests, philosophers, and artists: the most venomous attacks on the senses were not made by the impotent or the ascetics; they were made by those impossible ascetics, those who felt it necessary to be ascetics.

3

The spiritualization of sensuality is called love: it's a great triumph over Christianity. Another triumph is our spiritualization of hostility. This means we are starting to truly understand the value of having enemies: in other words, with them, we are forced to do and conclude the opposite of what we previously did and concluded. Throughout history, the Church wanted to destroy its enemies; we, the immoralists and Antichrists, see an advantage in the survival of the Church. Even in politics, hostility has become more spiritual—much more cautious, thoughtful, and moderate. Almost every political party now sees its self-preservation in preventing the opposition from falling apart; the same applies on a grand scale in politics. A new creation, particularly something like a new Empire, needs enemies more than friends: it only starts to feel necessary as a contrast. And we do the same with the "inner enemy": in this area too, we have spiritualized enmity, and we understand its value. A man is productive only if he is rich in contrasting instincts; he can remain youthful only as long as his soul doesn't begin to take things easy or yearn for peace. Nothing is more foreign to us than that old desire for the "peace of the soul," which is the goal of Christianity. Nothing could make us less envious than the moral cow and the contentment of a clean conscience. The person who has renounced war has renounced a great life.

In many cases, "peace of the soul" is simply a misunderstanding—it's something different that hasn't found a more honest name. Without any circumlocution or bias, I'll suggest a few possibilities. "Peace of the soul" could be the sweet glow of rich animality in the realm of morality (or religion). Or it could be the first sign of weariness, the first shadow cast by evening—the shadow that every kind of evening casts. It could be a sign that the air is moist, and winds are blowing from the south. It could be unconscious gratitude for good digestion (sometimes called "brotherly love"). Or the calm of a convalescent, who now tastes life anew and waits for his time. Or the state that follows after thoroughly satisfying our strongest passion, the well-being of unfamiliar satiety. Or the senility of our will, our desires, and our vices. Or laziness, dressed up by vanity in a moral guise. Or the end of a long period of suspense and agonizing uncertainty, replaced by certainty—sometimes even terrible certainty. Or the expression of maturity and mastery in the midst of a task, creative work, or production—where calm breathing signals that "freedom of will" has been achieved. Who knows? Maybe *The Twilight of the Idols* is just a form of "peace of the soul."

4

I will state a principle. All naturalism in morality—that is, every sound morality—is governed by a life instinct. Any of the laws of life are fulfilled by a definite command: "Thou shalt," "Thou shalt not," and any obstacle or hostile force in life's path is removed. On the other hand, morality that opposes nature—that is, nearly all the morality that has been taught, honored, and preached up until now—directly attacks life's instincts. It condemns, sometimes secretly and

sometimes openly, these very instincts. When it says, "God sees into the heart of man," it rejects the deepest and most powerful desires of life and makes God an enemy of life. The saint, in whom God is pleased, is the ideal eunuch. Life ends where the "Kingdom of God" begins.

5

Once you understand the villainy of such a rebellion against life, as has become nearly sacred in Christian morality, you will also understand its futility, its falseness, its absurdity. For a living being to condemn life is, after all, only a symptom of a particular kind of life. Whether the condemnation is justified or not is never even questioned. To truly evaluate life's value, a person would have to be outside of life, and moreover, understand it as deeply as those who have fully lived it. These reasons alone show that this problem is beyond our reach. When we talk about values, we are speaking under the influence and perspective of life itself: life itself pushes us to determine values. Life itself values through us when we determine values. This means that even the morality that opposes life, and views God as the opposite of life, is still a valuation of life—what kind of life? I've already answered this: it's a valuation of life in decline, weakened, exhausted, and condemned. Morality, as it has been understood so far—as Schopenhauer summed up in "The Denial of the Will to Life"—is the instinct of degeneration, which becomes an imperative: it says, "Perish!" It is the death sentence for men who are already doomed.

6

Let us finally consider how simple it is for us to say: "Man should be this way or that!" Reality shows us a marvelous richness of types, and a flourishing variety of forms and changes, yet the first moralist who comes along cries, "No! Man should be different!" He even knows exactly what man should be like—this sanctimonious fool—he draws his own face on the wall and declares, "Behold, the man!" But even when the moralist speaks to the individual and says, "You should be this way or that!" he still makes a fool of himself. The individual, in his past and future, is a piece of fate, a law, a necessity for everything that is to come. To say to him, "Change yourself," is the same as saying that everything should change, even in reverse. Truly, these moralists were consistent—they wanted man to be different, i.e., virtuous. They wanted him to be after their own image—that is, sanctimonious hypocrites. And in doing so, they denied the world! No small form of insanity! No modest form of immodesty! Morality, insofar as it condemns without any aim or consideration for life, is a specific error. No one should show mercy for it—it is a degenerate attitude that has caused untold harm. We, the immoralists, on the other hand, have opened our hearts to all kinds of understanding and approval. We don't deny easily; we take pride in saying "yes" to things. Our eyes have opened wider to the economy of life, which still uses all that the sacred madness of priests and the morbid reason in priests rejects. What advantage does this economy draw? Well, we immoralists are the answer to that question.

The Four Great Errors

1

The error of confusing cause and effect.

There is no greater mistake than to confuse the effect with the cause; I call this the intrinsic perversion of reason. Yet, this error is one of the oldest and most recent habits of humankind. In one part of the world, it has even been sanctified; it is known as "Religion" and "Morality." Every postulate of religion and morality carries this confusion. Priests and moral lawgivers promote this distortion of reason. Let me give an example. Everyone knows the book by the famous Cornaro, in which he recommends his sparse diet as the secret to a long, happy, and virtuous life. Few books have been more widely read, and to this day, thousands of copies are still printed annually in England. I doubt there's any book (excluding the Bible) that has done more harm and shortened more lives than this well-meaning curiosity. The reason is the confusion of effect and cause. This well-meaning Italian attributed his long life to his diet, while the real cause of his longevity was his slow molecular change and low energy expenditure, which naturally required him to eat a small amount. He wasn't free to eat more or less. His frugality wasn't a choice; he would have been ill had he eaten more. However, someone who is not a carp should not only eat well, but is also compelled to do so. A modern scholar, with his rapid consumption of nervous energy, would quickly deteriorate on Cornaro's diet. Trust me on that.

2

The most fundamental principle behind every religion and morality is this: "Do this and that, avoid this and that—and you will be happy. Otherwise…" Every morality and every religion is this imperative—I call it the great original sin of reason—immortal irrationality. In my view, this principle is inverted—first example of my "Transvaluation of all Values": a well-constituted man, one of "Nature's lucky strokes," must instinctively do certain things and avoid others. He introduces order, which is the physiological manifestation of his constitution, into his relations with people and things. In short, his virtue is a consequence of his good constitution. Longevity and having many children are not rewards for virtue; virtue itself is that slowing of the metabolic process which, among other things, results in a long life and many children, essentially what I call Cornarism. The Church and morality say, "A race, a people perish through vice and luxury." My restored reason says: when a people are degenerating physiologically, vice and luxury (the need for increasingly stronger and more frequent stimuli, common to exhausted natures) are inevitable. If a young man becomes pale and withered prematurely, his friends might attribute it to illness. I say: his illness, and his inability to resist it, is already the result of a depleted life, of hereditary exhaustion. A newspaper reader might say: "This party will die because of this mistake." My superior politics say: a party that makes such mistakes is already in its death throes—it no longer possesses instinctive certainty. Every mistake is a sign of degenerating instincts and disintegrating will. This is almost the definition of evil:

everything valuable is instinct—and therefore easy, necessary, and free. Effort is an objection; the god is characteristically different from the hero (in my terms: light feet are the first attribute of divinity).

3

The error of false causality.

Throughout history, people have believed they understood what a cause is. But where did we get this knowledge, or more accurately, this belief that we know? From the so-called "inner facts of consciousness," none of which have proven to be actual facts. We believed ourselves to be causes, even in the actions of our will; we thought that, at least in this matter, we had caught causality red-handed. No one doubted that all the antecedents of an action could be found in consciousness and discovered there as a "motive," if only we looked for them. Otherwise, we wouldn't be free to perform actions; we wouldn't be responsible for them. Finally, who would question that a thought is caused? That the ego causes the thought? Of these three "facts of inner consciousness," through which causality seemed guaranteed, the first and most convincing was the will as the cause. The concept of consciousness ("spirit") as a cause, and later the concept of the ego (the "subject") as a cause, came only after the causality of the will was already established as a "given," as a fact of experience. However, today we've come to our senses. We no longer believe a word of this. The "inner world" is full of phantoms and illusions: the will is one of them. The will no longer acts, so it no longer explains anything—it merely accompanies processes; it might even be absent. The so-called "motive" is another error. It's merely a ripple on the surface of consciousness, a side issue of the action, which is far more likely to conceal than reveal the real antecedents of the action. And as for the ego! It has become legendary, fictional, a mere play on words: it has completely ceased to think, feel, or will! What is the result of all this? There are no such things as spiritual causes. All popular experience on this subject is now obsolete! That's the result. We blissfully misused that experience, and we built the world on it as a world of causes, of will, of spirit. The most outdated and traditional psychology has been at work here—it did nothing else. All phenomena were seen as actions in this psychology, and all actions were the result of the will; according to it, the world was a complex mechanism of agents, and an agent (a "subject") lay at the root of all things. Man projected his three "inner facts of consciousness"—the will, the spirit, and the ego—outside of himself. He deduced the concept of Being from the concept of Ego, and he assumed "things" existed as he did, according to his notion of the ego as cause. Is it any wonder that later on, he always found in things only what he had projected onto them? The thing itself, I repeat, the concept of "thing," was simply a reflection of the belief in the ego as cause. And even your atom, dear mechanists and physicists, how much error and rudimentary psychology still cling to it!—Not to mention the "thing-in-itself," that horrific and absurd concept of metaphysicians! The error of spirit regarded as a cause, confused with reality, and made the measure of reality! And it was called God!

4

The error of imaginary causes.

Starting from the world of dreams, we find that to any distinct sensation, like the sound of a distant cannon, we tend to assign a cause after the fact (often with a bit of romantic fantasy in which the dreamer himself is, of course, the hero). Meanwhile, the sensation lingers like a continuous echo, until the instinct of causality forces it to become prominent, no longer as a random event, but as something meaningful. The cannon shot presents itself in a causal way, through a reversal of time's order. The cause, the motivation, is experienced first, often accompanied by a flood of details that flash by like lightning, and then the shot follows as the result. What's happening here? The ideas triggered by a particular sensory state are misinterpreted as the cause of that state. In fact, we do exactly the same thing when we're awake. Most of our general sensations—every kind of obstacle, pressure, tension, or explosion in the organs, especially the state of the nervous system—stimulate our instinct for causality: we need a reason for why we feel the way we do—whether we feel ill or well. We are never satisfied with simply acknowledging that we feel a certain way; we admit it—we become conscious of it—only after we've attributed it to some kind of motivation. Memory, which unconsciously becomes active in such cases, brings up past situations of a similar kind, along with the causal explanations associated with them—but not the actual cause. The belief that ideas and accompanying processes of consciousness are the causes is, without a doubt, generated by memory. And this way, we become accustomed to a particular interpretation of causes, which, in truth, hinders and even completely prevents us from investigating the real cause.

5

The Psychological Explanation of the Above Fact.

Tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar provides relief, comfort, and satisfaction, while also creating a sense of power. The unfamiliar brings with it danger, anxiety, and worry—the basic instinct is to escape these painful feelings. **First principle:** Any explanation is better than none at all. Since, at its core, it's just about freeing oneself from certain oppressive thoughts, the means used to achieve this are not chosen with great care. The first explanation that makes the unfamiliar seem familiar gives such comfort that it is "accepted as true." The proof of happiness ("of power") serves as the criterion for truth.

The instinct for causality is, therefore, shaped and triggered by the feeling of fear. Whenever possible, the question "why?" should not just seek the cause as a cause, but rather a particular kind of cause—a comforting, liberating, and reassuring cause. The first result of this need is that something already known, previously experienced, and recorded in memory is presented as the cause. The new, unfamiliar factor is excluded from the causes. Not only do we try to find a certain kind of explanation as the cause, but we also select and prefer those explanations that quickly eliminate the sensation of strangeness, novelty, and unfamiliarity—in other words, the

most ordinary explanations. The result is that a certain way of postulating causes starts to dominate more and more, eventually becoming concentrated into a system, and finally prevailing to the exclusion of all other causes and explanations. The banker immediately thinks of business, the Christian of "sin," and the girl of her love affair.

6

The whole domain of morality and religion can be classified under the category of "Imaginary Causes."

These are the "explanations" of general unpleasant sensations. These sensations are attributed to certain creatures hostile to us (evil spirits, for instance, with the most famous example being the misunderstanding of hysterical women as witches). These sensations are linked to actions that are deemed reprehensible (the feeling of "sin" or "sinfulness" is a way of explaining certain physiological disturbances—people always find reasons to be dissatisfied with themselves). These sensations are thought to result from punishment, from compensation for something we shouldn't have done or been (this idea was more boldly expanded by Schopenhauer into a principle in which morality is revealed in its true form—as a true poisoner and slanderer of life: "All great suffering, whether mental or physical, reveals what we deserve: for it could not visit us if we did not deserve it," *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. 2, p. 666). These sensations are often seen as consequences of ill-considered actions with negative results (such as the passions or the senses, which are postulated as causes and guilty parties). Through other misfortunes, distressing physiological conditions are interpreted as "merited."

The "explanation" of pleasant sensations is that these are believed to be dependent on trust in God. They may depend on our awareness of having done good deeds (a so-called "good conscience" is a physiological state that may be the result of good digestion). They might depend on the favorable outcome of certain undertakings (this is a naïve mistake: the happy outcome of an undertaking doesn't give a hypochondriac or a person like Pascal a general sensation of pleasure). They may depend on faith, love, and hope—the Christian virtues. In reality, all of these supposed explanations are just the results of certain states, or rather translations of feelings of pleasure and pain into a false framework: a man feels hopeful because the dominant physiological sensation in his body is one of strength and wealth; he trusts in God because the feeling of abundance and power gives him a peaceful mind.

Morality and religion are entirely parts of the psychology of error. In every case, cause and effect are confused; truth is confused with the effect of what is believed to be true, or a certain state of consciousness is confused with the chain of causes that led to it.

7

The Error of Free-Will.

At present, we have no sympathy for the concept of "free-will." We know all too well what it is—the most egregious theological trick ever devised to make humanity "responsible" in a theological sense—that is, to make people dependent on theologians. Let me now explain the psychology behind the whole process of instilling the sense of responsibility. Whenever people try to assign responsibility to someone, it is the instinct for punishment and the desire to judge that is at work. Becoming loses its innocence when any specific condition is traced back to a will, intentions, or responsible actions. The doctrine of the will was created primarily for the purpose of punishment—that is, to trace guilt. Ancient psychology, or the psychology of the will, emerged from the fact that its creators, the priests at the head of ancient societies, wanted to establish the right to administer punishments—or to allow God to do so. People were thought of as "free" so they could be judged and punished—so they could be held guilty. Therefore, every action had to be seen as voluntary, and the origin of every action had to be imagined as coming from consciousness. This is how the fundamentally fraudulent nature of psychology was established as the very foundation of psychology itself.

Now, with the opposite movement underway, now that we immoralists are doing everything in our power to eliminate the concepts of guilt and punishment from the world again, and to cleanse psychology, history, nature, and all social institutions and customs of any trace of those two concepts, we recognize no more radical opponents than the theologians. With their notion of "a moral order of things," they still pollute the innocence of Becoming with punishment and guilt. Christianity is the metaphysics of the hangman.

8

What, then, can our teaching be?

It is that no one gives a person their qualities—not God, society, parents, ancestors, or even themselves. (This nonsensical idea, which was finally refuted here, was taught as "intelligible freedom" by Kant, and perhaps even by Plato himself.) No one is responsible for the fact that they exist at all, that they are who they are, or that they find themselves in certain circumstances or environments. The fatality of their existence cannot be separated from the fatality of everything that has been and will be. This is not the result of individual intention, will, or goal—there is no striving to reach any "ideal man," "ideal happiness," or "ideal morality" with them. It's absurd to wish for them to be heading towards some purpose. We invented the concept of "purpose"; in reality, purpose is completely absent. One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, and one is in the whole—there is nothing that could judge, measure, compare, or condemn our existence, because that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, and condemning the whole. But there is nothing outside of the whole! The fact that no one will be held responsible, that the nature of existence cannot be traced to a first cause, that the world is

not an entity as a sensorium or as spirit—this alone is the great liberation—only then is the innocence of Becoming restored... The concept of "God" has been the greatest objection to existence up to this point... We deny God, we deny responsibility in God: only then do we save the world.

The "Improvers" of Mankind

1

You know my demand for philosophers—that they should take a stance *Beyond Good and Evil*—that they should rise above the illusion of moral judgment. This demand stems from a perspective I was the first to articulate: that there are no such things as moral facts. Moral judgment, like religious judgment, believes in realities that aren't real. Morality is simply an interpretation of certain phenomena—or more strictly, a misinterpretation of them. Moral judgment, like religious judgment, belongs to a stage of ignorance in which the concept of reality itself, the distinction between real and imagined things, is still absent. At such a stage, truth is applied to many things that today we consider "imaginary." That's why moral judgment should never be taken literally: as it stands, it is pure nonsense. However, as a code of signs, it is invaluable: to those who understand, it reveals valuable facts about cultures and inner conditions that didn't know enough to "understand" themselves. Morality is simply a sign-language, a symptomatology: one must already know what it's about in order to make use of it.

2

Let me give you one example, for now. Throughout history, there have been people who sought to "improve" mankind: this, above all, is what was called morality. But many different tendencies are hidden under this one word. Both the taming of the beast-like man and the breeding of a specific type of man have been called "improvement." These zoological terms represent real things—actual things of which the typical "improver," the priest, naturally knows nothing, and will never know. To call the taming of an animal "improvement" sounds almost like a joke to us. He who knows what happens in zoos or menageries is skeptical that an animal is truly "improved" there. It is certainly weakened, made less dangerous, and through fear, pain, wounds, and hunger, it becomes a sick animal. The same applies to the tamed man whom the priest has "improved." In the early Middle Ages, when the Church was distinctly and above all a menagerie, the most beautiful examples of the "blond beast" were hunted down everywhere—the noble Germans, for example, were "improved." But what did this "improved" German, lured to the monastery, look like after the process? He became a caricature of a man, an abortion: he had become a "sinner," caged, imprisoned by a host of absurd notions. He lay there, sick, miserable, even hateful toward himself: full of hatred for the instincts of life, filled with suspicion toward all that is still strong and happy. In short, a "Christian." In physiological terms: in a fight with an animal, the only way to weaken it may be to make it sick. The Church understood this: it ruined man, made him weak—but it claimed to have "improved" him.

3

Now let us consider the other form of what is called morality, the rearing of a particular race and species. The most magnificent example of this is found in Indian morality, and it is

religiously sanctioned in the "Law of Manu." This book lays out the task of raising no less than four races at once: a priestly race, a warrior race, a merchant and agricultural race, and finally, a race of servants—the Sudras. It is quite clear that we are no longer in a circus watching wild animal tamers in this case. To even conceive of such a breeding plan presupposes the existence of a man who is far gentler and more reasonable than the mere lion-tamer. Stepping out of the Christian atmosphere of hospitals and prisons, one can breathe more freely in this healthier, more elevated, and spacious world. How miserable the New Testament seems beside Manu, and how foul the air surrounding it! But even this system felt the need to be harsh—not this time in a struggle with the animal-like man, but with his opposite: the non-caste man, the mixed-blood man, the Chandala. And once again, it had no other means of making him weak and harmless than by making him sick—it was the struggle with the greatest "number."

Perhaps nothing is more offensive to our feelings than these security measures of Indian morality. The third edict, for instance (Avadana-Sastra I.), which deals with "impure vegetables," states that the only food the Chandala should be allowed consists of garlic and onions, as holy scriptures forbid them from receiving corn or grain-bearing fruits, water, or fire. This same edict dictates that the water they need must come neither from rivers, wells, nor ponds, but only from ditches leading to swamps or from the holes left by animal footprints. They are also forbidden to wash their clothes or their bodies, as the water granted to them can only be used for drinking. Furthermore, Sudra women are forbidden from assisting Chandala women in childbirth, and Chandala women are also prohibited from helping each other in such circumstances.

The effects of such sanitary measures could not fail to manifest. Deadly epidemics and horrible venereal diseases soon appeared, which led to the introduction of "the Law of the Knife"—circumcision for male children and the removal of the small labia for females. Manu himself says: "The Chandala are the fruit of adultery, incest, and crime" (this is the inevitable consequence of the idea of breeding). "Their clothes shall consist only of rags torn from corpses, their vessels shall be fragments of broken pottery, their ornaments shall be made of old iron, and their religion shall be the worship of evil spirits. They shall wander from place to place without rest. They are forbidden to write from left to right or to use their right hand in writing: the use of the right hand and writing from left to right are reserved for people of virtue, for people of race."

4

These regulations are quite revealing: they show us the pure, primal humanity of the Aryans—revealing that the idea of "pure blood" is actually the opposite of harmless. On the other hand, it becomes clear where the hatred, the Chandala hatred of this humanity, has been immortalized—among which people it has become both religion and genius. From this perspective, the gospels are of the highest value as documents, and the Book of Enoch is even more so. Christianity, which sprang from Jewish roots and can only be understood as growing from this soil, represents the counter-movement against that morality of breeding, race, and

privilege: it is essentially an anti-Aryan religion. Christianity is the revaluation of all Aryan values, the triumph of Chandala values, the proclaimed gospel of the poor and the lowly, the general uprising of all the downtrodden, the wretched, the malformed, and the broken against the "race"—the immortal revenge of the Chandala, embodied in the religion of love.

5

The morality of breeding and the morality of taming, in the methods they use to succeed, are truly well-suited to each other. We can establish as a fundamental principle that in order to create morality, one must have the absolute will to immorality. This is the great and strange issue I have been occupied with for so long: the psychology of the "Improvers" of mankind. A small, and ultimately insignificant fact, known as the "pia fraus," first introduced me to this problem: the pia fraus, the inherited trait of all philosophers and priests who "improve" mankind. Neither Manu, nor Plato, nor Confucius, nor the teachers of Judaism and Christianity, have ever doubted their right to falsehood. They have never questioned their right to many other things. To put it simply: all the methods that have been used up until now to make man moral were, in fact, thoroughly immoral.

Things the German Lack

1

Among Germans today, it's not enough just to have intellect; one is actually forced to claim it, to assert ownership of it.

Perhaps I know the Germans, and maybe I can tell them a few home truths. Modern Germany holds such an immense store of inherited and acquired talent that, for some time, it could spend this accumulated treasure, even quite extravagantly. However, the superior culture that has emerged with this modern trend is not one of refined taste or noble beauty of instincts; rather, it's a collection of virtues more masculine than those of any other European country. There is a wealth of good spirits, self-respect, a lot of strength in human relations and the reciprocity of duties; much industry and perseverance—and a certain inherited sobriety that needs more of a push than a brake. Let me add that in this country, people still obey without feeling humiliated by it. And no one despises their opponent.

You can see that I aim to be fair to the Germans: and in this regard, I don't want to be untrue to myself. Therefore, I must also share my objections. Achieving power costs a lot; power stultifies. The Germans—they were once called a people of thinkers—do they really think at all now? Today, Germans are bored by intellect, they distrust it; politics have overtaken all seriousness about truly intellectual matters—"Germany, Germany above all." I fear this has been the death of German philosophy. "Are there any German philosophers? Are there any German poets? Are there any good German books?" people ask me abroad. I blush, but with the courage that is characteristic of me, even in moments of despair, I answer: "Yes, Bismarck!"—Could I have dared to admit what books are being read today? Cursed instinct of mediocrity!

2

What could German intellect have been! Who has not thought sadly about this question! But this nation has deliberately stultified itself for almost a thousand years: nowhere else have the two great European narcotics, alcohol and Christianity, been so viciously abused as in Germany. Recently, a third opiate was added to the list, one that, by itself, would have been enough to ruin all subtle and bold intellectual energy: I speak of music, our sluggish and constipating German music. How much grumpy heaviness, paralysis, dampness, dressing-gown laziness, and beer is there in German intellect!

How is it possible that young men who dedicate their entire lives to intellectual pursuits do not feel within them the first instinct of intellectuality, the self-preserving instinct of the intellect—and yet they drink beer? The alcoholism of learned youths does not prevent them from becoming scholars—one can be a great scholar even without intellect—but it is a problem in every other way. Where can that soft degeneracy, which beer produces in the intellect, not be

found! I once pointed out a case like this, which became almost famous—the degeneration of our leading German free spirit, the clever David Strauss, into the author of a suburban gospel and New Faith. It was not in vain that he sang the praises of "the dear old brown liquor" in verse—true to death.

3

I have spoken of German intellect. I have said that it is becoming coarser and shallower. Is that enough? In reality, something very different worries me: the steady decline of German earnestness, depth, and passion in intellectual matters. Not just intellect, but even pathos has changed. From time to time, I come in contact with German universities; what an extraordinary atmosphere there is among their scholars! What barrenness! What self-satisfied and lukewarm intellectuality! For anyone to point to German science as an argument against me would show that they completely misunderstand my point, and it would also prove that they haven't read a word of my writings. For seventeen years, I have done little else than expose the de-intellectualizing influence of our modern scientific studies. The severe constraint that every individual faces today due to the vast scope of science is the main reason why more full, richer, and profound individuals cannot find education or educators suited to them. Nothing is more harmful to this age than the overabundance of pretentious idlers and fragmentary individuals. Our universities are, in fact, the involuntary breeding grounds for this kind of withering of intellectual instincts. And the whole of Europe is starting to realize this—politics on a large scale deceive no one. Germany is becoming more and more the flatland of Europe. I am still searching for a German with whom I can be serious in my own way. And how much more am I searching for one with whom I could be cheerful—*The Twilight of the Idols*: ah, what man today would be capable of understanding the kind of seriousness from which a philosopher is recovering in this work! It is our cheerfulness that people understand least.

4

Let's examine another aspect of the issue: it's not only clear that German culture is in decline, but there are also adequate reasons for this decline. After all, no one can spend more than they have: this is true of individuals, and it's also true of nations. If you spend your strength acquiring power, or in politics on a large scale, or in economics, or universal commerce, or parliamentarism, or military interests—if you dissipate the small amount of reason, earnestness, will, and self-control that make up your nature in one direction, you cannot dissipate it in another. Culture and the state—let no one be deceived about this—are opposites: A "culture-state" is merely a modern idea. One thrives at the expense of the other. All great periods of culture have been periods of political decline; what is great from a cultural perspective was always unpolitical—even anti-political. Goethe's heart opened with the arrival of Napoleon—but it closed with the thought of the "Wars of Liberation." At the very moment when Germany became a great power in the political world, France grew in importance as a cultural force. Even

now, a large amount of fresh intellectual earnestness and passion has migrated to Paris; issues like pessimism and Wagner's works, for example, are considered in France with incomparably more subtlety and thoroughness than in Germany—the Germans are even incapable of this kind of earnestness. In European cultural history, the rise of the Empire marks, above all, a shift in the center of gravity. People everywhere are aware of this: in areas that truly matter—and these, after all, are what make up culture—the Germans are no longer worth considering. I ask you, can you show me a single German intellectual who could be mentioned in the same breath as other European thinkers like Goethe, Hegel, Heinrich Heine, or Schopenhauer? The fact that there isn't a single German philosopher worth mentioning is becoming increasingly remarkable.

5

Everything that truly matters has been overlooked by Germany's higher education system: both the goal and the means to achieve that goal. People forget that education, the process of cultivation itself, is the end—and not "the Empire." They forget that it is the educator who is needed for this purpose—not the public-school teacher or university scholar. Educators are required who are themselves educated, superior, and noble intellects, who can prove their qualifications—who are mature and well-rounded products of culture at every moment of their lives, in word and gesture; not the learned fools who, like "superior wet-nurses," are now thrust upon the youth of the land by public schools and universities. With only rare exceptions, what Germany lacks is the first prerequisite of education—that is, the educators; hence the decline of German culture. One of those rare exceptions is my highly respected friend Jacob Burckhardt of Basel: to him, above all, Basel owes its prominent position in human culture.

What the higher schools of Germany actually accomplish is this: they train a large number of young men in the shortest time possible to become useful and exploitable servants of the state. "Higher education" and a vast crowd—these terms contradict each other from the outset. All superior education must concern the exception: a man must be privileged to have a right to such a great privilege. Great and beautiful things cannot be common possessions: *pulchrum est paucorum hominum* (beauty is the possession of a few).

What causes the decline of German culture? The fact that "higher education" is no longer a special privilege—the democracy of a process of cultivation that has become "general," common. It must also be remembered that the privileges of the military profession, by urging too many to attend the higher schools, contribute to their downfall. In modern Germany, no one is allowed to give their children a noble education: regarding their teachers, curricula, and educational goals, our higher schools are all fundamentally based on a mediocre foundation. Everywhere, too, haste prevails, as if something would be lost if the young man were not "finished" by the age of twenty-three or didn't know how to answer the most essential question, "which career to choose?" The superior man, if you please, does not like "careers," precisely because he knows he is called. He has time, he takes time, he cannot possibly think of becoming

"finished"—in the matter of higher culture, a man of thirty years is still a beginner, a child. Our overcrowded public schools, our accumulation of poorly trained public-school teachers, are a scandal. Perhaps there are serious reasons for defending this situation, as shown recently by the professors of Heidelberg; but there can be no justification for it.

6

In order to stay true to my nature, which is affirmative and concerned with contradictions and criticism only indirectly and reluctantly, let me state right away the three objectives for which we need educators. People must learn to see, learn to think, and learn to speak and write: the goal of all three pursuits is a noble culture.

To learn to see—this means training the eye to calmness and patience, allowing things to come to it; to defer judgment and develop the habit of approaching and understanding an individual case from all angles. This is the first step in intellectual development. One must not immediately react to a stimulus; one must gain control over the instincts that block and isolate. To learn to see, as I understand it, is almost the same as what in popular language is called "strength of will." The key feature is precisely not wanting to see, being able to postpone a decision. All lack of intellectuality, all vulgarity, stems from the inability to resist a stimulus: one must respond or react, indulging every impulse. In many cases, such automatic action is already a sign of illness, of decline, and a symptom of exhaustion. Almost everything that crude popular language calls "vicious" is merely this physiological inability to refrain from reacting.

As an example of what it means to have learned to see, I'll say that someone trained this way will, as a learner, become generally slow, suspicious, and resistant. With a calm hostility, he will first allow all strange and new things to approach him—but he will draw back his hand when they come too close. To stand with all the doors of one's soul wide open, to lie subserviently before every trivial fact, to be perpetually ready to jump into other souls and things—this so-called "objectivity" of modern times—is bad taste. It is fundamentally vulgar and cheap.

7

As for learning how to think—our schools no longer have any concept of this. Even at the universities, among the actual scholars in philosophy, logic as a theory, a practical skill, and a discipline is beginning to fade away. Pick up any German book: you won't find the slightest hint that there is such a thing as a technique, a study plan, or a will to mastery when it comes to thinking—that thinking must be learned, just like dancing must be learned, and that thinking must be learned as a form of dancing. What German can still say from experience that he knows the delicate shiver that light footfalls in intellectual matters cause to spread throughout his body and limbs? Stiff awkwardness in intellectual stances, and the clumsy fist in grasping—these things are so inherently German that outside of Germany they are completely associated with the German spirit. The German has no finesse for subtle nuances. The fact that the people of

Germany have actually tolerated their philosophers, especially the most deformed cripple of ideas that has ever existed—the great Kant—gives a clear idea of their native elegance. For, to tell the truth, dancing in all its forms should be a part of any noble education: dancing with the feet, with ideas, with words—and, need I add, one must also be able to dance with the pen—one must learn how to write. But at this point, I would become entirely enigmatic to German readers.

Skirmishes in a War with the Age

1

My Impossible People.

- **Seneca**, or the bullfighter of virtue.
- **Rousseau**, or the return to nature, in its unrefined state.
- **Schiller**, or the moral trumpeter of Sackingen.
- **Dante**, or the hyena who writes poetry in tombs.
- **Kant**, or pretension as an intelligible character.
- **Victor Hugo**, or the lighthouse in the sea of nonsense.
- **Liszt**, or the school of racing after women.
- **George Sand**, or abundant fertility, in plain English: the cow with plenty of beautiful milk.
- **Michelet**, or enthusiasm in its shirtsleeves.
- **Carlyle**, or pessimism after undigested meals.
- **John Stuart Mill**, or offensive clarity.
- The **Goncourt brothers**, or the two Ajax fighting with Homer. Music by Offenbach.
- **Zola**, or the love of stinking.

2

Renan.

Theology, or the corruption of reason by original sin (Christianity). Proof of this: Renan, who, even in the rare cases when he dares to give a definitive answer to a general question, consistently misses the mark with painful regularity. For example, he tries to associate science with nobility, but surely it should be clear that science is inherently democratic. He seems driven by a strong desire to represent an aristocracy of intellect, yet at the same time, he grovels, not only on his knees but fully submitting, to the opposite doctrine—the gospel of humility. What is

the point of all the free-spiritedness, modernity, mockery, and acrobatic flexibility if, deep down, you are still a Christian, a Catholic, and even a priest? Renan's strength, much like that of a Jesuit or Father Confessor, lies in his seductiveness. His intellectuality carries that smooth, self-satisfied complacency of a parson—like all priests, he only becomes dangerous when he is capable of love. He is unmatched in the art of skillfully venerating a dangerous thing. This intellect of Renan's, which in action is enervating, is just one more calamity for poor, sick France, with her willpower falling apart.

3

Sainte-Beuve.

There is nothing of a man in him; he is full of petty spite towards all strong spirits. He wanders aimlessly; he is subtle, inquisitive, a little bored, always listening at keyholes—essentially a woman, with all the revengefulness and sensuality that women possess. As a psychologist, he is a genius of slander, endlessly rich in ways to achieve this; no one knows better than he how to insert a little poison into praise. At his core, he is plebeian and shares Rousseau's resentful spirit: for this reason, he is a Romanticist—because beneath all romanticism, Rousseau's instinct for revenge still grunts and frets. He is a revolutionary, but restrained by "fear." He is uncomfortable with everything that is strong (public opinion, the Academy, the court, even Port Royal). He is embittered by everything great in men and things, by everything that believes in itself. Enough of a poet and enough of a woman to feel greatness as power; he is always turning and twisting, because, like the proverbial worm, he constantly feels that he is being stepped on. As a critic, he has no standard of judgment, no guiding principle, no backbone. Though he has the tongue of a cosmopolitan libertine who can chatter about a thousand things, he does not have the courage to even acknowledge his libertinism. As a historian, he has no philosophy, and lacks the power of philosophical vision—hence his refusal to take on the role of a judge, instead hiding behind the mask of "objectivity" in all important matters. His approach is better suited for those things where subtle and effete taste is the highest judge: in these things, he truly has the courage of his own personality—he truly enjoys his own nature—he really is a master. In some ways, he is a prototype of Baudelaire.

4

The Imitation of Christ is one of those books that I can't even touch without feeling physically repulsed. It gives off a fragrance of the eternally feminine, which one can only truly appreciate if one is a Frenchman or a Wagnerite. This saint has a way of speaking about love that even makes Parisian women feel a little uncomfortable. I've been told that the most intelligent of Jesuits, Auguste Comte, who sought to lead his fellow countrymen back to Rome by the indirect route of science, drew his inspiration from this book. And I believe it: "The religion of the heart."

5

G. Eliot.

They have rid themselves of the Christian God and therefore feel all the more compelled to cling to Christian morality: this is an English way of thinking; but let us not take it amiss in moral women like Eliot. In England, any man who indulges in even a slight liberation from theology must redeem his honor in the most extreme manner by becoming a moral fanatic. That's how penance is done in that country.

As for us, we act differently. When we renounce the Christian faith, we also abandon all claim to Christian morality. This is by no means self-evident, and in defiance of English superficial thinking, the point must be made clearer and clearer. Christianity is a system, a complete worldview, conceived as a whole. If its central concept, the belief in God, is removed, the whole system is destroyed; nothing vital remains for us to hold onto. Christianity assumes that man does not and cannot know what is good or bad for him: the Christian believes in God, who alone knows these things. Christian morality is a command; its origin is transcendental. It is beyond criticism, beyond the right to criticize; it is true only on the condition that God is truth—it stands or falls with the belief in God.

If the English truly believe that they intuitively know, on their own, what is good and evil, and therefore claim they no longer need Christianity to guarantee morality, this in itself is simply the result of Christian values still dominating them, and a proof of the strength and depth of this influence. It shows that the origin of English morality has been forgotten, and that its very relative right to exist is no longer felt. For the English, morality is not yet a problem.

6

George Sand.

I have been reading the first *Lettres d'un Voyageur*: like everything that comes from Rousseau's influence, it is false, fabricated, inflated, and exaggerated! I cannot stand this bright wallpaper style, just as I can't tolerate the vulgar pursuit of generous emotions. The worst part about it is definitely the flirtatious adoption of masculine traits by this woman, in the manner of ill-mannered schoolboys. And how cold she must have been inwardly all along, this unbearable artist! She wound herself up like a clock—and wrote. As cold as Hugo and Balzac, as cold as all Romanticists are once they begin to write! And how self-satisfied she must have been, this prolific ink-producing cow. For she had something German in her (German in the bad sense), just as Rousseau, her master, did; something that could only have come about when French taste was in decline!—and Renan adores her!

7

A Moral for Psychologists.

Do not engage in notebook psychology! Never observe just for the sake of observing! Such things lead to a distorted point of view, to a squint, to something forced and exaggerated. To purposely try to experience things—this is not helpful. In the midst of an experience, a person should not turn their eyes upon themselves; in such cases, any eye becomes the "evil eye." A born psychologist instinctively avoids seeing just for the sake of seeing. The same is true for the born painter. Such a person never works "from nature"—they leave it to their instinct, to their camera obscura, to sift and define the "fact," "nature," or "experience." The general idea, the conclusion, the result, is the only thing that reaches their consciousness. They know nothing of the deliberate process of deducing from particular cases.

What happens when a person goes about it differently? For example, when they follow the style of Parisian novelists and engage in notebook psychology, both on a large and small scale? Such a person is constantly spying on reality, and every evening they return home with a handful of new curios. But look at the result! A mass of disjointed pieces, at best a mosaic, in any case something hastily put together, restless and garish. The Goncourt brothers are the greatest offenders in this respect: they cannot write three sentences together without causing pain to the eye—the eye of the psychologist. From an artistic perspective, nature is no model. It exaggerates, distorts, and leaves gaps. Nature is the accident. Studying "from nature" seems to me a bad sign: it shows submission, weakness, and fatalism—lying in the dust before trivial facts is beneath a true artist. To see what *is*—that is the function of a different kind of intellect, the anti-artistic, the matter-of-fact. One must know who one is.

8

Concerning the psychology of the artist.

For art to be possible at all—that is, for an aesthetic mode of action and observation to exist—a certain preliminary physiological state is necessary: *ecstasy*. This state of ecstasy must first intensify the sensitivity of the entire system; otherwise, no art is possible. Various types of ecstasy, regardless of how they are produced, have the power to create art, especially the form of ecstasy connected to sexual excitement—this most venerable and primitive form of ecstasy. The same applies to the ecstasy that arises from all great desires and strong passions: the ecstasy of the feast, the arena, acts of bravery, victory, all extreme actions; the ecstasy of cruelty; the ecstasy of destruction; the ecstasy triggered by certain meteorological conditions, such as the arrival of spring, or the use of narcotics; and finally, the ecstasy of will—the ecstasy that results from accumulated and surging willpower.

The essential characteristic of ecstasy is the feeling of increased strength and abundance. Driven by this feeling, a person gives of themselves to things, forces them to partake in their richness, and imposes their will upon them—this process is called *idealising*. Let us dispel a common

misconception: idealising does not consist, as is often believed, of suppressing or eliminating details or unimportant features. The most important factor at work is the monumental accentuation of the main characteristics, and as a result, the lesser details fade away.

9

In this state, a person enriches everything from their own abundance: what they see, what they will, is seen as expanded, compressed, strong, overflowing with power. They transfigure things until they reflect their own power—until they are marked by their perfection. This compulsion to transform things into beauty is—*Art*. Everything—even that which they are not—becomes a means for this person to rejoice in themselves; in art, man rejoices in his own perfection.

It is possible to imagine the opposite state, a specifically anti-artistic state of instincts—a state where a person impoverishes, weakens, and drains the life from everything. And, in truth, history is full of such anti-artists, such creatures of low vitality, who have no choice but to drain everything they see, to suck out its life and make it thinner. This is the case with the true Christian, such as Pascal, for example. There is no such thing as a Christian who is also an artist... Let no one be so naive as to suggest Raphael or any 19th-century Christian of the homeopathic type as an objection to this statement: Raphael said Yes, Raphael acted Yes—therefore, Raphael was not a Christian.

10

What do the antithetical concepts of **Apollonian** and **Dionysian**, which I have introduced into the vocabulary of aesthetics, mean as representing two distinct modes of ecstasy? **Apollonian ecstasy** primarily acts as a force that stimulates the eye, so that it gains the ability to see. The painter, the sculptor, and the epic poet are, at their core, visionaries. On the other hand, **Dionysian ecstasy** stimulates and intensifies the entire system of passions, so that they discharge themselves through all forms of expression at once, releasing all the power of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transformation, and every form of mimicry and theatrical performance. The defining feature remains the ease with which transformation occurs, the inability to resist reacting (a state similar to certain hysterical patients, who, at the slightest suggestion, assume any role). It is impossible for the Dionysian artist not to understand any suggestion; no outward sign of emotion escapes him. He possesses the instinct to comprehend and intuit to the highest degree, and he is capable of the most perfect art of communication. He can immerse himself in every persona, in every passion; he is constantly changing.

Music, as we understand it today, is also a general excitation and discharge of emotions; however, it is only the remnant of a much richer world of emotional expression, a mere residue of Dionysian theatricality. For music to exist as a distinct art, many senses, especially the muscular sense, had to be somewhat paralysed (at least relatively—since rhythm still appeals to our muscles to some extent). This means that man no longer physically imitates and represents

everything he feels as soon as he feels it. Nevertheless, that is the normal Dionysian state, and in any case, its primitive form. Music is the slow specialization of this state, at the cost of related capacities.

11

The actor, the mime, the dancer, the musician, and the lyricist are, at their core, fundamentally related in their instincts; however, over time, they have gradually specialized in their specific art forms, even to the point of contradiction. The lyricist stayed connected with the musician for the longest period of time, and the actor with the dancer. The architect, on the other hand, does not embody either a Dionysian or Apollonian state: in his case, it is the great act of will, the will that moves mountains, the ecstasy of great will that aspires to art. The most powerful men have always inspired architects; the architect has always been influenced by the notion of power. In architectural structures, man's pride, his triumph over gravity, his will to power, take on visible form. Architecture is a form of oratory of power through shapes. Sometimes it is persuasive, even flattering, and at other times, simply commanding. The highest sensation of power and security is expressed through grandeur of style. This power, which no longer needs to be proven, which scorns the need to please, which responds only with difficulty, which feels no witnesses around it, which is oblivious to opposition, which relies on itself fatalistically, and is a law among laws: such power naturally expresses itself through grandeur of style.

12

I have been reading the life of Thomas Carlyle, that unconscious and involuntary farce, that heroically moral interpretation of dyspeptic moods. Carlyle, a man of strong words and attitudes, a rhetorician by necessity, seems forever tormented by the desire to find some kind of strong faith, and by his inability to do so—he is, in this regard, a typical Romanticist! To yearn for a strong faith is not proof of having one, but rather the opposite. If a man has strong faith, he can afford the luxury of skepticism; he is strong enough, firm enough, well-constructed enough for such a luxury. Carlyle stuns something within himself with the force of his reverence for men of strong faith and his rage towards those who are less foolish; he is desperately in need of noise. An attitude of constant and passionate dishonesty towards himself—this is his essence; because of this, he is and remains interesting.

Of course, in England, he is admired precisely for his "honesty." Well, that's English; and given that the English are the nation of consummate pretension, it's not only understandable but also very natural. At the core, Carlyle is an English atheist who makes it a point of honor *not* to be one.

13

Emerson.

He is much more enlightened, broader, more versatile, and more subtle than Carlyle; but above all, he is happier. He is someone who instinctively lives on ambrosia and leaves the indigestible parts of things on his plate. Compared to Carlyle, he is a man of taste. Carlyle, who was very fond of him, nevertheless said, "He doesn't give us enough to chew." This is perfectly true, but it's not a criticism of Emerson. Emerson possesses that warm intellectual cheerfulness that discourages excessive seriousness; he has no real sense of how old he is or how young he will still be—he could have said of himself, in the words of Lope de Vega: "I succeed myself." His mind is always finding reasons to be content and even thankful; and sometimes he comes very close to that serene superiority of the worthy bourgeois who, returning from an amorous rendezvous, like someone who has done something well, says gratefully, "Though strength is lacking, pleasure deserves praise."

14

Anti-Darwin.

Regarding the famous "struggle for existence," it seems to me, for now, more of an assumption than a fact. It does happen, but as an exception. The general condition of life is not one of scarcity or famine, but rather of abundance, lavishness, and even absurd wastefulness—where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for power. We should not confuse Malthus with nature.

However, supposing this struggle does exist—and indeed it does—the result is unfortunately the opposite of what the Darwinian school seems to desire, and of what, in agreement with them, we might also wish: that is, it always works to the disadvantage of the strong, the privileged, and the fortunate exceptions. Species do not evolve toward perfection: the weak always prevail over the strong—simply because they are the majority, and because they are also more cunning. Darwin overlooked the intellect (as is typical of the English!); the weak have more intellect. To acquire intellect, one must need it. One loses it when one no longer needs it. Those who possess strength dismiss intellect ("let it go!" say the Germans of today, "the Empire will remain").

As you can see, intellect, to me, means caution, patience, cunning, dissimulation, great self-control, and everything related to mimicry (what is praised today as virtue is very closely related to this).

15

Casuistry of a Psychologist.

This man knows humanity: but for what purpose does he study his fellow men? He wants to gain some small or even great advantage from them—he is a politician! That man over there is also

well-versed in human nature: and you tell me that he doesn't want to derive any personal profit from his knowledge, that he is completely disinterested? Examine him a little more closely! Perhaps he wants to gain a more insidious advantage from his understanding; namely, to feel superior to people, to look down on them, to no longer feel like one of them. This "disinterested person" is a despiser of mankind; and the former person is of a more humane nature, no matter what appearances may suggest. At least he considers himself the equal of those around him; at least he sees himself as one of them.

16

The psychological tact of Germans seems to me to have been called into question by a whole series of cases, which my modesty prevents me from listing. However, I will not let the opportunity pass to back up my argument with at least one example: I resent the Germans for making a mistake about Kant and his "backstairs philosophy," as I call it. Such a man was not the model of intellectual integrity. Another thing I dislike hearing is a certain infamous "and": the Germans say, "Goethe and Schiller"—and I even fear they say "Schiller and Goethe." Has no one figured out Schiller yet? But there are other "ands" that are even worse. With my own ears, I have heard—though only among university professors, it is true—men speak of "Schopenhauer and Hartmann."

17

The most intellectual men, as long as they are also the most courageous, endure the most intense tragedies. But because of this, they honor life, for it presents them with its greatest opposition.

18

Concerning "the Conscience of the Intellect"

Nothing seems to me rarer today than genuine hypocrisy. I strongly suspect that this trait is unable to thrive in the mild climate of our culture. Hypocrisy belongs to an age of strong faith—one in which a person does not lose their own faith, even though they must outwardly profess another belief. Nowadays, a person either gives it up, or more commonly, acquires a second faith—but in any case, they remain honest. Without a doubt, it is now possible to have many more convictions than before: possible, that is, allowable, harmless. This leads to a certain tolerance towards oneself. Tolerance towards oneself allows for a greater number of convictions to coexist peacefully. They live side by side, and, as is the case today, they take great care not to compromise themselves. How does a person compromise themselves today? When they are consistent; when they pursue a clear course; when they have fewer than five faces; when they are genuine. I fear greatly that modern man is far too fond of comfort to indulge in certain vices; and as a result, these vices are dying out. Everything evil that comes from strength of will—and perhaps there is nothing evil without the strength of will—degenerates in our stagnant

atmosphere into virtue. The few hypocrites I have known merely imitated hypocrisy: like almost every tenth person today, they were actors.

19

Beautiful and Ugly:

Nothing is more relative, let's say, more limited, than our sense of the beautiful. Whoever tries to separate it from the pleasure that man finds in his fellow humans will immediately lose their grounding. "Beauty in itself" is merely a word; it isn't even a real concept. In the beautiful, man sets himself up as the standard of perfection; in rare cases, he even worships himself as that standard. A species has no other choice but to say "yes" to itself alone, in this way. Its most basic instinct, the instinct for self-preservation and self-expansion, still shines through even in such lofty ideas. Man imagines the world to be filled with beauty—he forgets that he is the source of it all. He alone has given it beauty. Alas! And only human, all-too-human beauty! The truth is, man reflects himself in things; he finds everything beautiful that mirrors his own image. The judgment "beautiful" is simply "the vanity of his species."

A little demon of suspicion might well whisper in the skeptic's ear: is the world truly beautified just because man thinks it beautiful? He has only humanized it—that's all. But nothing, absolutely nothing, proves to us that man is the true model of beauty. Who knows what he would look like in the eyes of a higher judge of taste? He might seem a little outlandish—perhaps even somewhat amusing, perhaps even a bit arbitrary? "Oh Dionysus, divine one, why do you pull on my ears?" Ariadne asks on one occasion of her philosophical lover, during one of their famous conversations on the island of Naxos. "I find a certain humor in your ears, Ariadne: why are they not a little longer?"

20

Nothing is beautiful; man alone is beautiful. All aesthetics rest on this simple truth; it is the first axiom of this science. Now, let us add the second principle: nothing is ugly except the degenerate man. Within these two principles, the realm of aesthetic judgments is contained. From a physiological standpoint, everything ugly weakens and depresses man. It reminds him of decay, danger, and impotence; he literally loses strength in its presence. The effect of ugliness can be measured with a dynamometer. Whenever man's spirits are downcast, it is a sign that he senses the presence of something "ugly." His sense of power, his will to power, his courage, and his pride—all of these collapse at the sight of what is ugly, and rise at the sight of what is beautiful. In both cases, an inference is made; the premises for this are abundantly stored in our instincts.

Ugliness is understood to signify a hint or symptom of degeneration: that which reminds us, even remotely, of degeneracy, compels us to judge it as "ugly." Every sign of exhaustion, gravity, age, or fatigue; every kind of constraint, such as cramping or paralysis; and above all, the smells, colors, and forms associated with decay and decomposition—even if they have been reduced to

mere symbols—these all provoke the same reaction, which is the judgment "ugly." A certain hatred is expressed here: what does man hate? Without a doubt, it is the decline of his type. In this regard, his hatred comes from the deepest instincts of the race: there is horror, caution, depth, and far-reaching vision in this hatred—it is the most profound hatred that exists. For this reason alone, art is profound.

21

Schopenhauer.
Schopenhauer, the last German thinker who can be considered truly significant (a European event, like Goethe, Hegel, or Heinrich Heine, and not just a local or national figure), is, for a psychologist, a case of the first rank. I mean, he made a masterful yet malicious attempt to recruit the very forces that oppose nihilism—those great self-affirming powers of the "will to live," the exuberant forms of life itself—in support of a general nihilistic depreciation of life. He interpreted art, heroism, genius, beauty, great sympathy, knowledge, the will to truth, and tragedy, one after another, as the results of the denial, or the need for the denial, of the "will"—the greatest forgery, Christianity aside, that history has produced. Upon closer inspection, he is simply the heir of the Christian interpretation, except that he managed to approve, in a Christian fashion (i.e., nihilistically), even the great achievements of human culture, which Christianity entirely repudiates. He approved of them as paths to "salvation," as preparatory stages to "salvation," as appetizers meant to spark the desire for "salvation."

22

Let me point to a single example. Schopenhauer speaks of beauty with a melancholic fervor—why does he do this? Because in beauty, he sees a bridge that one can travel across, or which stimulates the desire to travel further. According to him, beauty offers a momentary escape from the "will"—it lures one toward eternal salvation. He values it particularly as a release from the "burning core of the will," which is sexuality—he sees beauty as the negation of the procreative instinct. What a peculiar saint! Someone contradicts you, Schopenhauer; I fear it is Nature herself. Why is there beauty in tone, color, aroma, and rhythmic movement in nature at all? What is it that brings beauty to the forefront? Fortunately, another philosopher contradicts him. No less an authority than the divine Plato himself (as Schopenhauer calls him) upholds a different view: that all beauty lures to procreation—that this is the primary characteristic of its effect, from the lowest sensuality to the highest spirituality.

23

Plato goes further. With an innocence that only a Greek, not a "Christian," could have, he says that Platonic philosophy would not exist if there were not such beautiful boys in Athens: it was the sight of them alone that stirred the soul of the philosopher with erotic passion, and gave it no rest until it had planted the seeds of all lofty things in such beautiful soil. He, too, was a peculiar

saint! One scarcely believes one's ears, even if one believes Plato. At least one realizes that philosophy was pursued differently in Athens; above all, it was public. Nothing is less Greek than the concept-spinning of an anchorite, amor intellectualis dei in the manner of Spinoza. Plato's style of philosophy could instead be defined as an erotic competition, a continuation and spiritualization of the old agonal gymnastics and the conditions on which they depended.

What was the ultimate result of Plato's philosophical eroticism? A new art form of the Greek Agon—dialectics. In opposition to Schopenhauer and in honor of Plato, I remind you that all the higher culture and literature of classical France grew on the soil of sexual interests. In all its forms, you may look for gallantry, the senses, sexual competition, and "woman," and you will not search in vain.

24

L'Art pour l'Art.

The struggle against a purpose in art is always a struggle against the moral tendency in art, against its subordination to morality. *L'art pour l'art* means "let morality go to the devil!"—But even this hostility reveals the dominating power of moral prejudice. If art is stripped of the purpose of preaching morality and improving humanity, it does not follow that art becomes absolutely pointless, purposeless, or senseless—*l'art pour l'art*—a snake that bites its own tail. "No purpose at all is better than a moral purpose!"—this is how pure passion speaks.

A psychologist, on the other hand, asks: what does all art do? Does it not praise? Does it not glorify? Does it not select? Does it not bring things into focus? In all of this, it strengthens or weakens certain values. Is this merely a secondary matter? An accident? Something in which the artist's instinct plays no role? Or is it rather the very prerequisite that allows the artist to accomplish something?

Is the artist's most fundamental instinct concerned with art itself? Or is it concerned with the purpose of art, with life? With a certain kind of desirable life? Art is the great stimulant of life; how can it be seen as purposeless, pointless, *l'art pour l'art*?

There remains one more question to answer: Art also reveals much that is ugly, hard, and questionable in life—doesn't this seem to make life intolerable? And in fact, some philosophers have ascribed this function to art. According to Schopenhauer's doctrine, the general purpose of art was to "free one from the Will"; and what he admired as the great utility of tragedy was that it "made people more resigned."

But this, as I've shown before, is a pessimistic viewpoint; it is the "evil eye." The artist himself must be consulted. What does the soul of the tragic artist communicate to others? Is it not precisely his fearless attitude towards that which is terrible and questionable? This attitude in itself is highly desirable; once one has experienced it, one honors it above all else. He

communicates it. He must communicate it, provided he is an artist and a genius in the art of communication. A courageous and free spirit, in the face of a mighty foe, in the presence of sublime misfortune, and face to face with a problem that inspires horror—this is the triumphant stance that the tragic artist chooses and glorifies. The martial elements in our soul celebrate their feast in tragedy; he who is accustomed to suffering, he who anticipates suffering, the heroic man, extols his existence through tragedy—only to him does the tragic artist offer this cup of sweetest cruelty.

25

To associate in a friendly way with anyone; to keep the door of one's heart open to all, is certainly generous—but it is nothing more than that. You can recognize hearts capable of true hospitality by their abundance of screened windows and closed shutters: they keep their finest rooms empty. Why? Because they are waiting for guests who are truly worth their time.

26

We no longer value ourselves enough when we express the content of our souls. Our true experiences are not at all talkative. They couldn't communicate themselves, even if they wanted to. They struggle to find words for such intimate thoughts. The things we find words for are things we have already overcome. In every conversation, there's an element of disdain. It seems that speech was invented only for average, mediocre, and easily communicable things. Every spoken word reveals the speaker's vulgarity—(This is an excerpt from a moral code for deaf-mutes and other philosophers.)

27

"This picture is perfectly beautiful!" The dissatisfied and frustrated literary woman, with a desert in her heart and belly, listens with agonized curiosity every moment to the voice inside her, urging her: *aut liberi, aut libri* (either children or books). The literary woman, educated enough to understand the voice of nature, even when it speaks in Latin, and also enough of a peacock and a fool to speak French to herself in private: "I will see myself, I will read myself, I will be amazed and say: Is it possible that I had so much wit?"

28

The objective ones speak:
"Nothing comes more easily to us than being wise, patient, and superior. We are soaked in the oil of indulgence and sympathy, absurdly just, forgiving everything. Precisely for this reason, we must be strict with ourselves; for this reason, we should indulge in a little emotion, a little emotional vice now and then. It may seem bitter to us, and we might even laugh at the way we

behave. But what does it matter? We have no other form of self-control left. This is our asceticism, our way of doing penance."

To make it personal—this is the nature of the virtues of the "impersonal and objective one."

29

Extract from a doctor's examination paper:

"What is the task of all higher education?"

To turn man into a machine.

"What methods are used?"

He must learn how to be bored.

"How is this achieved?"

Through the concept of duty.

"What example of duty does he have before him?"

The philologist: it is he who teaches people how to endure.

"Who is the perfect man?"

The government official.

"Which philosophy provides the highest formula for the government official?"

Kant's philosophy: the government official as a thing-in-itself made the judge of the government official as an appearance.

30

The Right to Stupidity.

The worn-out worker, whose breathing is slow, whose expression is good-natured, and who lets things go as they will: this typical figure, found across all social classes in this age of labor (and of "Empire!"), has now begun to claim even Art, including books, especially newspapers—and much more so beautiful nature, Italy! This man of the evening, with his "savage instincts lulled," as Faust puts it, needs his summer vacation, his sea baths, his glacier, his Bayreuth. In such ages, Art has the right to be purely foolish—as a sort of vacation for the spirit, wit, and sentiment. Wagner understood this. Pure foolishness is a pick-me-up.

31

Yet Another Problem of Diet.

The methods with which Julius Caesar protected himself from illness and headaches: long marches, a simple way of living, constant stays in the open air, continuous hardships—these are the self-preserving and self-defensive measures against the extreme vulnerability of those delicate machines running at the highest capacity, which we call geniuses.

32

The Immoralist speaks:

Nothing is more repulsive to true philosophers than man when he begins to wish. When they see man only through his actions; when they witness this bravest, craftiest, and most enduring of creatures, even when caught in disaster, how admirable he appears! They even encourage him... But true philosophers despise the man who desires, as well as the "desirable" man—and all the desires and ideals of humanity. If a philosopher could be a nihilist, he would be one; for he finds nothing behind all human ideals, not even nothingness, but rather vileness, absurdity, sickness, cowardice, fatigue, and all sorts of dregs from the goblets of his life... Why is it that man, who as a reality is so commendable, ceases to deserve respect the moment he begins to desire? Does he have to atone for being so perfect in reality? Must he compensate for his deeds, for the mental and willful tension behind all his actions, by letting his powers diminish in imagination and absurdity? Until now, the history of human desires has been mankind's shameful story: one should avoid delving too deeply into it. What justifies man is his reality—it will justify him forever. How much more valuable is a real man than any other man who is merely the phantom of desires, dreams, falsehoods, and lies—than any ideal man? And the ideal man, above all, is what the philosopher cannot stand.

33

The Natural Value of Egoism.

Selfishness holds as much value as the physiological worth of the person practicing it: its value may be great or it may be worthless and contemptible. Every individual can be classified based on whether they represent the ascending or descending line of life. Once this is determined, a standard is set by which the value of their selfishness can be assessed. If they represent the ascending line of life, their value is, of course, extraordinary—and for the sake of the collective life, which in them makes a step forward, concern for their well-being, for securing their optimal conditions, may even be extreme. The human unit, the “individual,” as both the common people and philosophers have always understood him, is certainly a misconception: he is not an isolated entity, not an atom, not just a "link in the chain," nor merely a product of the past—he embodies

the entire direct line of humanity leading up to his own life. However, if he represents a decline in development, degeneration, or chronic illness (as illnesses are usually the result, not the cause, of decline), then his value is minimal, and true fairness would have him take as little as possible from those who are fortunate strokes of nature. In such a case, he is nothing more than a parasite upon them.

34

The Christian and the Anarchist.

When the anarchist, as the representative of the decaying segments of society, raises his voice in outrage for "right," "justice," and "equal rights," he is merely expressing the frustration of his ignorance, unable to understand why he is truly suffering—what his poverty truly consists of—the poverty of life itself. An instinct for causality is at work in him: someone must be responsible for why he feels so uncomfortable. His "splendid indignation" alone offers him some relief; it is a pleasure for all those who feel oppressed to complain—it gives them a fleeting feeling of power. The very act of complaining, the simple fact that one laments their situation, can lend such a charm to life that, for that reason alone, one is willing to endure it. There is a small sense of revenge in every lamentation. One projects one's miseries, and, under certain circumstances, even one's flaws, onto those who are different, as if their condition were an injustice, an unfair privilege. "Since I am a scoundrel, you should be one too." Revolutions are often based on this kind of reasoning.

To lament one's circumstances is always despicable: it is always the result of weakness. Whether one blames others or oneself for their suffering, it amounts to the same thing. The socialist blames others, while the Christian, for example, blames themselves. What both attitudes share, or rather, what is equally dishonorable in both, is the belief that someone must be responsible for one's suffering—in short, the sufferer soothes themselves with the sweet feeling of revenge to ease their pain. The targets of this desire for vengeance, like a desire for pleasure, are purely accidental causes. In every direction, the sufferer finds reasons to cool their petty desire for revenge. If they are a Christian, as I've mentioned, they find these reasons within themselves. The Christian and the anarchist—both are decadent. But even when the Christian condemns, slanders, and defiles the world, they are driven by the same instinct that leads the socialist worker to curse, slander, and throw dirt at society. Even the final "Judgment" is a form of solace for revenge—the revolution, as the socialist worker imagines it, is just a little further off... The idea of a "Beyond"—why a Beyond, if not as a means of throwing mud at the "Here," at this world?

35

A Criticism of the Morality of Decadence.

An "altruistic" morality, one in which selfishness fades, is always a bad sign. This applies to both individuals and, especially, to nations. The best qualities are missing when selfishness starts to disappear. To instinctively choose what harms you, to be drawn by "disinterested" motives—these are almost the defining traits of decadence. "Not having one's own interests at heart" is simply a moral disguise for a very different, physiological reality: "I no longer know how to recognize what is in my best interest."

It is the disintegration of instincts! All is lost for a person when they become altruistic. Instead of simply admitting, "I am no longer of value," the lie of morality in the decadent's mouth says: "Nothing is of value—life is worthless."

Such a judgment becomes a great danger in the long run because it is contagious, and it quickly takes root in society, flourishing with tropical abundance, now as a religion (Christianity), and again as a philosophy (Schopenhauerism). Under certain circumstances, the very fumes of this toxic growth, which springs from the heart of decay, can poison life for thousands and thousands of years.

36

A Moral for Doctors.

The sick person is a parasite on society. In certain cases, it is indecent to continue living. To persist in a state of cowardly dependence on doctors and medical treatments, once the meaning of life and the right to live have been lost, should be regarded with the greatest contempt by society. Doctors, for their part, should be the agents of this contempt—they should stop issuing prescriptions and instead administer daily doses of disgust to their patients. A new responsibility should be created for doctors: the responsibility of ruthlessly suppressing and eliminating degenerate life, in all cases where the highest interests of life itself, of advancing life, demand it—such as in favor of the right to procreate, the right to be born, the right to live. One should die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly. Death should be chosen freely—death at the right time, clearly and joyfully faced, embraced in the presence of one's children and other witnesses. It should be affected in a way that allows for a proper farewell, where the one who is about to depart is still himself and capable not only of valuing what he has achieved and willed in life but also of summing up the value of life itself. Everything, in contrast, to the ghastly comedy that Christianity has made of the hour of death. We should never forgive Christianity for abusing the weakness of the dying man, using his manner of dying as a means to evaluate both the man and his past. In spite of all cowardly prejudices, it is our duty to restore the proper, physiological aspect of so-called natural death, which is in fact perfectly "unnatural" and is really

nothing but suicide. One never dies due to anyone else's fault but one's own. The only difference is that death in the most contemptible circumstances—the death that is not free, the death that happens at the wrong time—is the death of a coward. Out of love for life, one should wish death to be different—that is, free, deliberate, and neither a matter of chance nor surprise.

Finally, let me offer some advice to our pessimistic friends and all other decadents. We cannot prevent ourselves from being born, but this error—sometimes it is an error—can be corrected if we choose. The person who ends their life performs the most worthy of deeds: they almost deserve to live for having done so. Society—indeed, life itself—gains more from such a deed than from any life spent in renunciation, anemia, and other virtues. At least suicide frees others from the sight of them, and at least it removes one objection against life. Pure and true pessimism can only be proved by the self-refutation of the pessimists themselves: one should take consistency a step further; one should not just deny life as Schopenhauer did in *The World as Will and Idea*, but first and foremost, deny Schopenhauer.

Incidentally, pessimism, no matter how infectious it may be, does not increase the morbidity of an age or species; rather, it is the expression of that morbidity. One succumbs to it in the same way one succumbs to cholera—one must already be predisposed to the disease. Pessimism itself does not increase the number of the world's decadents by even one. Let me remind you of the statistical fact that in years when cholera rages, the total number of deaths does not exceed that of other years.

37

Have We Become More Moral?

As might have been expected, the entire fury of moral stultification—which, as is well-known, is often mistaken for morality itself in Germany—was directed against my concept of "Beyond Good and Evil." I could tell you many stories about this. Above all, people tried to convince me of the "incontestable superiority" of our age regarding moral sentiment and the progress we've made. They argued that compared to us, a figure like Cesare Borgia could not be considered the "higher man" or the Superman that I declared him to be. The editor of the Swiss newspaper *Bund* even expressed admiration for the courage of my work, but pretended to "understand" that its aim was to abolish all decent feeling. Much obliged!

In reply, I raise the following question: have we truly become more moral? The mere fact that everyone believes we have is already an objection to this belief. We modern men, so sensitive and considerate, full of mutual care, actually dare to suppose that the pampered empathy we now display, this unanimity in sparing and helping each other, marks a definitive step forward and shows us far ahead of the men of the Renaissance. But every age thinks the same about itself—it must. This much is certain: we would never dare to live in the conditions of the Renaissance, nor even imagine ourselves in those conditions. Our nerves could not endure that reality, let alone our muscles. But the inability to endure this does not denote progress—it simply reflects the

weakened, delicate, and more susceptible nature of our era, which inevitably leads to the creation of a more considerate morality.

If we imagine the absence of our delicate nature, our physiological frailty, our morality of "humanization" would immediately lose its value—no morality has inherent value. It would even make us scorn it. However, do not doubt that we moderns, wrapped in the thick cotton wool of our humanitarianism that even shrinks from grazing a stone, would present a comedy to Cesare Borgia's contemporaries that would make them die of laughter. We are indeed, without realizing it, exceedingly ridiculous with our modern "virtues."

The decline of hostile instincts and those that arouse suspicion—the true progress of our era—is just one symptom of the general decline in vitality. It requires a hundred times more trouble and caution to live such a dependent, senile existence. In these circumstances, everyone helps everyone else, and to a certain extent, everyone is either an invalid or an invalid's caretaker. This is called "virtue." Among those who lived differently—that is, a fuller, more abundant, more extravagant life—it would be called by other names: possibly "cowardice," "vileness," or "old woman's morality."

Our softening of morals—this is my cry, my innovation—is the result of our decline. Conversely, toughness and harshness in morals may arise from a surplus of life. When that condition prevails, much is dared, much is challenged, and much is also squandered. What once was simply the salt of life is now our poison. To be indifferent—even this is a form of strength. But for that, we are too senile, too frail. Our morality of fellow-feeling, which I first raised a finger to warn against, that moral impressionism, is one symptom more of the excessive physiological irritability which characterizes everything decadent.

That movement which tried to present itself scientifically, through Schopenhauer's morality of pity—a sad attempt—is in essence the movement of decadence in morality, closely related to Christian morality. Strong ages and noble cultures see something contemptible in pity, in "love of one's neighbor," and in a lack of egoism and self-esteem. Ages should be measured according to their positive forces. By this standard, the Renaissance—so prodigal, so fateful—appears as the last great age, while we moderns, with our anxious care for ourselves and our love for our neighbors, our unassuming virtues of industry, equity, and scientific method, with our lust for collection, economy, and mechanization—represent a weak age.

Our virtues are necessarily determined by our weakness. "Equality," a specific process of making everyone uniform, which is expressed in the theory of equal rights, is tied to a declining culture. The gap between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to distinguish oneself—that, the pathos of distance, is proper to all strong ages. The force of tension, indeed, the tension itself between extremes, is shrinking every day—the extremes themselves are merging into a state of identity. Our political theories and state constitutions, including "The German Empire," are the logical results of decline. The unconscious effects of

decadence have started to dominate even the ideals of the sciences. My objection to English and French sociology remains that it knows only the decadent form of society and, with childlike innocence, treats the instincts of decline as the standard of sociological valuations.

Declining life, the decay of all organizing power—that is, all that power which separates, cleaves gulfs, and establishes rank—has formulated itself in modern sociology as the ideal. Our socialists are decadents, but so was Herbert Spencer, who saw something to be desired in the triumph of altruism!

38

My Concept of Freedom

Sometimes, the value of something doesn't lie in what it helps us achieve, but in what we must sacrifice to obtain it. For example, liberal institutions lose their liberal nature once they are firmly established. Once they are secure, no greater enemies of freedom exist than liberal institutions themselves. These institutions, though they promote freedom while they are being fought for, ultimately undermine the Will to Power. They level everything to the ground and elevate mediocrity to a moral standard. They make people small, cowardly, and pleasure-loving—basically, they turn people into docile animals. In essence, liberalism transforms mankind into cattle.

However, when these institutions are under threat, they produce quite different results. They promote the cause of freedom powerfully, but it is war—war fought for liberal institutions—that produces these results. War trains men to be free. What is freedom, really? Freedom is the will to be responsible for ourselves. It is the ability to maintain a distance from other people, to become indifferent to hardship, severity, and even life itself. It is the willingness to sacrifice others for our cause, even if it means sacrificing ourselves.

Freedom is about the triumph of the virile instincts that rejoice in war and victory over other instincts, such as the instinct for "happiness." A man who has achieved freedom, and certainly a spirit that has achieved freedom, tramples ruthlessly upon the weak comforts worshipped by tea merchants, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats who are enslaved by their dreams. The free man is a warrior.

How do we measure freedom in individuals or nations? It is measured by the resistance one must overcome, the pain endured to remain dominant. The highest type of free man would be found where the greatest resistance is constantly met: just a few steps away from tyranny, on the very threshold of enslavement. This is true psychologically, as we associate "tyrants" with powerful, relentless instincts that demand the greatest authority and discipline to oppose them. Julius Caesar is an exemplary figure of this. It is also true politically: look at the course of history. The nations that amounted to something, that became great, never achieved that under liberal institutions. Great danger turned them into something worthy of reverence—danger that forced

them to discover their resources, virtues, means of defense, and genius, pushing them to be strong.

First principle: a man must need to be strong, otherwise he will never achieve strength. The aristocratic communities like Rome and Venice, which were the greatest breeding grounds for strong men, understood freedom exactly as I understand it: as something you must both possess and fight for, something to be seized by force.

39

A Criticism of Modernity

Our institutions are no longer effective, and we all agree on this. However, the fault does not lie with the institutions themselves, but with us. We have lost the instincts that give rise to such institutions, and as a result, they are beginning to disappear because we are no longer suited for them. Democracy has always been the death knell for the power of organization. As I pointed out in *Human, All-too-Human*, modern democracy, with its half-measures like the "German Empire," is a decaying form of the State. For institutions to function, there must be a certain will, an instinct, a drive that is fundamentally antiliberal and even ruthless. This is the will to tradition, to authority, to responsibility for future generations, and to solidarity within family lines that stretch indefinitely into the past and future. When this will exists, something is founded that resembles the Roman Empire or Russia—two examples of nations that still possess the strength and endurance to promise something for the future.

In contrast, the West no longer has the instincts from which institutions are born. Modernity, with its obsession with living in the present, rushing at full speed, and lacking any sense of responsibility, is precisely what people call "freedom." Everything about institutions that makes them meaningful is despised, rejected, and feared. Any mention of authority sends people into a panic about new forms of slavery. The degeneration of our political instincts, especially in our politicians and political parties, has reached a point where they instinctively support that which weakens society and accelerates its downfall.

Take, for example, modern marriage. While it is clear that reason has been removed from the concept of marriage today, this is not a problem with marriage itself but with modernity. The rational foundation of marriage once lay in the exclusive legal responsibility of the man, which added stability to the institution. Today, however, marriage lacks that stability. In the past, the indissolubility of marriage gave it gravity, helping it endure even amidst the fleeting nature of sentiment and passion. Responsibility for choosing marriage partners also lay with the families, which further secured the institution. Today, as society increasingly favors love-based marriages, the very foundation of marriage has been undermined. No institution can be based on an individual's personal whims, and love alone cannot sustain it. Marriage can be founded on sexual desire, property instincts (viewing the wife and children as possessions), or the instinct to dominate, which seeks to organize even the smallest forms of dominion, such as family, to

maintain acquired power and wealth across generations. Marriage, as an institution, requires the affirmation of long-lasting organization and security for future generations. If society cannot guarantee such continuity, marriage loses its meaning.

In the end, modern marriage has lost its meaning, and as a result, it is being gradually abolished.

40

The Question of the Working-Man

The very existence of the "working-man question" is a result of ignorance, or more precisely, degenerate instincts that have contributed to the stupidity of modern times. Some things, by their nature, should never be questioned—this is the fundamental principle of instinct. I cannot fathom what society intends to do with the working man of Europe now that his situation has become a matter of debate. He is far too comfortable to stop asking questions, and even more audacious ones at that. After all, he holds the majority.

There is no longer any hope for the development of a humble, contented individual like the Chinaman, who would have been the reasonable and necessary ideal. But what has been done instead? Everything has been done to destroy the very instincts that make the working class tolerable, even to its own members. The working man has been granted military service eligibility, the right to form unions, and the right to vote. Can it be surprising that he now sees his situation as one of injustice and moral distress?

But again, I ask, what is the goal? If society seeks a specific outcome, it must desire the means to achieve it. If society wishes to maintain a class of subordinates, it is madness to educate them as though they should be masters.

41

"The Kind of Freedom I Do Not Mean"

In today's age, it is actually more dangerous to follow one's instincts without restraint. The instincts themselves conflict, disturb, and undermine each other. I have already characterized modernity as a state of physiological self-contradiction. A rational educational system would demand that at least one of these conflicting instincts be subdued under strict control, in order to allow others to grow stronger, assert their power, and dominate.

Currently, the only plausible way to make the individual possible—whole, that is—would be to limit or prune him. Instead, the opposite is happening. Independence, free development, and laissez-faire are most loudly demanded by those for whom no constraint could be too severe. This is true in both politics and art. However, this is a symptom of decay: our modern conception of "freedom" is yet another sign of the degeneration of instinct.

42

Where Faith is Necessary

Nothing is rarer among moralists and saints than true uprightness; they may claim the opposite, or even believe it. However, when faith becomes more effective, convincing, and useful than conscious hypocrisy, that hypocrisy, by instinct, becomes harmless. This is the first principle for understanding great saints. The same applies to philosophers, who are another type of saint. Their work demands that they endorse only certain truths—those that help their profession gain public approval. In other words, they are practical; they recognize each other by agreeing on these "certain truths."

To put it plainly: "Thou shalt not lie," which is a warning to philosophers: Beware of speaking the truth.

43

A Quiet Hint to Conservatives

What we did not know before, but now understand—or could understand if we chose—is that retrogression, or a return to any former state, is absolutely impossible. We, as physiologists, know this well. Yet, priests and moralists have long believed in it—they sought to push humanity back to an earlier standard of virtue. Morality has always been a Procrustean bed, trying to force everyone into a one-size-fits-all mold. Politicians, too, have copied the preachers of virtue in this regard. There are still parties today whose sole aim is to reverse progress, to make everything revert to an older form.

But not everyone can go backward. It's inevitable: we must move forward, which means stepping further into decadence (this, I define as modern "progress"). We can try to slow this development down, and in doing so, we may accumulate degeneration, making it more violent, more explosive—but that's all we can do.

44

My Concept of Genius

Great individuals, like great eras, are explosive forces in which an immense amount of power is concentrated. Their very existence is always tied to historical and physiological conditions. They are the result of generations of energy that has been accumulated, stored, and preserved for their use, awaiting the moment when that energy explodes. When the tension reaches its peak, even the smallest spark can bring "genius," "great deeds," and significant change into the world.

So, what is the value of context—historical periods, the "Zeitgeist" (Spirit of the Age), and "public opinion"? Take Napoleon, for example. The France of the Revolution, and even more so the France leading up to it, could have produced a figure completely opposite to Napoleon—indeed, it did. But because Napoleon was something different, he came from a stronger, older civilization that had been building power for much longer than the revolutionary France. This made him master of his time. Great men are necessary, but the age in which they emerge is largely coincidental. They succeed because they are stronger, more mature, and because the energy for their success has been stored up for them.

The relationship between a genius and their time is like that between strength and weakness, maturity and youth. The age is always relatively younger, thinner, less mature, less resolute, and more childish in comparison. The fact that the general opinion in France today is completely different on this point—also seen in Germany, though that matters less—is a very troubling sign. In those countries, the idea of environment and context has become sacred, almost scientific, even among physiologists. This is a bad, depressing sign. In England, this idea also prevails, though nobody is surprised by that. The English have only two ways to understand genius: either democratically, like Buckle, or religiously, like Carlyle.

Great men and great ages are extraordinarily dangerous; they leave exhaustion and sterility in their wake. The great man is an endpoint, as is a great age—think of the Renaissance. The genius, through his work and deeds, is a squanderer. His greatness lies in his self-consumption. The instinct for self-preservation is suspended in him. The overwhelming pressure of his energy prohibits self-protection or prudence. People call this "self-sacrifice," praising his "heroism," his disregard for his own well-being, and his devotion to a cause or fatherland—this is a misunderstanding. He overflows, consumes himself, and does so inevitably, as a river bursts its banks.

Because humanity has benefited greatly from these powerful forces, it has given them many gifts, including a sense of higher morality. This is the gratitude humanity offers: it misunderstands its benefactors.

45

The Criminal and His Like

The criminal is often viewed as a strong individual who finds himself in unfavorable circumstances, a robust person who has been made ill by the very conditions that suppress his natural instincts. He lacks the wild and savage state where his abilities could flourish, a more dangerous and free form of existence where all his strengths—his shield and sword—would rightfully have a place. Society, however, condemns his virtues; the most spirited parts of him are entangled in passions like suspicion, fear, and dishonor. This creates a kind of physiological degeneration. When a man is forced to do what he is best at, what he enjoys the most, but in

secret, with caution and ruse, he becomes weakened. Constantly paying the price for his instincts through danger, persecution, and misfortune, even his feelings begin to turn against these instincts—he begins to see them as detrimental.

It is our tame, mediocre society that leads a wild son of nature, one who comes from the mountains or the sea, to eventually degenerate into a criminal. Not always, though—there are rare cases where such men prove stronger than society, and Napoleon from Corsica is the most notable example. Dostoevsky's observations on this matter are also important. He, the only psychologist I truly learned from, spoke about the Siberian convicts he lived among—those utterly hopeless criminals who had no chance of rejoining society. Contrary to what even Dostoevsky had expected, these men were often the hardest, most valuable material in Russian society.

Let's generalize the criminal's case. Imagine individuals who, for whatever reason, fail to gain societal approval, who know they are not seen as beneficial or useful—those who feel like the Chandala, knowing they are considered unworthy, polluted, or inferior. The thoughts and actions of such individuals are tainted by a sense of shame and isolation. Their existence is more colorless than those whose lives are validated by society's standards. But many of the people we now admire—scientists, artists, geniuses, free spirits, actors, businesspeople, and explorers—once lived in such a semi-sepulchral state. When the priest was seen as the highest type of man, all other valuable types of men were undervalued. The time is coming—mark my words—when the priest will be seen as the lowest type, as the Chandala, the most disreputable and false kind of man.

Even now, under the mildest customs and usages ever to rule the earth (at least in Europe), anyone who stands apart, who remains hidden for an extended period, or who leads an obscure and unaccustomed life, is becoming more and more like the criminal. All pioneers of the spirit have, for a time, the gray and fatalistic mark of the Chandala on them—not because they are seen as such, but because they feel the profound chasm that separates them from everything traditional and honorable. Nearly every genius experiences the "Catilinarian life" as one of the stages of development—a feeling of hatred, revenge, and revolt against everything that has ceased to evolve. Catiline—the early stage of every Caesar.

46

Here the Outlook is Free

When a philosopher chooses silence, it might be a sign of the nobility of his soul. When he contradicts himself, it could be a manifestation of love; and the very politeness of a knight of knowledge may compel him to speak falsely. It has been said, with much subtlety, that "it is unworthy of great hearts to spread the trouble they feel," but one must also add that there can be greatness of heart in not shying away from the most undignified actions. A woman who loves

may sacrifice her honor; a knight of knowledge who loves may sacrifice his very humanity; and a God who loved, became a Jew.

47

Beauty is No Accident

Even the beauty of a race or family—the charm and perfection of its movements—are not the result of chance; like genius, they are the product of accumulated work over generations. Great sacrifices must have been made in the pursuit of good taste. For this reason, many things must have been done, and many things left undone. The seventeenth century in France is exemplary for both. In that era, there was a principle of selection in terms of company, locality, clothing, and the satisfaction of sexual instincts. Beauty was preferred over profit, habit, opinion, and laziness. The first rule was: no one should "let themselves go," even when alone.

Good things are costly, and the person who possesses them is always different from the one acquiring them. Everything good is inherited; what is not inherited is imperfect, merely a beginning. In Athens during Cicero's time (who marveled at it), men and youths were far more beautiful than women, but what hard work and effort the men had devoted to beauty over centuries! We should not misunderstand the method used: merely disciplining thoughts and feelings is almost useless (this is a major mistake in German culture, which is illusory). The body must be persuaded first. Strictly maintaining a distinguished and tasteful demeanor, and associating only with those who don't "let themselves go," is more than enough to ensure distinction and taste. In two or three generations, everything is deeply rooted.

The fate of a people or humanity hinges on whether they begin their culture in the right place—not with the "soul" (as priests and half-priests mistakenly believe), but with the body, demeanor, diet, and physiology. The rest follows naturally. That is why the Greeks remain the foundational event in culture—they knew what was necessary and did it. Christianity, with its contempt for the body, is the greatest calamity to ever befall humankind.

48

Progress in My Sense

When I speak of a "return to nature," it's not about going backward but about going upward—into a higher, freer, and even more terrible nature, one that can tackle great challenges and play with them. To illustrate this, let's use a parable: Napoleon exemplified the "return to nature" in the way I see it, particularly in his military tactics and, more importantly, in his strategic vision, as military experts would attest. But what about Rousseau? What did he wish to return to? Rousseau, the first modern man, both idealist and scoundrel in one person, who needed moral "dignity" just to tolerate his own existence—sick with excessive vanity and self-loathing.

This flawed figure, standing at the threshold of modernity, sought a "return to nature." But I ask again, where did he truly want to return to?

I despise Rousseau, even in the context of the Revolution. While the Revolution was the historical embodiment of his hybrid idealism and crudeness, what truly disgusts me is its Rousseauesque morality—the so-called "truths" of the Revolution, which continue to wield power and pull everything mediocre and flat toward its side. The doctrine of equality! There is no more toxic idea than this. It appears to come from the very mouth of justice, but in reality, it pulls the veil over true justice. The proper expression of justice would be: "To equals, equality; to unequals, inequality." That would be the true voice of justice, and the logical conclusion would be: "Never make unequal things equal."

The fact that so much horror and bloodshed is associated with the doctrine of equality has created such a fiery halo around this "modern idea" that even the noblest minds have been misled by the Revolution as a drama. But this, in no way, justifies honoring it more. The only one who saw it as it truly is, with the contempt it deserves, was Goethe.

49

Goethe

Goethe was no mere German phenomenon but a European event, an extraordinary effort to overcome the limitations of the 18th century by returning to nature and rising to the naturalness of the Renaissance. His life and work represented a form of self-overcoming for the century. He embodied the strongest instincts of his time: its sentimentality, its idolization of nature, its rejection of history, its idealism, and its revolutionary spirit—though all these tendencies were in essence forms of the unreal.

Goethe turned to history, natural science, antiquity, and even Spinoza, alongside practical action, to serve his vision. He set clear boundaries for himself, never retreating from life but plunging fully into it. He didn't give up; instead, he took as much as he could on his shoulders and into his heart. What he aspired to was totality. He rejected the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, and will, which had been advocated by Kant with his repulsive scholasticism. Goethe disciplined himself into a harmonious whole, actively creating himself.

In an age dominated by unreal sentimentality, Goethe stood as a convinced realist. He said yes to everything that aligned with this outlook. There was no greater event in his life than the real and undeniable existence of Napoleon. Goethe envisioned a strong, highly cultured man—someone skilled in all bodily feats, self-disciplined, with a deep reverence for himself, and capable of embracing the full richness of naturalness. This person, endowed with strength, could enjoy freedom without being overwhelmed by it. He would be tolerant, not out of weakness but out of

strength, knowing how to turn to his advantage what might ruin a mediocre soul. For such a man, nothing would be forbidden, except weakness, whether as vice or virtue.

This spirit, fully liberated, appears in the universe with a cheerful and confident fatalism. He believes that while individual things may be flawed, the universe as a whole justifies and affirms itself. This faith is the highest of all faiths, and I have christened it with the name of Dionysus.

50

The nineteenth century, in a sense, sought the very qualities Goethe aspired to: a broad and encompassing understanding, approval for all things, a certain detachment, bold realism, and reverence for every fact. However, despite these ambitions, the result has not been a figure like Goethe, but rather a state of chaos, a nihilistic groan, and an overwhelming sense of confusion. The century seems perpetually unable to find its footing, driven by an instinctual fatigue that continually pulls Europe back toward the ideals of the eighteenth century—through romanticism, altruism, excessive sentimentality, pessimistic taste, and political socialism.

In this light, isn't the nineteenth century, especially its later years, simply an exaggerated and brutalized version of the eighteenth century, marking a period of decline and decadence? Hasn't Goethe, therefore, been nothing more than a fleeting episode—a beautiful failure? But we must recognize that great men are often misunderstood when viewed through the narrow lens of public utility. The very fact that no tangible advantage can be drawn from their existence may, in itself, be a hallmark of their greatness.

51

Goethe is the last German I respect because he understood three key ideas that I also embrace. We are aligned in our view of the "cross." People often wonder why I write in German, especially since I am less read in my own country. But I question whether I even care about being read right now. My goal is to create works that will withstand the test of time, things that time itself cannot erode. I seek not just to write, but to imbue my work with a sense of immortality. I have never been modest enough to expect less from myself.

The aphorism and the sentence are the forms in which I, as the first among Germans, excel. These are the vessels of "eternity." My ambition is to express in ten sentences what others need an entire book to say, or, in some cases, what they fail to express at all.

I have already given humanity its deepest book, *Zarathustra*; soon, I will give it the most independent one.

Things I owe to the Ancients

1

In conclusion, I will briefly reflect on the ancient world, which I have sought to access through new means and perhaps discovered a new pathway to. My taste, which is far from tolerant, does not always give an enthusiastic "Yes" to this world. In fact, my preference is often to say "No," or, even better, to say nothing at all. This applies not just to entire cultures, but also to books, places, and landscapes.

The number of ancient books that truly matter in my life is very small, and many of the most famous ones are not among them. My appreciation for style, particularly for the epigram as a form of style, was sparked almost instinctively when I encountered Sallust. I remember the surprise of my respected teacher Corssen when, as his worst Latin student, I earned the highest marks—at that moment, I grasped everything there was to understand. Condensed, severe, with as much substance as possible in the background, and with a cool, yet mischievous, disregard for "beautiful words" and "beautiful feelings"—in these characteristics, I found my true direction. In my works leading up to *Zarathustra*, you will see my earnest effort to achieve the Roman style, to embody "æra perennius" in writing.

The same thing occurred when I first encountered Horace. No poet has ever provided me with the same artistic joy as the first Horatian ode I read. In certain languages, aspiring to what Horace accomplished would seem absurd. His poetry, a mosaic of words where every unit spreads its power across the whole—by its sound, placement, and meaning—achieves a maximum of energy with a minimum of signs. This is Roman, and if you believe me, it is noble in the highest sense. By comparison, all other poetry seems to be no more than popular, sentimental nonsense.

2

I don't owe the Greeks the same deep impressions that I do to the Romans, and honestly, they can never be what the Romans are to us. You can't learn from the Greeks— their style is too strange, too fluid, to be forceful or have the lasting impact of a classic. Who would ever have learned writing from a Greek? Who could have done so without the Romans? Don't even bring up Plato to me. I'm thoroughly skeptical about Plato, and I can't agree with the traditional admiration of Plato the artist among scholars. In fact, the most discerning critics of antiquity would agree with me. To me, Plato mixes all the forms of style together, and in this regard, he's one of the first to decay in style. He has a similar role to the Cynics who invented the Menippean satire. The Platonic dialogue—this self-satisfied and childish kind of dialectic—only works for you if you've never read good French authors like Fontenelle. Plato is boring.

In reality, my mistrust of Plato is deep. He seems completely disconnected from the core instincts of the Greeks, deeply entangled in moral prejudices, and pre-Christian—his idea of "good" is already the highest value to him. Rather than use any other term, I'd prefer to call Plato's work "superior nonsense" or, if you prefer, "idealism." Humanity has paid a high price because of this Athenian who studied among the Egyptians (or perhaps the Jews in Egypt?). In the tragic history of Christianity, Plato represents the deceptive allure of the "ideal," which led the noblest souls of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and cross the bridge leading to the "cross." And we can still see Plato's influence in the concept of the "church," and in its structure, system, and practice.

For my part, after all the Platonic influences, my refuge, my preference, my remedy, has always been Thucydides. Thucydides, and perhaps Machiavelli's concept of the prince, resonate with me the most due to their absolute commitment to refusing self-deception and seeing reason in reality—not in "rationality," and certainly not in "morality." There is no cure more radical than Thucydides for the misguided, idealized image of the Greeks that the "classically-cultured" young person carries into life as a result of their schooling. His works should be studied carefully, line by line, and his unsaid thoughts should be understood as clearly as what he actually says. Few thinkers have so many unspoken thoughts. In him, the culture of the Sophists—the culture of realism—finds its most perfect expression. This invaluable movement stood in contrast to the moral and idealistic deception that was spreading through the Socratic Schools. Greek philosophy is the degeneration of the Greek instinct, while Thucydides represents the culmination, the final expression of the strong, strict positivism that was inherent in the ancient Greek spirit.

Ultimately, it's the courage in the face of reality that sets figures like Thucydides apart from Plato. Plato is a coward in the face of reality, and so he escapes into the ideal. Thucydides masters himself, and because of that, he is able to master life.

3

In order to challenge the idea of "beautiful souls," "golden means," and other supposed perfections of the Greeks—such as their calm grandeur, ideal mindset, or exalted simplicity—I was saved by the psychologist within me. I saw their most fundamental instinct, the Will to Power, and witnessed them trembling with the intense energy of this instinct. I recognized that all their institutions were born from strategies designed to keep each member of society safe from the internal explosive energy lurking within their neighbor. This immense inner tension ultimately manifested in violent and reckless external conflict: the states tore each other apart so that each one could maintain peace within itself. Strength was necessary, as danger was never far away—it lay in ambush everywhere. The incredible physical agility, the bold realism and immorality inherent in the Greeks, were not natural qualities but a necessity. They were a result, not something that had always been present.

Even their festivals and arts were tools for fostering a sense of superiority and for displaying it: they were measures of self-glorification, and in some cases, used to make themselves feared. Imagine trying to judge the Greeks from the German perspective, through the lens of their philosophers, as if the suburban respectability of Socratic schools could provide the key to understanding what is truly Greek. The philosophers, of course, were the decadents of Greece, the counter-movement to the old noble tastes—against the spirit of competition, against the value of the race, against the authority of tradition. Socratic virtues were preached to the Greeks because they had lost true virtue. Irritable, cowardly, unstable, and all turned into actors, the Greeks had more than enough reason to submit to having morality imposed upon them. But it didn't truly help them—great words and ideals fit the decadents well.

4

I was the first to take the extraordinary phenomenon of Dionysus seriously in order to understand the ancient, still rich and even overflowing Hellenic instinct. It can only be explained as a manifestation of excess energy. Anyone who studied the Greeks with the depth of a modern connoisseur like Jakob Burckhardt of Basel would immediately see the value of this interpretation. In his *Cultur der Griechen*, Burckhardt included a special chapter on the phenomenon of Dionysus. If you want to see the opposite approach, look no further than the almost laughable lack of instinct shown by German philologists when they tackle the Dionysian question. The renowned Lobeck, especially, with the self-assurance of someone who has dried up between books, made an attempt to dive into the world of these mysterious states, but convinced himself he was being scientific when, in reality, he was just embarrassingly superficial and childish. Lobeck, with all his professorial pride, told us that these so-called mysteries were really just about common observations: for example, wine provokes desire, men sometimes live on fruit, plants bloom in spring and fade in autumn. As for the vast array of rites, symbols, and myths that arose from the orgy and filled the ancient world, Lobeck took it a step further with his absurd reasoning: he said that when the Greeks had nothing better to do, they just laughed, played, or cried, and that these behaviors led to the creation of festivals, legends, and myths. He suggested that these so-called "farcical performances" were simply part of the celebrations, retained as rituals. This, of course, is nonsense, and no one should take a man like Lobeck seriously.

We are affected very differently when we examine the concept of "Hellenic" as understood by Winckelmann and Goethe and realize that it is incompatible with the element from which Dionysian art arises—I speak of orgiastic rituals. I believe that Goethe would have completely rejected this element from the potentialities of the Greek soul. Therefore, Goethe did not truly understand the Greeks. The fundamental fact of the Hellenic instinct—its "will to life"—is expressed only in the Dionysian mysteries and the psychology of the Dionysian state. What did the Greeks achieve through these mysteries? They secured eternal life, the eternal recurrence of life; the future promised and sanctified in the past; a triumphant affirmation of life despite death

and change. Real life was conceived as the collective continuation of life through procreation and the mysteries of sexuality. To the Greeks, the symbol of sex was the most revered symbol, embodying the true essence of all the piety of antiquity. The act of procreation, pregnancy, and birth evoked the loftiest and most sacred feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries, pain was considered holy: the "pains of childbirth" sanctified pain in general—everything that becomes and grows, everything that ensures the future, involves pain. In order for there to be eternal joy in creating, and for the will to life to eternally affirm itself, the "pains of childbirth" must also be eternal. This is what the word Dionysus symbolizes: there is no higher symbolism than this Greek symbolism, this symbolism of the Dionysian phenomenon. It represents the most profound instinct of life, the instinct that guarantees the future and eternity of life, understood religiously—the path to life itself, procreation, is considered sacred.

It was only Christianity that, with its fundamental resentment against life, defiled sexuality, turning it into something impure. Christianity cast filth upon the very foundation, the very first condition of our existence.

5

The psychology of orgiastic experience, conceived as the feeling of an overwhelming surplus of vitality and strength, within which even pain becomes a stimulus, provided me with the key to understanding the concept of tragic feeling. This idea has been misunderstood not only by Aristotle but even more so by our pessimists. Far from supporting the pessimism of the Greeks, as Schopenhauer suggests, tragedy should instead be viewed as the categorical rejection and condemnation of such pessimism. The affirmation of life, including its most strange and terrible problems—the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility, even through the sacrifice of its highest types—this is what I termed Dionysian. This is what I identified as the gateway to understanding the psychology of the tragic poet.

Tragedy is not about escaping terror and pity, nor purging oneself of dangerous passions through their vehement expression, as Aristotle believed. It is about transcending terror and pity, embracing the eternal lust for Becoming itself—a lust that also includes the lust for destruction. With this, I once again return to the starting point from which I first embarked: *The Birth of Tragedy* was my first transvaluation of all values. With this, I reaffirm my connection to the source of my will and my capacity—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the prophet of eternal recurrence.

The Hammer Speaketh

"Why are you so hard?" said the diamond to the charcoal. "Aren't we related?"

"Why are you so soft, my friends? That's my question for you. Aren't you my brothers?"

"Why are you so soft, so submissive, and weak? Why do your hearts love denial and self-sacrifice so much? How is it that so little of fate shows in your eyes?"

"And if you won't be people of fate, strong and unyielding, how can you hope to conquer alongside me?"

"And if your strength can't cut, divide, and shape, how can you hope to create alongside me?"

"Because all creators are strong. And it must feel blessed to leave your mark on time as if it were soft wax—"

"Blessed to carve your mark into the will of the ages as if it were brass—harder than brass, nobler than brass. True greatness is only found in being strong through and through."

This new standard, my friends, I place above you: Become strong."

— *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, III, 29