

Beyond Good and Evil

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche was born in Germany into a puritanical, religious family. Growing up as the son of a minister, he became one of the most influential and outspoken critics of religion, particularly of Christianity and traditional morality.

After studying at the University of Bonn and the University of Leipzig, he became professor of Philosophy at the University of Basel. His works include: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1884); *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886); *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887); *The Antichrist* (1888); and *The Will to Power* (1906).

It was Nietzsche who coined the phrase, “God is Dead.” Although many have discounted his work, Nietzsche’s works have influenced many of France’s and Germany’s most important thinkers such as; Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Nietzsche argued that the fundamental creative force in all creation is the will to power. All individuals seek to fulfill their desires, affirm themselves, flourish and dominate others. Since we are unequal in our talents and abilities, the fittest will survive and dominate those who are weaker and less talented. Nietzsche’s great disdain for Christianity is that it seeks to frustrate this natural will to power by its basic belief that all human beings are of equal worth. He labeled Christianity “slave morality” and “the ethics of resentment” because he believed it was the invention of jealous priests who were envious and resentful of the power of the nobility.

Our present readings are taken from *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Twilight of the Idols*.

Vocabulary:

Tedious:	long and tiresome; wearisome
Soporific:	tending to cause sleep
Advocates:	supporters
Ensnaring:	trapping
Calamity:	disaster
Cant:	insincere statements, especially praise; monotonous speech
Taruffism:	cantism (see above)
Insinuate:	to suggest something, usually negative
Interrogating:	questioning
Ponderous:	considering something
Mediocre:	below average
Incarnated:	put into concrete form
Pathos:	evoking pity, sorrow, or compassion
Appropriation:	authorization for a specific purpose
Obtrusion:	to push out of the way
Antithesis:	opposite
Mendicant:	a beggar
Derivatively:	to undergo change from an original source
Retaliation:	revenge
Refinement:	to make clearer
Unemancipated:	not free
Ascendancy:	the state of being dominant
Impious:	not religious
Paltry:	extremely small; worthless
Egregious:	a great error or wrong
Veneration:	worship
Astuteness:	keen discernment

Sojourn: long journey
Idiosyncrasy: individual or particular habit or manner

Concepts:

The Will to Power:
Master-Morality:
Slave Morality:
Christianity:
Beyond Good and Evil:
The Ethics of Resentment:
The Death of God:
Nobility:

Questions:

1. *How does Nietzsche describe “general welfare?”*
2. *According to Nietzsche, what is life?*
3. *How does Nietzsche describe exploitation?*
4. *How does Nietzsche describe the master-morality?*
5. *How does Nietzsche describe the slave-morality?*
6. *According to Nietzsche, who is beyond good and evil?*
7. *How does Nietzsche describe Christianity?*

I HOPE TO BE FORGIVEN for discovering that all moral philosophy hitherto has been tedious and has belonged to the soporific appliances — and that “virtue,” in my opinion, has been more injured by the *tediousness* of its advocates than by anything else; at the same time, however, I would not wish to overlook their general usefulness. It is desirable that as few people as possible should reflect upon morals, and consequently it is *very* desirable that morals should not some day become interesting! But let us not be afraid! Things still remain today as they have always been: I see no one in Europe who has (or discloses) an idea of the fact that philosophizing concerning morals might be conducted in a dangerous, captious, and ensnaring manner - that *calamity* might be involved therein. ...No new thought, nothing of the nature of a finer turning or better expression of an old thought, not even a proper history of what has been previously thought on the subject: an *impossible* literature, taking it all in unless one knows how to leaven it with some mischief. In effect, the old English vice called *cant*, which is *moral Taruffism*, has insinuated itself also into these moralists (whom one must certainly read with an eye to their motives if one *must* read them), concealed this time under the new form of the scientific spirit; moreover, there is not absent from them a

secret struggle with the pangs of conscience, from which a race of former Puritans must naturally suffer, in all their scientific tinkering with morals. (Is not a moralist the opposite of a Puritan? That is to say, as a thinker who regards morality as questionable, as worthy of interrogation, in short, as a problem? Is moralizing not — immoral?) In the end, they all want *English* morality to be recognized as authoritative, inasmuch as mankind, or the “general utility,” or “the happiness of the greatest number,” — no! The happiness of *England*, will be best served thereby. They would like, by all means, to convince themselves that the striving after *English* happiness, I mean after *comfort* and *fashion* (and in the highest instance, a seat in Parliament), is at the same time the true path of virtue; in fact, that insofar as there has been virtue in the world hitherto, it has just consisted in such striving. Not one of those ponderous, conscience-stricken herding-animals (who undertake to advocate the cause of egoism as conducive to the general welfare) wants to have any knowledge or inkling of the facts that the “general welfare” is no ideal, no goal, no notion that can be at all grasped, but is only a nostrum, — that what is fair to one *may not* at all be fair to another, that the requirement of one morality for all is really a detriment to higher men, in short, that there is a *distinction of rank* between man

and man, and consequently between morality and morality. They are an unassuming and fundamentally mediocre species of men, these utilitarian Englishmen, ... Every elevation of the type “man,” has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society — and so will it always be — a society believing in a long scale of gradations of rank and differences of worth among human beings, and requiring slavery in some form or other. Without the *pathos of distance*, such as grows out of the incarnated difference of classes, out of the constant out looking and down looking of the ruling caste on subordinates and instruments, and out of their equally constant practice of obeying and commanding, of keeping down and keeping at a distance — that other more mysterious pathos could never have arisen, the longing for an ever new widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, further, more extended, more comprehensive states, in short, just the elevation of the type “man,” the continued “self-surmounting of man,” to use a moral formula in a super moral sense. To be sure, one must not resign oneself to any humanitarian illusions about the history of the origin of an aristocratic society (that is to say, of the preliminary condition for the elevation of the type “man”): the truth is hard. Let us acknowledge unprejudiced how every higher civilization hitherto has *originated!* Men

with a still natural nature, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey, still in possession of unbroken strength of will and desire for power, threw themselves upon weaker, more moral, more peaceful races (perhaps trading or cattle-rearing communities), or upon old mellow civilizations in which the final vital force was flickering out in brilliant fireworks of wit and depravity. At the commencement, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their superiority did not consist first of all in their physical, but in their psychical power — they were more *complete* men (which at every point also implies the same as “more complete beasts”).

To refrain mutually from injury, from violence, from exploitation, and put one’s will on a par with that of others, this may result in a certain rough sense in good conduct among individuals when the necessary conditions are given (namely, the actual similarity of the individuals in amount of force and degree of worth, and their co-relation within one organization). As soon, however, as one wished to take this principle more generally, and if possible even as the *fundamental principle of society*, it would immediately disclose what it really is — namely, a will to the *denial* of life, a principle of dissolution and decay. Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is

essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildestly, exploitation; — but why should one for ever use precisely these words on which for ages a disparaging purpose has been stamped? Even the organization within which, as was previously supposed, the individuals treat each other as equal — it takes place in every healthy aristocracy — must itself, if it be a living and not a dying organization, do all that towards other bodies, which the individuals within it refrain from doing to each other: it will have to be the incarnated Will to Power, it will endeavor to grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendancy — not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life *is* precisely Will to Power. On no point, however, is the ordinary consciousness of Europeans more unwilling to be corrected than on this matter; people now rave everywhere, even under the guise of science, about coming conditions of society in which “the exploiting character” is to be absent: — that sounds to my ears as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions. “Exploitation” does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the *nature* of the living being as a primary organic function; it is a

consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power, which is precisely the Will to Life. — Granting that as a theory this is a novelty — as a reality it is the *fundamental* fact of all history: let us be so far honest towards ourselves!

In a tour through the many finer and coarser moralities which have hitherto prevailed or still prevail on the earth, I found certain traits recurring regularly together and connected with one another, until finally two primary types revealed themselves to me, and a radical distinction was brought to light. There is *master-morality* and *slave-morality*; — and I would at once add, however, that in all higher and mixed civilizations, there are also attempts at the reconciliation of the two moralities; but one finds still oftener the confusion and mutual misunderstanding of them, indeed, sometimes their close juxtaposition — even in the same man, within one soul. The distinctions of moral values have either originated in a ruling caste, pleasantly conscious of being different from the ruled — or among the ruled class, the slaves and dependents of all sorts. In the first case, when it is the rulers who determine the conception “good,” it is the exalted, proud disposition which is regarded as the distinguishing feature and that which determines the order of rank. The noble type of man separates from himself the beings in which

the opposite of this exalted, proud disposition displays itself: he despises them. Let it at once be noted that in this first kind of morality the antithesis “good” and “bad” means practically the same as “noble” and “despicable”; — the antithesis “good” and “evil” is of a different origin. The cowardly, the timid, the insignificant, and those thinking merely of narrow utility are despised; moreover, also, the distrustful, with their constrained glances, the self-abasing, the dog-like kind of men who let themselves be abused, the mendicant flatterers, and, above all, the liars: — it is a fundamental belief of all aristocrats that the common people are untruthful. “We truthful ones” — the nobility in ancient Greece called themselves. It is obvious that everywhere the designations of moral value were at first applied to *men*, and were only derivatively and at a later period, applied to *actions*; it is a gross mistake, therefore, when historians of morals start with questions like, “Why have sympathetic actions been praised?” The noble type of man regards himself as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: “What is injurious to me is injurious in itself”; he knows that it is he himself only who confers honor on things; he is a creator of values. He honors whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of plenti-

tude, of power, which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of a wealth which would faint give and bestow: — the noble man also helps the unfortunate, but not — or scarcely — out of pity, but rather from an impulse generated by the super-abundance of power. The noble man honors in himself the powerful one, him also who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silence, who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and hardness, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard. “Wotan placed a hard heart in my breast,” says an Old Scandinavian Saga: it is thus rightly expressed from the soul of a proud Viking. Such a type of man is even proud of not being made for sympathy; the hero of the Saga, therefore, adds warningly: “He who has not a hard heart when young, will never have one.” The noble and brave who think thus are the furthest removed from the morality which sees precisely in sympathy, or in acting for the good of others, or in *disinterestedness*, the characteristic of the moral; faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a radical enmity and irony towards “selflessness,” belong as definitely to noble morality, as do a careless scorn and precaution in presence of sympathy and the “warm heart.” — It is the powerful who *know* how to honor; it is their art, their domain for invention. The profound reverence for age

and for tradition — all law rests on this double reverence, — the belief and prejudice in favor of ancestors and unfavorable to newcomers, is typical in the morality of the powerful; and if, reversely, men of “modern ideas” believe almost instinctively in “progress” and the “future,” and are more and more lacking in respect for old age, the ignoble origin of these “ideas” has complacently betrayed itself thereby. A morality of the ruling class, however, is more especially foreign and irritating to present-day taste in the sternness of its principle that one has duties only to one’s equals; that one may act towards beings of a lower rank, towards all that is foreign, just as seems good to one, or “as the heart desires,” and in any case “beyond good and evil”: it is here that sympathy and similar sentiments can have a place. The ability and obligation to exercise prolonged gratitude and prolonged revenge — both only within the circle of equals, — artfulness in retaliation, *refinement* of the idea in friendship, a certain necessity to have enemies (as outlets for the emotions of envy, quarrelsomeness, arrogance — in fact, in order to be a good *friend*): all these are typical characteristics of the noble morality, which, as has been pointed out, is not the morality of “modern ideas,” and is, therefore, at present difficult to realize, and also to unearth and disclose — It is otherwise with the second type of morality,

slave-morality. Supposing that the abused, the oppressed, the suffering, the unemancipated, the weary, and those uncertain of themselves, should moralize, what will be the common element in their moral estimates? Probably a pessimistic suspicion with regard to the entire situation of man will find expression, perhaps a condemnation of man, together with his situation. The slave has an unfavorable eye for the virtues of the powerful; he has a skepticism and distrust, a *refinement* of distrust of everything “good” that is there honored — he would fain persuade himself that the very happiness there is not genuine. On the other hand, those *qualities* which serve to alleviate the existence of sufferers are brought into prominence and flooded with light; it is here that sympathy, the kind, helping hand, the warm heart, patience, diligence, humility, and friendliness attain to honor; for here these are the most useful qualities, and almost the only means of supporting the burden of existence. Slave-morality is essentially the morality of utility. Here is the seat of the origin of the famous antithesis “good” and “evil”: — power and dangerousness are assumed to reside in the evil, a certain dreadfulness, subtlety, and strength, which do not admit of being despised. According to slave-morality, therefore, the “evil” man arouses fear: according to master-morality, it is precisely

the “good” man who arouses fear and seeks to arouse it, while the bad man is regarded as the despicable being. The contrast attains its maximum when, in accordance with the logical consequences of slave-morality, a shade of depreciation — it may be slight and well-intentioned — at last attaches itself even to the “good” man of this morality; because, according to the servile mode of thought, the good man must in any case be the *safe* man: he is good-natured, easily deceived, perhaps a little stupid, *un bon-homie*. Everywhere that slave-morality gains the ascendancy, language shows a tendency to approximate the significance of the words “good” and “stupid.” ...

What then, alone, can our teaching be? — That no one gives man his qualities, neither God, society, his parents, his ancestors, nor himself. ...No one is responsible for the fact that he exists at all, that he is constituted as he is, and that he happens to be in certain circumstances and in particular environments. The fatality of his being cannot be divorced from the fatality of all that which has been and will be. This is not the result of an individual attention, of a will, of an aim, there is no attempt at attaining to any “ideal man,” or “ideal happiness” or “ideal morality” with him — it is absurd to wish him to be careering towards some sort of purpose. *We* invented the concept “purpose,” in reality purpose is altogether lack-

ing. One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole — there is nothing that could judge, measure, compare, and condemn our existence, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing and condemning the whole. *But there is nothing outside the whole!* The fact that no one shall any longer be made responsible, that the nature of existence may not be traced to a *causa prima*, that the world is an entity neither as a sensorial nor as a spirit — *this alone is the great deliverance* — thus alone is the innocence of becoming restored. ...The concept “God” has been the greatest objection to existence hitherto. ... We deny God, we deny responsibility in God: thus, alone do we save the world.

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I regard Christianity as the most fatal and seductive lie that has ever yet existed — as the greatest and most impious lie: I can *discern* the last sprouts and branches of its ideal beneath every form of disguise, I decline to enter into any compromise or false position in reference to it — I urge people to declare open war with it.

The morality of paltry people as the measure of all things: this is the most repugnant kind of degeneracy that civilization has ever yet brought into existence. And this

kind of ideal is hanging still, under the name of “God,” over men’s heads!!

However modest one’s demands may be concerning intellectual cleanliness, when one touches the New Testament one cannot help experiencing a sort of inexpressible feeling of discomfort; for the unbounded cheek with which the least qualified people will have their say in its pages, in regard to the greatest problems of existence, and claim to sit in judgment on such matters, exceeds all limits. The impudent levity with which the most unwieldy problems are spoken of here (life, the world, God, the purpose of life), as if they were not problems at all, but the most simple things which these little bigots *know all about!!*

This was the most fatal form of insanity that has ever yet existed on earth: — when these little lying abortions of bigotry began laying claim to the words “God,” “last judgment,” “truth,” “love,” “wisdom,” “Holy Spirit,” and thereby distinguishing themselves from the rest of the world; when such men began to transvalue values to suit themselves, as though they were the sense, the salt, the standard, and the measure of all things; then all that one should do is this: build lunatic asylums for their incarceration. To *persecute* them was an egregious act of antique folly: this was taking them too seriously, it was making them serious.

The *law*, which is the fundamental-

ly realistic formula of certain self-preservative measures of a community, forbids certain actions that have a definite tendency to jeopardize the welfare of that community: it does *not* forbid the attitude of mind which gives rise to these actions — for in the pursuit of other ends the community requires these forbidden actions, namely, when it is a matter of opposing its *enemies*. The moral idealist now steps forward and says: “God sees into men’s hearts: the action itself counts for nothing; the reprehensible attitude of mind from which it proceeds must be extirpated. ...” In normal conditions men laugh at such things; it is only in exceptional cases, when a community lives *quite* beyond the need of waging war in order to maintain itself, that an ear is lent to such things. Any attitude of mind is abandoned, the utility of which cannot be conceived.

This was the case, for example, when Buddha appeared among a people that were both peaceable and afflicted with great intellectual weariness.

This was also the case in regard to the first Christian community (as also the Jewish), the primary condition of which was the absolutely *apolitical* Jewish society. Christianity could grow only upon the soil of Judaism — that is to say, among a people that had already renounced the political life, and which led a sort of parasitic existence within the Roman sphere of gov-

ernment. Christianity goes a step *farther*: it allows men to “emasculate” themselves even more; the circumstances actually favor their doing so. — *Nature is expelled* from morality when it is said, “Love ye your enemies:” for *Nature’s* injunction, “Ye shall love your neighbor and *hate* your enemy,” has now become senseless in the law (in instinct); now, even *the love a man feels for his neighbor* must first be based upon something (*a sort of love of God*). *God* is introduced everywhere, and *utility* is withdrawn; the natural *origin* of morality is denied everywhere: the *veneration of Nature*, which lies in *acknowledging a natural morality*, is *destroyed* to the roots. ...

Whence comes the *seductive charm* of this emasculate ideal of man? Why are we not *disgusted* by it, just as we are disgusted at the thought of a eunuch? ...The answer is obvious: it is not the voice of the eunuch that revolts us, despite the cruel mutilation of which it is the result; for, as a matter of fact, it has grown sweeter. ...And owing to the very fact that the “male organ” has been amputated from virtue, its voice now has a feminine ring, which, formerly, was not to be discerned.

On the other hand, we have only to think of the terrible hardness, dangers, and accidents to which a life of manly virtues leads ... to perceive how the most robust type of man was fascinated and moved by

the voluptuous ring of this “goodness” and “purity.” ...

The *Astuteness of moral castration*. — How is war waged against the virile passions and valuations? No violent physical means are available; the war must, therefore, be one of ruses, spells, and lies — in short, a “spiritual war.”

First recipe: One appropriates virtue in general, and makes it the main feature of one’s ideal; the older ideal is denied and declared to be *the reverse of all ideals*. Slander has to be carried to a fine art for this purpose.

Second recipe: One’s own type is set up as a general *standard*; and this is projected into all things, behind all things, and behind the destiny of all things — as God.

Third recipe: The opponents of one’s ideal are declared to be the opponents of God; one arrogates to oneself a *right* to great pathos, to power, and a right to curse and to bless.

Fourth recipe: All suffering, all gruesome, terrible, and fatal things are declared to be the results of opposition to one’s ideal — all suffering is *punishment* even in the case of one’s adherents (except it be a trial, etc).

Fifth recipe: One goes so far as to regard Nature as the reverse of one’s ideal, and the lengthy sojourn amid natural conditions is considered a great trial of patience

— a sort of martyrdom; one studies contempt, both in one's attitudes and one's looks towards all "natural things."

Sixth recipe: The triumph of anti-naturalism and ideal castration, the triumph of the world of the pure, good, sinless, and blessed, is projected into the future as the consummation, the finale, the great hope, and the "Coming of the Kingdom of God."

I hope that one may still be allowed to laugh at this artificial hoisting up of a small species of man to the position of an absolute standard of all things.

To what extent psychologists have been corrupted by the moral idiosyncrasy! — Not one of the ancient philosophers had the courage to advance the theory of the non-free will (that is to say, the theory that denies morality); — not one had the courage to identify the typical feature of happiness, of every kind of happiness ("pleasure"), with the will to power: for the pleasure of power was considered immoral; — not one had the courage to regard virtue as a *result of immorality* (as a result of a will to power) in the service of a species (or of a race, or of a *polis*); for the will to power was considered immoral.

In the whole of moral evolution, there is no sign of truth: all the conceptual elements which come into play are fictions; all the psychological tenets are false; all the forms of logic employed in this department

of prevarication are sophisms. The chief feature of all moral philosophers is their total lack of intellectual cleanliness and self-control: they regard "fine feelings" as arguments: their heaving breasts seem to them the bellows of godliness. ...

This "virtue" made wholly abstract was the highest form of seduction; to make oneself abstract means to *turn one's back on the world*.

The moment is a very remarkable one: the Sophists are within sight of the first *criticism* of morality, the first knowledge of *morality*: — they classify the majority of moral valuations (in view of their dependence upon local conditions) together; — they lead one to understand that every form of morality is capable of being upheld dialectically: that is to say, they guessed that all the fundamental principles of a morality must be *sophistical* — a proposition which was afterwards proved in the grandest possible style by the ancient philosophers from Plato onwards (up to Kant); — they postulate the primary truth that there is no such thing as a "moral *per se*," a "good *per se*," and that it is madness to talk of "truth" in this respect.

From *The Complete Works of Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, 1910.