



## **The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic (1887) (in part)**

By:  
Friedrich Nietzsche

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### **FIRST ESSAY: “GOOD AND EVIL,” “GOOD AND BAD.”**

2.

All honor, then, to the noble spirits who would fain dominate these historians of morality. But it is certainly a pity that they lack the historical sense itself, that they themselves are quite deserted by all the beneficent spirits of history. The whole train of their thought runs, as was always the way of old-fashioned philosophers, on thoroughly unhistorical lines: there is no doubt on this point. The crass ineptitude of their genealogy of morals is immediately apparent when the question arises of ascertaining the origin of the idea and judgment of ‘good’. “Man had originally,” so speaks their decree, “praised and called ‘good’ altruistic acts from the standpoint of those on whom they were conferred, that is, those to whom they were useful; subsequently the origin of this praise was forgotten, and altruistic acts, simply because, as a sheer matter of habit, they were praised as good, came also to be felt as good—as though they contained in themselves some intrinsic goodness.” The thing is obvious: this initial derivation contains already all the typical and idiosyncratic traits of the English psychologists—we have “utility,” “forgetting,” “habit,” and finally “error,” the whole assemblage forming the basis of a system of values, on which the higher man has up to the present prided himself as though it were a kind of privilege of man in general. This pride must be brought low, this system of values must lose its values: is that attained?

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<sup>1</sup> From the Project Gutenberg’s *Genealogy of Morals*, by Friedrich Nietzsche, [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). For the full text visit the Project Gutenberg website. This edited version is intended for academic or personal use and may not be sold or used for profit. I have changed UK spellings to US spellings where appropriate, as well as made clarifications in translation (noted with brackets). Footnotes, unless in italics, are the translator’s.

Now **the first argument** that comes ready to my hand is that the real homestead of the concept ‘good’ is sought and located in the wrong place: *the judgment ‘good’ did **not** originate among those to whom goodness was shown*. Much rather has it been the good themselves, that is, the aristocratic, the powerful, the high–stationed, the high–minded, who have felt that they themselves *were good*, and that their *actions were good*, that is to say of the first order, in contradistinction to all the low, the low–minded, the vulgar, and the plebeian.<sup>2</sup> It was out of this pathos of distance that they first arrogated the right to **create values** for their own profit, and to coin the names of such values: what had they to do with utility? The standpoint of utility is as alien and as inapplicable as it could possibly be, when we have to deal with so volcanic an effervescence of supreme values, creating and demarcating as they do a hierarchy within themselves: it is at this juncture that one arrives at an appreciation of the contrast to that tepid temperature, which is the presupposition on which every combination of worldly wisdom and every calculation of practical expediency is always based—and not for one occasional, not for one exceptional instance, but chronically. The pathos of nobility and distance, as I have said, the chronic and despotic *esprit de corps*<sup>3</sup> and fundamental instinct of a higher dominant race coming into association with a meaner race, an “under race,” *this is the origin of the antithesis of good and bad*. (The masters’ right of giving names goes so far that it is permissible to look upon language itself as the expression of the power of the masters: they say “this is that, and that,” they seal finally every object and every event with a sound, and thereby at the same time take possession of it.)

It is because of this origin that the word ‘good’ is far from having any necessary connection with altruistic acts, in accordance with the superstitious belief of these moral philosophers. On the contrary, *it is on the occasion of the decay of aristocratic values, that the antitheses between “egoistic” and “altruistic” presses more and more heavily on the human conscience*—it is, to use my own language, **the herd instinct** which finds in this antithesis an expression in many ways. And even then it takes a considerable time for this instinct to become sufficiently dominant, for the valuation to be inextricably dependent on this antithesis (as is the case in contemporary Europe); for to–day that prejudice is predominant, which, acting even now with all the intensity of an obsession and brain disease, holds that ‘moral’, ‘altruistic’, and “*désintéressé*”<sup>4</sup> are concepts of equal value.

### 3.

[**The second argument**], quite apart from the fact that this hypothesis as to the genesis of the value ‘good’ cannot be historically upheld, it suffers from *an inherent psychological contradiction*. The utility of altruistic conduct has presumably been the origin of its being praised, and this origin has become forgotten. But in what conceivable way is this forgetting possible! Has perchance the utility of such conduct ceased at some given moment? The contrary is the case. This utility has rather been experienced every day at all times, and is consequently a feature that obtains a new and regular emphasis with every fresh day; it follows that, so far from vanishing from the consciousness, so far indeed from being forgotten, it must necessarily become impressed on the consciousness with ever–increasing distinctness. How much more logical is that contrary theory (it is not the truer for that) which is represented, for instance, by Herbert Spencer,<sup>5</sup> who places the concept ‘good’ as essentially similar to the concept ‘useful’, ‘purposive’, so that in the judgments ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mankind is simply

<sup>2</sup> From the Latin, *pleb*. “Lower class”, “common person”, “person of no distinction.”

<sup>3</sup> French, literally, “spirit of the group”; the morale of a group.

<sup>4</sup> French, “selfless”, “disinterest.”

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), philosopher and polymath who—after reading Darwin’s *Origin of Species*—coined the phrase “survival of the fittest”. Probably the most influential and popular thinker in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English speaking world.

summarizing and investing with a sanction its unforgotten and unforgettable experiences concerning the ‘useful–purposive’ and the ‘mischievous–non–purposive’. According to this theory, ‘good’ is *the attribute of that which has previously shown itself useful*; and so is able to claim to be considered “valuable in the highest degree,” “valuable in itself.” This method of explanation is also, as I have said, **wrong**, but at any rate the explanation itself is coherent, and psychologically tenable.

## 4.

The guide–post which first put me on the right track was this question—what is the true etymological significance of the various symbols<sup>6</sup> for the idea ‘good’ which have been coined in the various languages? I then found that *they all led back to the same evolution of the same idea—that everywhere ‘aristocrat’, ‘noble’ (in the social sense), is the root idea, out of which have necessarily developed ‘good’ in the sense of “with aristocratic soul,” ‘noble’, in the sense of “with a soul of high caliber,” “with a privileged soul”—a development which invariably runs parallel with that other evolution by which “vulgar,” “plebeian,” “low,” are made to change finally into ‘bad’*. The most eloquent proof of this last contention is the German word “*schlecht*” itself: this word is identical with “*schlicht*”—(compare “*schlechtweg*” and “*schlechterdings*”)—which, originally and as yet without any sinister innuendo, simply denoted the plebeian man in contrast to the aristocratic man. It is at the sufficiently late period of the Thirty Years’ War<sup>7</sup> that this sense becomes changed to the sense now current.

From the standpoint of the Genealogy of Morals this discovery seems to be substantial: the lateness of it is to be attributed to the retarding influence exercised in the modern world by democratic prejudice in the sphere of all questions of origin. This extends, as will shortly be shown, even to the province of natural science and physiology, which, *prima facie*<sup>8</sup> is the most objective. The extent of the mischief which is caused by this prejudice (once it is free of all trammels except those of its own malice), particularly to Ethics and History, is shown by the notorious case of [Henry Thomas] Buckle:<sup>9</sup> it was in Buckle that that plebeianism of the modern spirit, which is of English origin, broke out once again from its malignant soil with all the violence of a slimy volcano, and with that salted, rampant, and vulgar eloquence with which up to the present time all volcanoes have spoken.

## 5.

With regard to our problem—which can justly be called an intimate problem—and which elects to appeal to only a limited number of ears: it is of no small interest to ascertain that in those words and roots which denote ‘good’ we catch glimpses of that arch–trait, on the strength of which the aristocrats feel themselves to be *beings of a higher order* than their fellows. Indeed, they call themselves in perhaps the most frequent instances simply after their *superiority in power* (e.g. ‘the powerful’, ‘the lords’, ‘the commanders’), or after the most obvious sign of their superiority, as for example ‘the rich’, ‘the possessors’ (that is the meaning of *arya*; and the Iranian and Slav[ic] languages correspond. But

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<sup>6</sup> Words.

<sup>7</sup> The “Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) was a European religious conflict between Roman Catholic and Protestant states which began in the German “Holy Roman Empire” and then spread across Europe. Historians estimate nearly eight million people were killed or died due to famine caused by the generation-long war.

<sup>8</sup> Latin, “on face value”, “at first glance”.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Buckle (1821-1862), English historian who’s unfinished History of Civilization attempted to give a more scientific, and what we would call—‘sociological’—account of historical phenomena. It was a massive work which received mixed reviews in its day and would be considered methodologically questionable and naïvely Eurocentric by today’s standards of History. Nietzsche’s objections rest in Buckle’s celebration of the movement toward democracy and political Liberalism as intellectually rooted progress.

they also call themselves after some characteristic idiosyncrasy; and this is the case which now concerns us.

They name themselves, for instance, ‘the truthful’: this is first done by the Greek nobility whose mouthpiece is found in Theognis, the Megarian poet.<sup>10</sup> The word ἐσθλος [*esthlos* - brave], which is coined for the purpose, signifies etymologically ‘one who is’, who has reality, who is real, who is true; and then with a subjective twist, the ‘true’, as the ‘truthful’: at this stage in the evolution of the idea, it becomes the motto and party cry of the nobility, and quite completes the transition to the meaning ‘noble’, so as to place outside the pale the lying, vulgar man, as Theognis conceives and portrays him—till finally the word after the decay of the nobility is left to delineate psychological noblesse, and becomes as it were ripe and mellow. In the word κακός [*kakos* - bad] as in δειλός [*deilos* - coward] (the plebeian in contrast to the ἀγαθός) [*agathos* - good] the cowardice is emphasized. This affords perhaps an inkling on what lines the etymological origin of the very ambiguous ἀγαθός [*agathos*] is to be investigated. In the Latin *malus* [bad] (which I place side by side with μέλας [*melas* - dark]) the vulgar man can be distinguished as the dark-colored, and above all as the black-haired (“*hic niger est*”)<sup>11</sup>, as the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Italian soil, whose complexion formed the clearest feature of distinction from the dominant blondes, namely, the Aryan conquering race: at any rate Gaelic has afforded me the exact analogue—*Fin* (for instance, in the name *Fin-Gal*),<sup>12</sup> the distinctive word of the nobility, finally—good, noble, clean, but originally the blonde-haired man in contrast to the dark black-haired aboriginals....

## 6.

Above all, there is no exception (though there are *opportunities* for exceptions) to this rule, that *the idea of political superiority always resolves itself into the idea of psychological superiority*, in those cases where the highest caste is at the same time the priestly caste, and in accordance with its general characteristics confers on itself the privilege of a title which alludes specifically to its priestly function. It is in these cases, for instance, that ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ confront each other for the first time as badges of class distinction; here again there develops a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ in a sense which has ceased to be merely social. Moreover, care should be taken not to take these ideas of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ too seriously, too broadly, or too symbolically: all the ideas of ancient man have, on the contrary, got to be understood in their initial stages, in a sense which is, to an almost inconceivable extent, crude, coarse, physical, and narrow, and above all essentially unsymbolical. The ‘clean man’ is originally only a man who washes himself, who abstains from certain foods which are conducive to skin diseases, who does not sleep with the unclean women of the lower classes, who has a horror of blood—not more, not much more! On the other hand, the very nature of a priestly aristocracy shows the reasons why just at such an early juncture there should ensue a really dangerous sharpening and intensification of opposed values: it is, in fact, through these opposed values that gulfs are cleft in the social plane, which a veritable Achilles of free thought would shudder to cross. There is from the outset a certain diseased taint in such sacerdotal aristocracies, and in the habits which prevail in such societies—habits which, averse as they are to action, constitute a compound of introspection and explosive emotionalism, as a result of which there appears that introspective morbidity and neurasthenia, which adheres almost inevitably to all priests at all times: with regard, however, to the remedy which they themselves have invented for this disease—the philosopher has no option but to state, that it has proved itself in its effects a hundred times more dangerous than the disease, from which it should have been the deliverer. Humanity itself is still

<sup>10</sup> Theognis of Megara, (active c. 550 BCE) was an Archaic lyric poet.

<sup>11</sup> Latin, “one with a dark heart”, a person with bad intension.

<sup>12</sup> In old Gaelic, *fin* translates “white”, “fair”, “bright” and *gal* translates “able”, “capable”, “strong”.

diseased from the effects of the naïvetés of this priestly cure. Take, for instance, certain kinds of diet ([e.g.,] abstention from flesh), fasts, sexual continence, flight into the wilderness .... consider too the whole metaphysic of the priests, with its war on the senses, its enervation, its hair-splitting; consider its self-hypnotism on the fakir and Brahman principles .... and that climax which we can understand only too well of an unusual satiety with its panacea of nothingness (or God: the demand for a *unio mystica* [mystical union] with God is the demand of the Buddhist for nothingness, Nirvana—and nothing else!). In sacerdotal societies every element is on a more dangerous scale, not merely cures and remedies, but also pride, revenge, cunning, exaltation, love, ambition, virtue, morbidity. Further, it can fairly be stated that it is on the soil of this essentially dangerous form of human society—the sacerdotal form—that man really becomes for the first time an interesting animal. It is in this form that the soul of man has in a higher sense attained depths and become evil—and those are the two fundamental forms of the superiority which up to the present man has exhibited over every other animal.

## 7.

The reader will have already surmised with what ease the priestly mode of valuation can branch off from the knightly aristocratic mode, and then develop into the very antithesis of the latter: special impetus is given to this opposition, by every occasion when the castes of the priests and warriors confront each other with mutual jealousy and cannot agree over the prize. The *knightly-aristocratic 'values' are based on a cult of the physical*, on a flowering, rich, and even effervescing healthiness, that goes considerably beyond what is necessary for maintaining life, on war, adventure, the chase, the dance, the tourney—on everything, in fact, which is contained in strong, free, and joyous action. The priestly-aristocratic mode of valuation is—we have seen—based on other hypotheses: it is bad enough for this class when it is a question of war! Yet the priests are, as is notorious, the worst enemies—why? *Because they are the weakest [enemies]. Their weakness causes their hate to expand into a monstrous and sinister shape, a shape which is most crafty and most poisonous.* The really great haters in the history of the world have always been priests, who are also the cleverest haters—in comparison with the cleverness of priestly revenge, every other piece of cleverness is practically negligible.

Human history would be too fatuous for anything were it not for the cleverness imported into it by the weak—take at once the most important instance. All the world's efforts against the "aristocrats," the "mighty," the "masters," the "holders of power," are negligible by comparison with what has been accomplished against those classes by the Jews—the Jews, that priestly nation which eventually realized that the one method of effecting satisfaction on its enemies and tyrants was by means of a *radical transvaluation of values*, which was at the same time an act of the cleverest revenge. Yet the method was only appropriate to a nation of priests, to a nation of the most jealously nursed priestly revengefulness. It was the Jews who, in opposition to the aristocratic equation (**good** = *aristocratic* = *beautiful* = *happy* = *loved by the gods*), dared with a terrifying logic to suggest the contrary equation, and indeed to maintain with the teeth of the most profound hatred (the hatred of weakness) this contrary equation, namely,

"the wretched are alone the good; the poor, the weak, the lowly, are alone the good; the suffering, the needy, the sick, the loathsome, are the only ones who are pious, the only ones who are blessed, for them alone is salvation—but you, on the other hand, you aristocrats, you men of power, you are to all eternity the evil, the horrible, the covetous, the insatiate, the godless; eternally also shall you be the unblessed, the cursed, the damned!"

We know who it was who reaped the heritage of this Jewish transvaluation. In the context of the monstrous and inordinately fateful initiative which the Jews have exhibited in connection with this most fundamental of all declarations of war, I remember the passage which came to my pen on another occasion<sup>13</sup>—that it was, in fact, with the Jews that *the revolt of the slaves begins in the sphere of morals*; that revolt which has behind it a history of two millennia, and which at the present day has only moved out of our sight, because it—has achieved victory.

## 8.

But you [do not] understand this? You have no eyes for a force which has taken two thousand years to achieve victory? There is nothing [odd] in this: all lengthy processes are hard to see and to realize. But this is what took place: from the trunk of that tree of revenge and hate, Jewish hate—that most profound and sublime hate, which creates ideals and changes old values to new creations, the like of which has never been on earth—there grew a phenomenon which was equally incomparable, a new love, the most profound and sublime of all kinds of love: and from what other trunk could it have grown?

But beware of supposing that this love has soared on its upward growth, as in any way a real negation of that thirst for revenge, as an antithesis to the Jewish hate! No, the contrary is the truth! This love grew out of that hate, as its crown, as its triumphant crown, circling wider and wider amid the clarity and fullness of the sun, and pursuing in the very kingdom of light and height its goal of hatred, its victory, its spoil, its strategy, with the same intensity with which the roots of that tree of hate sank into everything which was deep and evil with increasing stability and increasing desire. This Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate gospel of love, this “Redeemer” bringing salvation and victory to the poor, the sick, the sinful—was he not really temptation in its most sinister and irresistible form, temptation to take the tortuous path to those very Jewish values and those very Jewish ideals? Has not Israel really obtained the final goal of its sublime revenge, by the tortuous paths of this “Redeemer,” for all that he might pose as Israel’s adversary and Israel’s destroyer? Is it not due to the black magic of a really great policy of revenge, of a far-seeing, burrowing revenge, both acting and calculating with slowness, that Israel himself must repudiate before all the world the actual instrument of his own revenge and nail it to the cross, so that all the world—that is, all the enemies of Israel—could nibble without suspicion at this very bait? Could, moreover, any human mind with all its elaborate ingenuity invent a bait that was more truly dangerous? Anything that was even equivalent in the power of its seductive, intoxicating, defiling, and corrupting influence to that symbol of the holy cross, to that awful paradox of a “god on the cross,” to that mystery of the unthinkable, supreme, and utter horror of the self-crucifixion of a god for the salvation of man?

It is at least certain that *sub hoc signo*<sup>14</sup> Israel, with its revenge and transvaluation of all values, has up to the present always triumphed again over all other ideals, over all more aristocratic ideals...

## 10.

The revolt of the slaves in morals begins in the very *principle of resentment* becoming creative and giving birth to values—a resentment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action, are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge. While every *aristocratic morality springs from a triumphant affirmation of its own demands*, the slave morality says

<sup>13</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aph. 195

<sup>14</sup> Latin, “in this sign conquer.” This is supposedly the statement Constantine I heard in a dream before his victory over his rival emperor, Maxentius Augustus, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312 CE). Early Christian historians often pointed to this as the moment of transformation from a pagan to Christian Roman Empire.

“no” from the very outset to what is “outside itself,” “different from itself,” and “not itself”: and this “no” is its creative deed. This [outward look] of the valuing standpoint—this inevitable gravitation to the objective instead of back to the subjective—is typical of *resentment: the slave-morality requires as the condition of its existence an external and objective world*, to employ physiological terminology, it requires objective stimuli to be capable of action at all—its action is fundamentally a reaction.

The contrary is the case when we come to the aristocrat’s system of values: it acts and grows spontaneously, it merely seeks its antithesis in order to pronounce a more grateful and exultant “yes” to its own self—its negative conception, ‘low’, ‘vulgar’, ‘bad’, is merely a pale late-born foil in comparison with its positive and fundamental conception (saturated as it is with life and passion), of “we aristocrats, we good ones, we beautiful ones, we happy ones.” When the aristocratic morality goes astray and commits sacrilege on reality, this is limited to that particular sphere with which it is not sufficiently acquainted—a sphere, in fact, from the real knowledge of which it disdainfully defends itself. It misjudges, in some cases, the sphere which it despises, the sphere of the common vulgar man and the low people: on the other hand, due weight should be given to the consideration that in any case the mood of contempt, of disdain, of superciliousness,<sup>15</sup> even on the supposition that it falsely portrays the object of its contempt, will always be far removed from that degree of falsity which will always characterize the attacks—in effigy, of course—of the vindictive hatred and revengefulness of the weak in onslaughts on their enemies. In point of fact, there is in contempt too strong an admixture of nonchalance, of casualness, of boredom, of impatience, even of personal exultation, for it to be capable of distorting its victim into a real caricature or a real monstrosity.

Attention again should be paid to the almost benevolent nuances which, for instance, the Greek nobility imports into all the words by which it distinguishes the common people from itself; note how continuously a kind of pity, care, and consideration imparts its honeyed flavor, until at last almost all the words which are applied to the vulgar man survive finally as expressions for ‘unhappy’, ‘worthy of pity’.... The ‘well-born’ simply felt themselves the ‘happy’; they did not have to manufacture their happiness artificially through looking at their enemies, or in cases to talk and lie themselves into happiness (as is the custom with all resentful men); and similarly, complete men as they were, exuberant with strength, and consequently necessarily energetic, they were too wise to dissociate happiness from action—*activity becomes in their minds necessarily counted as happiness* ... all in sharp contrast to the ‘happiness’ of the weak and the oppressed, with their festering venom and malignity, among whom happiness appears essentially as a narcotic, a deadening, a quietude, a peace, a “Sabbath,” an enervation of the mind and relaxation of the limbs,—in short, a purely passive phenomenon.

While the aristocratic man lived in confidence and openness with himself (*gennaios*, “noble-born,” emphasizes the nuance “sincere,” and perhaps also “naive”), the resentful man, on the other hand, is neither sincere nor naive, nor honest and candid with himself. His soul squints; his mind loves hidden crannies, tortuous paths and back-doors, everything secret appeals to him as his world, his safety, his balm; he is past master in silence, in not forgetting, in waiting, in provisional self-depreciation and self-abasement. A race of such resentful men will of necessity eventually prove more prudent than any aristocratic race, it will honor prudence on quite a distinct scale, as, in fact, a paramount condition of existence, while prudence among aristocratic men is apt to be tinged with a delicate flavor of luxury and refinement; so among them it plays nothing like so integral a part as that complete certainty of function of the governing unconscious instincts, or as indeed a certain lack of prudence, such as a vehement and valiant charge, whether against danger or the enemy, or as those ecstatic bursts of rage, love, reverence, gratitude, by which at all times noble souls have recognized each other. When the resentment of the aristocratic man manifests itself, it fulfills and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and consequently

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<sup>15</sup> An air of superiority.

instills no venom: on the other hand, it never manifests itself at all in countless instances, when in the case of the feeble and weak it would be inevitable.

An inability to take seriously for any length of time their enemies, their disasters, their misdeeds—that is the sign of the full strong natures who possess a [excess] of molding plastic force, that heals completely and produces forgetfulness. A good example of this in the modern world is Mirabeau,<sup>16</sup> who had no memory for any insults and meannesses which were practiced on him, and who was only incapable of forgiving because he forgot. Such a man indeed shakes off with a shrug many a worm which would have buried itself in another; it is only in characters like these that we see the possibility (*supposing, of course, that there is such a possibility in the world*) of the real “love of one’s enemies.” What respect for his enemies is found, forsooth, in an aristocratic man—and such a reverence is already a bridge to love! He insists on having his enemy to himself as his distinction. He tolerates no other enemy but a man in whose character there is nothing to despise and much to honor! On the other hand, imagine the “enemy” as the resentful man conceives him—and it is here exactly that we see his work, his creativeness; he has conceived “the evil enemy,” the “evil one,” and indeed that is the root idea from which he now evolves as a contrasting and corresponding figure a “good one,” himself—his very self!

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The method of this man is quite contrary to that of the aristocratic man, who conceives the root idea ‘good’ spontaneously and straight away, that is to say, out of himself, and from that material then creates for himself a concept of ‘bad’! This ‘bad’ of aristocratic origin and that “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred—the former an imitation, an “extra,” an additional nuance; the latter, on the other hand, the original, the beginning, the essential act in the conception of a slave–morality—these two words ‘bad’ and ‘evil’, how great a difference do they mark, in spite of the fact that they have an identical contrary in the idea ‘good’. But the idea ‘good’ is not the same: much rather let the question be asked, “Who is really evil according to the meaning of the morality of resentment?” In all sternness let it be answered thus: *just the good man of the other morality, just the aristocrat, the powerful one, the one who rules*, who is distorted by the venomous eye of resentment, into a new color, a new signification, a new appearance.

This particular point we would be the last to deny: the man who learned to know those ‘good’ ones only as enemies, learned at the same time not to know them only as “evil enemies” and the same men who inter pares were kept so rigorously in bounds through convention, respect, custom, and gratitude, though much more through mutual vigilance and jealousy inter pares, these men who in their relations with each other find so many new ways of manifesting consideration, self–control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship, these men are in reference to what is outside their circle (where the foreign element, a foreign country, begins), not much better than beasts of prey, which have been let loose. They enjoy there freedom from all social control, they feel that in the wilderness they can give vent with impunity to that tension which is produced by enclosure and imprisonment in the peace of society, they revert to the innocence of the beast–of–prey conscience, like jubilant monsters, who perhaps come from a ghastly bout of murder, arson, rape, and torture, with bravado and a moral equanimity, as though merely some wild student’s prank had been played, perfectly convinced that the poets have now an ample theme to sing and celebrate. *It is impossible not to recognize at the core of all these aristocratic races the beast of prey*; the magnificent blonde brute, avidly rampant for spoil and

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<sup>16</sup> Probably a reference to Honore Gabriel Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau (1749-1791), a nobleman who was an early voice of the French Revolution and argued for a moderate reconfiguration of the French nation into a constitutional monarchy based on the British model.



victory; this hidden core needed an outlet from time to time, the beast must get loose again, must return into the wilderness—the Roman, Arabic, German, and Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavian Vikings, are all alike in this need. It is the aristocratic races who have left the idea “barbarian” on all the tracks in which they have marched; nay, a consciousness of this very barbarianism, and even a pride in it, manifests itself even in their highest civilization ...

This audacity of aristocratic races, mad, absurd, and spasmodic as may be its expression; the incalculable and fantastic nature of their enterprises, Pericles sets in special relief and glory the ῥαθυμία [*rathumia* – “relaxation”] of the Athenians, their nonchalance and contempt for safety, body, life, and comfort, their awful joy and intense delight in all destruction, in all the ecstasies of victory and cruelty, all these features become crystallized, for those who suffered thereby in the picture of the “barbarian,” of the “evil enemy,” perhaps of the “Goth” and of the “Vandal.” The profound, icy mistrust which the German provokes, as soon as he arrives at power—even at the present time—is always still an aftermath of that inextinguishable horror with which for whole centuries Europe has regarded the wrath of the blonde Teuton beast (*although between the old Germans and ourselves there exists scarcely a psychological, let alone a physical, relationship*).

I have once called attention to the embarrassment of Hesiod,<sup>17</sup> when he conceived the series of social ages, and endeavored to express them in gold, silver, and bronze. He could only dispose of the contradiction, with which he was confronted, by the Homeric world, an age magnificent indeed, but at the same time so awful and so violent, by making two ages out of one, which he henceforth placed one behind each other—first, the age of the heroes and demigods, as that world had remained in the memories of the aristocratic families, who found therein their own ancestors; secondly, the bronze age, as that corresponding age appeared to the descendants of the oppressed, spoiled, ill-treated, exiled, enslaved; namely, as an age of bronze, as I have said, hard, cold, terrible, without feelings and without conscience, crushing everything, and bespattering everything with blood.

Granted the truth of the theory now believed to be true, that the very essence of all civilization is to train out of man, the beast of prey, a tame and civilized animal, a domesticated animal, it follows indubitably that we must regard as the real tools of civilization all those instincts of reaction and resentment, by the help of which the aristocratic races, together with their ideals, were finally degraded and overpowered; though that has not yet come to be synonymous with saying that the bearers of those tools also represented the civilization. It is rather the contrary that is not only probable—nay, it is palpable today; these bearers of vindictive instincts that have to be bottled up, these descendants of all European and non-European slavery, especially of the pre-Aryan population—these people, I say, represent the decline of humanity! These “tools of civilization” are a disgrace to humanity, and constitute in reality more of an argument against civilization, more of a reason why civilization should be suspected. One may be perfectly justified in being always afraid of the blonde beast that lies at the core of all aristocratic races, and in being on one’s guard: but who would not a hundred times prefer to be afraid, when one at the same time admires, than to be immune from fear, at the cost of being perpetually obsessed with the loathsome spectacle of the distorted, the dwarfed, the stunted, the envenomed? And is that not our fate? What produces today our repulsion towards “man”—for we suffer from “man,” there is no doubt about it...

### 13.

But let us come back to it; the problem of another origin of ‘the good’—of the good, as the resentful man has thought it out—demands its solution.

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<sup>17</sup> Hesiod (active c. 750–650 BCE), Archaic Greek author of *Theogony* (“Birth of the Gods”) which is the Greek creation myth, and second most important poet after Homer.

It is not surprising that the lambs should bear a grudge against the great birds of prey, but that is no reason for blaming the great birds of prey for taking the little lambs. And when the lambs say among themselves, “These birds of prey are evil, and he who is as far removed from being a bird of prey, who is rather its opposite, a lamb—is he not good?” Then there is nothing to cavil at in the setting up of this ideal, though it may also be that the birds of prey will regard it a little sneeringly, and perchance say to themselves, “We bear no grudge against them, these good lambs, we even like them: nothing is tastier than a tender lamb.”

To require of strength that it should not express itself as strength, that it should not be a wish to overpower, a wish to overthrow, a wish to become master, a thirst for enemies and antagonisms and triumphs, is just as absurd as to require of weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is just such a quantum of movement, will, action—rather it is nothing else than just those very phenomena of moving, willing, acting, and can only appear otherwise in the misleading errors of language (and the fundamental fallacies of reason which have become petrified therein), which understands, and understands wrongly, all working as conditioned by a worker, by a “subject.” And just exactly as the people separate the lightning from its flash, and interpret the latter as a thing done, as the working of a subject which is called lightning, so also does the popular morality separate strength from the expression of strength, as though behind the strong man there existed some indifferent neutral substratum, which enjoyed a caprice and option as to whether or not it should express strength. But there is no such substratum, there is no “being” behind doing, working, becoming; “the doer” is a mere appendage to the action. The action is everything. In point of fact, the people duplicate the doing, when they make the lightning lighten, that is a “doing–doing”: they make the same phenomenon first a cause, and then, secondly, the effect of that cause. The scientists fail to improve matters when they say, “Force moves, force causes,” and so on. Our whole science is still, in spite of all its coldness, of all its freedom from passion, a dupe of the tricks of language, and has never succeeded in getting rid of that superstitious changeling “the subject”....

What wonder, if the suppressed and stealthily simmering passions of revenge and hatred exploit for their own advantage this belief, and indeed hold no belief with a more steadfast enthusiasm than this: “the strong has the option of being weak, and the bird of prey of being a lamb.” Thereby do they win for themselves the right of attributing to the birds of prey the responsibility for being birds of prey: when the oppressed, down–trodden, and overpowered say to themselves with the vindictive guile of weakness:

“Let us be otherwise than the evil, namely, **good**; and good is everyone who does not oppress, who hurts no one, who does not attack, who does not pay back, who hands over revenge to God, who holds himself, as we do, in hiding; who goes out of the way of evil, and demands, in short, little from life; like ourselves the patient, the meek, the just.”

Yet all this, in its cold and unprejudiced interpretation, means nothing more than “once for all, the weak are weak; it is good to do nothing for which we are not strong enough”; but this dismal state of affairs, this prudence of the lowest order, which even insects possess (which in a great danger are fain to sham death so as to avoid doing “too much”), has, thanks to the counterfeiting and self–deception of weakness, come to masquerade in the pomp of an ascetic, mute, and expectant virtue, just as though the very weakness of the weak—that is, forsooth, its being, its working, its whole unique inevitable inseparable reality—were a voluntary result, something wished, chosen, a deed, an act of merit. This kind of man finds the belief in a neutral, free–choosing “subject” necessary from an instinct of self–preservation, of self–assertion, in which every lie is fain to sanctify itself. The subject (or, to use popular language, the *soul*) has perhaps proved itself the best dogma in the world simply because it

rendered possible to the horde of mortal, weak, and oppressed individuals of every kind, that most sublime specimen of self-deception, the interpretation of weakness as freedom, of being this, or being that, as merit....

## 16.

**Let us come to a conclusion.** The two opposing values, “good and bad,” “good and evil,” have fought a dreadful, thousand-year fight in the world, and though indubitably the second value has been for a long time in the preponderance, there are not wanting places where the fortune of the fight is still undecided. It can almost be said that in the meanwhile the fight reaches a higher and higher level, and that in the meanwhile it has become more and more intense, and always more and more psychological; so that nowadays there is perhaps no more decisive mark of the higher nature, of the more psychological nature, than to be in that sense self-contradictory, and to be actually still a battleground for those two opposites.

The symbol of this fight, written in a writing which has remained worthy of perusal throughout the course of history up to the present time, is called “Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome.” Hitherto there has been no greater event than that fight, the putting of that question, that deadly antagonism. Rome found in the Jew the incarnation of the unnatural, as though it were its diametrically opposed monstrosity, and in Rome the Jew was held to be convicted of hatred of the whole human race: and rightly so, in so far as it is right to link the well-being and the future of the human race to the unconditional mastery of the aristocratic values, of the Roman values.

What, conversely, did the Jews feel against Rome? One can surmise it from a thousand symptoms, but it is sufficient to carry one’s mind back to the Johannian Apocalypse, that most obscene of all the written outbursts, which has revenge on its conscience. (One should also appraise at its full value the profound logic of the Christian instinct, when over this very book of hate it wrote the name of the Disciple of Love, that self-same disciple to whom it attributed that impassioned and ecstatic Gospel—therein lurks a portion of truth, however much literary forging may have been necessary for this purpose.) The Romans were the strong and aristocratic; a nation stronger and more aristocratic has never existed in the world, has never even been dreamed of; every relic of them, every inscription enraptures, granted that one can divine what it is that writes the inscription. The Jews, conversely, were that priestly nation of resentment par excellence, possessed by a unique genius for popular morals: just compare with the Jews the nations with analogous gifts, such as the Chinese or the Germans, so as to realize afterwards what is first rate, and what is fifth rate.

Which of them has been provisionally victorious, Rome or Judea? But there is not a shadow of doubt; just consider to whom in Rome itself nowadays you bow down, as though before the quintessence of all the highest values—and not only in Rome, but almost over half the world, everywhere where man has been tamed or is about to be tamed—to three Jews, as we know, and one Jewess (to Jesus of Nazareth, to Peter the fisher, to Paul the tent-maker, and to the mother of the aforesaid Jesus, named Mary). This is very remarkable: Rome is undoubtedly defeated.

At any rate there took place in the Renaissance a brilliantly sinister revival of the classical ideal, of the aristocratic valuation of all things: Rome herself, like a man waking up from a trance, stirred beneath the burden of the new Judaized Rome that had been built over her, which presented the appearance of an ecumenical synagogue and was called the “Church”: but immediately Judea triumphed again, thanks to that fundamentally popular (German and English) movement of revenge, which is called the Reformation, and taking also into account its inevitable corollary, the restoration of the Church—the restoration also of the ancient graveyard peace of classical Rome.

Judea proved yet once more victorious over the classical ideal in the French Revolution, and in a sense which was even more crucial and even more profound: the last political aristocracy that existed in Europe, that of the French seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, broke into pieces beneath the instincts of a resentful populace—never had the world heard a greater jubilation, a more uproarious enthusiasm: indeed, there took place in the midst of it the most monstrous and unexpected phenomenon; the ancient ideal itself swept before the eyes and conscience of humanity with all its life and with unheard-of splendor, and in opposition to resentment's lying war-cry of the prerogative of the most, in opposition to the will to lowliness, abasement, and equalization, the will to a retrogression and twilight of humanity, there rang out once again, stronger, simpler, more penetrating than ever, the terrible and enchanting counter-war cry of the prerogative of the few! Like a final signpost to other ways, there appeared Napoleon, the most unique and violent anachronism that ever existed, and in him the incarnate problem of the aristocratic ideal in itself—consider well what a problem it is: Napoleon, that synthesis of Monster and Superman.