

A RETURN TO INNOCENCE:  
HOPEFUL WORDS ON THE RISE AND FALL OF MAN

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A Thesis  
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by  
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If the purpose of studying Public Administration is to more rightly form the governments of the world to fit the needs and potential of the people, then it behooves the administrator to understand, at the most fundamental level, the nature of man.

To this end, close study of the greatest minds in all history, and their approximations of the nature and potential of man, is a necessary vocation. Friedrich Nietzsche's great work, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, stands as doubly applicable to the art of Public Administration because it not only delves deep into the true nature of man, but also into those ideals around which man erected society. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche asks the difficult questions about man and his everlasting relationship with violence and how this has permeated our existence to such an extent as to color the ideals of modern day man. Even those age-old noble concepts such as justice, humility, and righteousness are held to the light and exposed as the ignoble creations that they are. Nietzsche's account of man is dark and that darkness taints all that he has created. Understanding alternative accounts of man and morality in society is necessary to understanding all of the possibilities in people as individuals and as a society.

Accepted by:  \_\_\_\_\_, Chair

## **Introduction**

In the second essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche discusses the promise and potential that man represents in the world, chronicles the mistakes and pitfalls which led to the squandering of this potential for centuries, and lastly, provides a possible way out. Contrary to popular opinions, which cast Nietzsche's philosophy as nihilist, thoughtless fascism, or, most disparagingly, the ramblings of a psychotic mind, his philosophy was value-driven and hopeful. It is true that Nietzsche saw much wrong with the world, with man, and with what has been deemed civilized society, but his philosophy is also prescriptive. He does not merely tear down the walls, but offers a blueprint for what could be built with the strength of human hands and minds. It is easily forgotten that despite all of the anger and disdain, Nietzsche holds a deep love for man and the unique nature of his existence.

As such, Nietzsche begins his essay by remarking on that which makes man so interesting and exceptional in the world. He finds these remarkable qualities in the mental capacities which man possesses above all other beings. Man is an animal with the ability to make promises and plan for a future which he must bring about. Man has the powers of foresight and will which enables him to push his will through time and space so as to create a future of his choosing. In tandem, man has the capacity to filter his world, to differentiate between that which is not helpful and necessary, and that which is accidental; man has the ability to forget what he needs to forget. The combination of memory, forgetfulness, and the right to make promises enables man, unlike any other creature, to construct a narrative for his world, to make sense of it,

and to write the ending which he finds most suitable. Man alone is supremely aware of his impact, possible and actual, upon the world.

It is this awareness which also makes man the only being to entertain the notion of responsibility. This awareness is key to understanding the positive nature of Nietzsche's philosophy. The mental evolution of humanity created an animal which can be sovereign to itself; and this leads to limitless possibility. Truly acknowledging this, according to Nietzsche, is the birth of responsibility, which is, in turn, the birthplace of the natural, helpful conscience. Unbound by the typical laws of the animal kingdom, man's destiny could reach the edge of the possible, if only he would be free from himself.

The great problem concerning man, is that for the longest time, his attempts at bettering himself have been misguided and dreadfully harmful. Nietzsche spends a great deal of time exploring the rise of man, from the individual to the community, from the days of chaos, to tradition, to law, and what he found stands in stark contrast to the man which exists today. The past, man's past, far from being 'civilized' is filled with blood, cruelty, and force. The story of man is not a narrative of nobility or an epic tale of morality slowly conquering the beasts. On the contrary, and quite to Nietzsche's point, the progress which prehistoric man made, that which created lofty empires and cemented man as the dominant life on the planet, was done through violence. Most importantly, for the longest time there was not an inkling of thought to suggest that this was wrong. But the tides shift and the sea changes, and at some point, man strove to change his character and eject all of those natural instincts which

made him so successful in the first place. Thus, according to Nietzsche, began the fall of man.

Necessitated by the destruction of man's instincts and rejection of his nature, man was forced to create new ideals, values and, ultimately, gods. Without their instincts to guide them, these creations became guideposts for man's behavior. The innocence of man would never return to the way it was once man forsook his nature for these artificial constructs. These constructs, Nietzsche says, were, and are, fundamentally at odds with man's nature, and so, over the long run, have been extremely detrimental to man's existence in the world. The hypocrisy of man's attempts to shed his nature is epitomized by his obsessions with justice and punishment, and, as such, Nietzsche devotes a lot of his thought to these two distinctly human phenomena.

Justice, although it is held as one of the highest and noblest ideals, has, according to Nietzsche as brutal and bloody a past as any of man's instincts which this false nobility deemed unworthy. The same can be said for punishment. The common misconception is that punishment exists in tandem with justice, as the enforcing power of the ideal, but that, Nietzsche claims, is a dire misunderstanding of the thing and of human nature. Punishment, far from being an offshoot and necessary *result* of this thing called justice, was conceived entirely separately and only recently has been shoehorned into this niche. Discovering what really lay behind these ever-present ideas and activities reveals basic truths about human nature and how man was meant to live, before he began to feel shame at his being.

This rejection of man's being, this construction of ideals, which man often claims as strength, Nietzsche posits as being the result of *weakness*, and the unfortunate triumph of the gathered weak against the strong. At that moment, man's true nature was forsaken and the man's fall was cemented by the creation of the bad conscience. Nietzsche's account of the bad conscience highlights the truth behind what many claim to be the civilizing of man, but Nietzsche identifies as the taming of man; and this truth, what civilized man was born of, what *created* 'civility' was far from it, and its motives far darker than many would like to admit. And this bad conscience, man's distrust and disgust with his nature, was then bolstered and assisted by the creation of divinities; a combination which Nietzsche says almost destroyed man beyond redemption.

Having already rejected his own nature and being, his instincts and his physicality, the emergence of a god, of something that would substantiate and justify this disgust, only furthered man's self-destructive tendencies. In God, men of the bad conscience found something which could magnify their unworthiness and give them something to worship in their place. God became the driving force behind man's own imperfection, and eventually, with dire consequences, its savior. The emergence of the judeo-christian God and the arrival of the bad conscience, together, locked mankind into generations of service to their own destruction, as man's sense of worth plummeted to the depths and their creations, such as justice and God, perched loftily on their pedestals.

But Nietzsche had more in mind than simply raging against the world and

heralding doom from the mountaintops, as he does not believe that man is beyond saving. Despite the polemical tone and clear disgust evident in his discussion of modern society, Nietzsche has a deep-seated faith in the power of man. He is not diametrically opposed to the notions of society, values, or even God; he is only opposed when he sees these things hindering man's progress through the world. All of these could serve to realize the highest potential of mankind, but instead Nietzsche sees them used to deride humanity and shackle it to the whims of the weak. His final thoughts on the matter are not an epitaph for humanity, but a plea for man to come back from the brink, to be a little more Greek, a little more Zarathustra, and impose their will on the world instead of bowing down before the will of the weak or the past. Man, to Nietzsche is the most amazing thing on this Earth, unique, powerful, *free*; his goal is to awaken the rest of the world to its own possibility.

### **Section 1**

“To breed an animal *with the right to make promises* – is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? Is it not the real problem regarding man?”

Thus Nietzsche begins his second essay in the *Genealogy of Morals*. He identifies the right to make promises as the problem and paradoxical task of man. The problem is not avarice, lust, or wrath, as many moral leaders of the centuries would have mankind believe. It is not the inherent biological infirmity of our corporeal existence belittling our rational side, as past dualists would affirm. The problem lies in promises, not the ability to make them, but the *right* to make them.



Promises appear as words and thus can be made by any speaking individual, but, for Nietzsche, a real promise is a rare thing and one with the right to make promises is even rarer.

Interestingly, before further defining what a promise is and what is necessary for an agent legitimately to make a promise, Nietzsche halts to address that force which he identifies as the antithesis to memory, the opposition - without Goliath there would be no David, and without a counteractive force, a promise would mean little. This countering force is forgetfulness – whose modern conception is weak and passive, a mistake in Nietzsche's eyes. Forgetfulness is an active faculty, a “positive faculty of repression,” with a necessary, though unappreciated, function.

Forgetfulness is seen these days as a lazy negative. When something is forgotten, it is seen not as a victory for the tool of forgetting, which un-clutters the mind and shuns those things deemed unimportant to the current function; rather it is seen as a failure of memory. The cause is seen as a *lack* of action from the memory, instead of a complete action from forgetfulness. To Nietzsche, the ability to forget is of utmost importance, because it frees the individual from becoming a completely reactionary force in the world.

“Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression, that is responsible for the fact that what we experience and absorb enters our consciousness as little while we are digesting it.” Nietzsche's point is that the human mind ‘forgets’ things all the time. At every waking instant, the mind is filtered. In order to aim the mind, concentrate

on a particular duty or project, or merely enjoy the sunshine, consciousness needs to be free from the constant sensory bombardment that results from living in the world. The events of yesterday need to make room for today, and the thoughts of tomorrow will need space from the musings of today. Sometimes they need to be thrown out completely, and sometimes input simply needs to sit on the back-burner while more pressing issues are attended to. Forgetfulness allows this to happen – it allows the mind to move on from the inflammatory, the bizarre, or an inundation of the banal. Nietzsche highlights the usefulness of this function with a physio-biological analogy.

The freedom that forgetfulness gives to the mind, freedom from complete conscious analysis and inspection of every piece of sensory input, is akin to the freedom that the body affords one during nourishment, physical input. The mind is not bothered, troubled, or hijacked by the digestive process. A million chemical reactions and muscle contractions accompany the act of eating and digesting, but no mind is paid to them. If it were necessary to devote one's mind to digestion, the time wasted would be monumental. In much the same way, if humans did not possess the ability to forget, a proactive yet innate force, our lives would be devoted to calculating minutiae of everyday sensory input and little would be left to devote to the higher, nobler causes and thoughts. "For our organism is an oligarchy."

Nietzsche's division of man's drives is seemingly derived from Plato. Man is an oligarchy, with reason at the head. Reason fights to control the lesser drives, appetites and their ilk, as much as possible. Forgetfulness allows the mind, reason, to dismiss the small and unimportant, and focus on the important. And, as with Plato,

this hierarchy is not only necessary for the sake of noble achievement and progress, but also for living well in the world - the key difference being, for Nietzsche, this does not require the same rigorous virtue described by Plato. Forgetfulness acts to preserve this oligarchical structure "like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order" and without it "there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, *no present.*"

Thus we see perhaps the most important function of forgetfulness. Not only does it allow for the mind to devote itself to higher functions, but it allows us to *be*. If one forgot nothing, one could never be done with anything. Forgetfulness allows man to move beyond the past. It allows him to forget the wrongs done to him and the wrongs personally committed, it allows the human creature to move past the mistakes and enjoy the present - without forgetfulness, each man would be chained to the immovable weight of the past. Referring to his earlier analogy, Nietzsche says that the man who cannot forget is even more crippled than the dyspeptic man - "he cannot 'have done' with anything." Thus forgetfulness emerges as neither inactive, nor accidental, nor detrimental to the human life. On the contrary, it exists as an enabling force, without which one could not live a full human life, one conducive to accomplishment or even the enjoyment of happiness.

Such is created the paradox of man, in Nietzsche's eyes. It is a creature whose intellect and emotion demands the ability to forget - without forgetting there could be no progress or prosperity - and simultaneously a creature which strives to enforce its will on the world around it - a creature built for it - and such enforcement demands

continuity, and as such memory. The drive to enforce one's will upon the world, the ability to demand this and achieve it, rests on the ability opposed to forgetfulness – the memory. It is this memory which allows for human beings to be the only animal capable of crafting a promise. It is important to remember, however, that the real paradox emerges not in the abilities afforded to man, but in his quest to earn the *right* to make promises. Middling speech and memory offer even the meanest fool the ability to promise, but few have the right.

“[A promise] involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot ‘have done,’ but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once; a real *memory of the will*.” The act of promising entails far more drive and will than most are likely to admit. In a world of understanding, it is not unheard of, or looked poorly upon, to break one's promise in the face of ‘mitigating’ or ‘unseen’ circumstances. The rise and fall of chance is often seen as a suitable excuse for the collapse of a modern-day promise. Nietzsche abhors this, shuns it, and casts it out as false. These promises, allowed to be broken by the guileless hands of fate, are false promises, to Nietzsche, and those that utter them do not bear the *right* to give them. And if these people were strong enough to attain that right, they would not watch them crumble with a light heart.

A promise is a statement of *will*. Making a promise is an active choice reflecting the desire of the individual at a certain point in time *and* it stakes the claim that the will of the promise-giver will extend, forcefully, through time and space to

enact the present desire in the future. A promise is a statement of desire, a statement of intent, and a challenge, pitting one's will against the forces of the world, human and not, and prematurely declaring the self the victor. A promise *is* strength. Only those strong enough to rein in the world and themselves are qualified to give such a promise. Only the strong can stand at the head of a flowing river and divert the flow up the mountain.

“To ordain the future in advance in this way, man must first have learned to distinguish necessary events from chance ones, to think causally, to see and anticipate distant eventualities as if they belonged to the present, to decide with certainty what is the goal and what the means to it, and in general be able to calculate and compute.” The right to make promises, therefore, is not merely a matter of strength. It is not merely a work of force. To make a promise, the agent must have a thorough understanding and grasp of the complex series of actions and reactions which exist in their world. An individual making a promise must have an understanding of these things because a promise extends temporally. One cannot honestly and sincerely promise anything, big or small, if one does not understand and appreciate the difficulties ahead. A promise is a plan; and to make a plan one needs reliable information as well as the ability to utilize it. Understanding the nature of cause and effect, with regards to the inanimate *and* the animate, and discerning the salient details in a given situation are as integral to the promise as the will to see it through. There is no such thing as ‘mitigating circumstances,’ there is only a promise kept and a promise broken.

But how can one play this game, making promises, when the pieces in play are human? Predicting human behavior is not a scientific endeavor, but a dodgy art at best. Man is simultaneously yawn-inducing and wildly erratic. But for the agent who imagines himself strong enough, a promise demands an understanding of human nature, or at least the will to overcome it. By making a promise, the agent takes the actions of free-thinking others upon his shoulders and claims that these actions will not interfere or will be beaten. But that is not the fundamental understanding which is necessary. "Man himself must first of all have become *calculable, regular, necessary*, even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for his own future, which is what one who promises does!" The first battle to be won, in the war for the human oath, is to understand oneself. Before one can swear to future events, outcomes, and wishes involving others and the outside world, one must first overcome oneself. One must first understand one's own appetites, motivations, and emotions, reign these in, and become master of the self, before one can claim to master the universe.

## **Section 2**

"This precisely is the long story of how *responsibility* originated."

As mentioned above, the necessary step towards an individual capable and worthy of promises is a calculable humanity. In order for one agent among many to declare the future, the agents making the future must be understood. And to be a predictable animal, man must be an animal of routine and custom; he must become

an animal of *morality*. This process, by which man becomes predictable and promises are made possible, Nietzsche calls the “morality of mores.” This morality was formed and inculcated through centuries of social labor, a “prehistoric” labor, to Nietzsche. And while Nietzsche does not value its methods, or even the goals it may have laid out for itself, he does value the endgame. Though created through “severity, tyranny, stupidity, and idiocy,” the result of these years of behavioral conditioning was that man became an animal which could be predicted and calculated. This, being fundamental to the right to make promises, made the shackles of prehistoric morality worth it.

It is only centuries later, at the end of this transformation, that anything worthwhile is born. The morality of mores and the customs beaten into the populace made man calculable, yes, but that alone is worth less than nothing. This neutering of the human animal would not be worth the transformation if not for the fact that it allows the ascension of the man with the right and ability to make promises. At the end of this age-old labor, “we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from the morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral (for “autonomous” and “moral” are mutually exclusive), in short, the man who has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises*.”

The prehistoric labor, the construction of custom and morality; though they were born with their own agendas, their worth is ultimately measured by the role they play in the rise of the sovereign individual. The sovereign individual is a power unto himself, an unburdened agent whose force of will is sufficient to lift the agent from the

middling masses of drones living through rote custom and morality. He is like only to himself – he has risen above that which made man calculable, and instead acts upon a calculable mankind. The morality which fashioned mankind into something usable is of no more use to the sovereign individual. As Nietzsche noted, autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive. One cannot be master of oneself *and* follow the rules of others. This sovereign individual is a conqueror of himself and the other. He understands and utilizes the calculable nature of mankind, but is not a slave to it. He is the strength of man at its most free, and he alone reserves the right to make promises.

It is only right that this individual would feel the weight of such a newfound ability, an *earned* right. Let there be no mistake – the right to make promises is earned. It is not given, but taken by those strong enough to see it and wield it. This is accompanied, no doubt, by a cognizance of the accomplishment. The sovereign individual knows what it has overcome and willed itself past; morality and custom are trifles when compared to the power and freedom of the sovereign. This agent rightfully stands above the rest of mankind, proudly aware of his superiority over those whose wills are not so free or strong, those who have not earned the right to make promises; a right which “necessarily gives him mastery over circumstances, over nature, and over all more short-willed and unreliable creatures.” Thus, the sovereign individual represents man at its freest and most powerful, deserving of trust, fear, and reverence all at once; the rest fall in the other half of Nietzsche’s dichotomy, as “short-willed and unreliable creatures.”



It is impossible, and unreasonable to ask, that the sovereign individual would be unaware of such a dichotomy. Being completely free and at the mercy of only oneself, the sovereign individual constructs his own value system. Not bowing to any previous conception, the sovereign individual values the strength he sees in the world and condemns the weak-willed. Sovereigns necessarily honor other sovereigns, others maximizing their human potential in the world, just as he honors himself. He respects those who seem to recognize the weight of human ability and possibility as he does, those who have earned the right to make promises by doing so sparingly and fulfilling them once they are made. And rightfully so, the sovereign individual harbors disdain for the weak, especially the weak who pretend to be strong. Those who make promises with no intention of keeping them, or who make them and lack the strength to see them through. Once the right to make promises has been earned, the sovereign appreciates the weight of power and responsibility, and cannot help but bear ill-will for those that do not appreciate it.

“The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and fate, has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct.” One cannot attain the level of power and will necessary to earn the right to make promises without comprehending what it is that one is doing – laying one’s will upon the world and *making* it so. In this way, a promise is a statement of dominance. A promise is a declaration of the supremacy of the individual will over time, space, and the wills of others. The weight of such power makes a permanent impression upon

the soul of the sovereign, and this newfound responsibility becomes an integral part of his existence, forever coming to bear on his actions. “What will he call this dominating instinct, supposing he feels the need to give it a name? The answer is beyond doubt: this sovereign man calls it his *conscience*.”

### Section 3

“His conscience? – It is easy to guess that the concept of ‘conscience’ that we here encounter in its highest, almost astonishing, manifestation, has a long history and variety of forms behind it. To possess the right to stand security for oneself and to do so with pride, thus to possess also the *right to affirm oneself* – this, as has been said, is a ripe fruit, but also a *late* fruit: how long must this fruit have hung on the tree, unripe and sour! And for a much longer time nothing whatever was to be seen of any such fruit: no one could have promised its appearance, although everything in the tree was preparing for and growing toward it!”

The journey towards the creation of the sovereign man has been a long and arduous one. To create something so powerful, so unique in the natural world, has taken centuries of evolution; although these efforts have not always known what exactly it was that they were forging.

The earliest efforts manifested themselves as crude, rudimentary attempts at creating a memory for the human animal – *mnemotechnics*. Mnemotechnics operated from the basic assumption that the surest way towards achieving permanence in the thought or behavior of the individual was through pain. This has been the oldest, and

saddest, according to Nietzsche, dogmatic truth in the study of human psychology. The powerful, prehistoric remnants of these lessons, struck into the human psyche through generations of oaths made, and broken, in blood, are the ghosts, Nietzsche says, that attend the mind of man whenever he feels the need to be 'serious.' Whether it be through sacrifice, penance, or absolution, the creation of a memory has been a bloody affair for mankind since he first learnt its value, and the power of pain.

This, according to Nietzsche, is the basis and strength of all of asceticism. "A few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, 'fixed,' with the aim of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system." The mnemotechnic machinations are designed towards 'freeing' these desired ideas from the cacophony of lesser drives, but in the eyes of a man such as Nietzsche, who draws the borders of autonomy around morality, such coercive measures reflect a dire mistake with regards to the progression of the human animal. The mind of a man is not a piece of metal, to be hammered and forced into position – a mindless man, following the rules of the vicious, is no better than a beast. Although the mind of the man needs to be lifted, and Nietzsche would not be one to shy from a harsh education, the destruction of the mind's autonomy renders the entire operation empty. This is the downfall of asceticism; that men would exchange their power and responsibility in the world for the false promise of certitude, and a pain that assures them.

To return to the more basic creation of a human memory, that which enabled men to join together in productive society, a quick study of the nature of a

society's system of punishment, delivered in exchange for 'forgetting' that which one has 'promised' not to do in society, is telling as to the nature of man's bloody conquest over himself and his less polite urgings. With his own people as an example, Nietzsche reminds us of how much it has taken in order to carve man into a socially acceptable creature. German modes of punishment have been cruel, with such means as stoning, quartering, and flaying alive, but not particularly unique; but they serve as a testament to the bloody history hiding behind the more noble aspects of modern society.

"With the aid of such images and procedures one finally remembers five or six 'I will not's,' in regard to which one had given one's *promise* so as to participate in the advantages of society— and it was indeed with the aid of this kind of memory that one at last came 'to reason'!" Indeed, Nietzsche's scorn is evident, that such a mind would be said to be a 'reasoning' one or that such an agreement would be called a 'promise'; one must question if such an individual even has the capacity to promise in the Nietzschean sense. But it is exactly this *lack* of thought, and surrender to pain and uncertainty, that undergirds the serious world of the modern man and his customs. This memory, which had been created with the aim to free the thinking man, must next free itself from its creator. Now having a memory, the human animal needs to free itself to choose that which it will remember.

#### **Section 4**

"But how did that other 'somber thing,' the consciousness of guilt, the 'bad

conscience, ' come into the world?'"

Nietzsche again decries the work of those that have come before him, those genealogists of morals whose conclusions he asserts "stay at a more than respectful distance from the truth." This is precisely because the genealogists before him had no appreciation for the study of history. They had no inkling that the answers they sought were to be found not within the increasingly convoluted and meaningless sphere of modern disconnected theoretical psychology, but within the bloody annals of history. It is pure folly to attempt to understand the innermost workings of the human animal while dismissing the centuries of tempering and tampering that have created him. That which man does now is an echo of the meaning of the past, an evolution, hopefully but not surely; something different, but with a rich history. Taken in a smaller timeline, just as to understand a man's actions at his death, one must understand what he has lived. To ignore the history of human morality while attempting to decipher it, is to ignore the greatest tool available. It is only fitting that the fruits of such a labor would be worthless and grand insights missed. "Have these genealogists of morals had even the remotest suspicion that, for example, the major moral concept *Schuld* [guilt] has its origin in the very material concept *Schulden* [debts]? Or that punishment, as requital, evolved quite independently of any presupposition concerning freedom or non-freedom of the will."

And what revelations these are! That the noble notion of guilt, the mark of the pious, would have in its lineage something as cold and corporeal as a debt! But even more so, that the birth of punishment is something quite separate from

deserving. The dispensation of punishment, now seen as the realm of the just, had, at its core, according to Nietzsche, not a thing to do with justice. Ideas of intentionality and cause were late to the mind of the human animal, but pain and punishment were always there. To the modern mind, it is nigh instinctive to assess the questions of cause, intention, and accident when supposing guilt or innocence, but the idea that criminals are punished because they "could have acted differently," is the *result* of an evolving human concept of justice, not the beginning. To suppose otherwise is to take a dishonest view of humanity, and the conclusions so garnered will be as upside-down as their foundation.

The brutal fact of the past is that punishment did not begin as a measure of justice, dispensing requital pain, but as a crude expression of anger and spirit.

Punishment was the human animal discharging its power to cause pain towards that which brought it pain. Importantly, it was not an expression of justice, enacted because of the deed which was done; only an unleashing of animalistic rage towards an event or individual seen to be the cause. There was no moral aspect, only pain for pain. "But this anger is held in check and modified by the idea that every injury has its *equivalent* and can actually be paid back, even if only through the *pain* of the culprit."

Therein lies an important question. Where did this idea come from?

Exchanging pain for pain is as old as violence itself, but wherefore did this new idea gain root in the human mind? What was it that could stay the anger and bloodlust of the human animal, the most powerful animal? Something happened, something was

there that stayed the hand of the powerful as the powerless lay under his paw. Says Nietzsche, "I have already divulged it: in the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*." Thus the journey returns to the material impulse of man – the heart of justice, guilt, and mercy.

### Section 5

"When we contemplate these contractual relationships, to be sure, we feel considerable suspicion and repugnance toward those men of the past who created or permitted them. This was to be expected from what we have previously noted."

That the birth of something as sacred as a promise would be such a bloody and cruel affair is an affront to the modern *civility* of the human creature and the nobility of what he has created. Men of high society revel simultaneously in their status as men 'of their word' and as *gentle* men, polite members of society. What they do not know is that the civil mask they now wear was designed and fashioned by the most brutal and 'base' of man's instincts.

But what else could be done? The creation of promises, as meaningful expressions, required the creation of a memory. This creation, in turn, required man to affix these orders by that way which he knew best – cruelty and pain. To compel man the animal to respect the power of words, his fellow man tied his words to his body. Just as the creditors of old ordered, to establish the promise as something sacred and in order to "impress repayment as a duty," any failure on the debtor's part could be taken from his flesh or his belongings. His life, his family, and his wealth

were all acceptable penalties for failure to repay. In fact, in olden days the legal code reflected this mentality, and laid down detailed instructions as to what could be done to the debtor, i.e. the flesh to gold ratio.

This was common practice in the older, harsher days; days when man was just learning to promise. The failure to repay, the breaking of a promise, opened the debtor to almost any and all forms of sadistic cruelty, with two-fold design.

Importantly, the flaying of the debtor did not serve only to impress the severity of promises made and broken upon the debtor, but also to assuage the feelings of injustice that had undoubtedly arisen within the spurned creditor. The pain and cruelty brought to bear upon the untrustworthy debtor not only hurts the debtor, but brings pleasure to the creditor.

At the end of this bloody and unfortunate exchange, what has come forth? Man does not bleed gold and cutting the debtor does not restore the creditor's coffers, so where is the compensation? The debtor has learned his lesson and his marks will not let him forget it, but the creditor, not to be forgotten, find his compensation in *harming the debtor* – “a recompense in the form of a kind of *pleasure* – the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely upon one who is powerless.” This has no material worth, but an emotional worth on par with the purest gold. This enjoyment is only intensified by the more egregious the debtor's crime and the lower his station. The creditor vents his rage and enjoys a taste of “the right of the masters” – that is, he revels in the joy of being *above* someone, and hurting them carelessly. Later, the power of punishment would fall more securely within the hands of the authorities, but



the same drive remained, it simply became voyeuristic. In an instance of non-payment, recompense "consists in a warrant for and title to cruelty:"

### **Section 6**

"It was in this sphere then, the sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of 'guilt,' 'conscience,' 'duty,' 'sacredness of duty' had its origin; its beginnings were; like the beginning of everything great on earth, soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time."

That these aspects of human moral society, commonly viewed as high or noble, have their roots in such bloody and savage soil is surely something to be weighed heavily. That the ideals which humans strive for, and the impetus within, come from the malice and bloodlust of men, as opposed to the divine or some supernatural sense of moral truth, brings such things closer to earth. It opens them to reinterpretation and reevaluation. To understand modern man, one must understand how far these roots go.

According to Nietzsche, this bloody trail has woven its way all through history, changing perhaps its name, but not its nature. Even the steadfast Christian philosopher, Immanuel Kant, famed for his strong sense of duty and conscience even at the expense of the sovereign agent, could not escape the history of his kind.

Nietzsche describes the categorical imperative as cruel, and how could he not? It demands the individual to subvert himself, *sacrifice* himself, in the name of duty. In the name of ancient pacts and promises, Kant demands modern man submit himself

to the rules and punishments of old. This is largely due to the fact that Kant was a wholehearted believer in the connection between guilt and suffering; more precisely, the notion that suffering is the proper response to guilt.

As this connection has grown, from its beginnings as punishment from creditor to debtor, the question must be asked again, "To what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt?" What is the connection between the two, that leads even (especially) the most pious to believe that suffering, *penance*, can counteract the guilt of 'sins' past? This notion, born and bred in early cruelty, not only survived, but *thrived*, even in the minds of the holy and high; surely something had changed. Surely the connection had evolved or distilled into something 'higher,' befitting those that embraced it. Nietzsche's response is simultaneously dark and illuminating, "To what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt? To the extent that to *make* suffer was in the highest degree pleasurable."

Though it be cloaked in everything from justice to divinity, the base logic of these interactions *remains* the human delight in causing suffering. In either arithmetic, monetary for the creditor or spiritual for the priest, suffering serves to balance the books only inasmuch as the wronged individual derives pleasure from the suffering of others. In modern Western society, this is typically viewed as bloodthirsty and despicable behavior. One has only to look to *The Merchant of Venice*, a Western masterpiece from a Western hero, and the character Shylock. Shylock is honestly owed a great sum, but due to his bloody desire to amend this debt, he is the villain. Driven by his desire to hurt those in his debt, he is publicly scorned and ruined.

Nietzsche's point is that God's *divine* justice and the penance he demands are no different; they are merely dressed up, dishonest, *cultivated* expressions of man's bloody justice. But no one wants to see that.

"It seems to me that the delicacy and even more the tartuffery of tame domestic animals (which is to say modern men, which is to say us) resists a really vivid comprehension of the degree to which *cruelty* constituted the great festival pleasure of more primitive men and was indeed an ingredient of almost every one of their pleasures." To Nietzsche, modern man has turned its back on what it could, *should*, be in exchange for a prettier, more 'sophisticated,' image of man the animal – man the servant of morality. This startling sea change Nietzsche derides as tartuffery, meaning hypocrisy but also a nod to Moliere's play *Tartuffe* and it is worth noting the character of Tartuffe was a hypocritical, fraudulent man of God who used his cunning to ensnare the less adept, because at these crucial points in history man began to hate himself. Man began to revile and scorn that which existed at the center of man's being, that which drove man the animal to supremacy, the happy ability to discharge one's power without guilt or remorse. That this manifested itself in violent, forceful ways is only natural, according to Nietzsche, and no more morally repugnant than a hawk devouring a mouse.

But what began "innocently," "naively," as simply an instinct of man, soon fell to "spiritualization and deification." The right to violence, the right to expend such energies, fell to those in high society, as a societal right, just as it was condemned by law for the rest. Indeed, it was not exceedingly long ago that those with the most

power could still very much get away with violent expressions of festivity. As Nietzsche notes, weddings, festivals, and other celebratory occasions were often accompanied by brutal displays such as executions or other punishments. Even then, as the human instinct for violence was being deformed, celebrating life, saying yes to the experience, went hand in hand with the cruelties of life. And in the darkened halls of the homes of those wealthy enough, the old forms of cruelty manifested themselves as “no noble household was without creatures upon whom one could heedlessly vent one’s malice and cruel jokes.” Thus the hypocrisy presents itself – the high, the *noble*, deride man’s natural instincts all the while nurturing and indulging them under the guise of secrecy or civilized justice.

To further illuminate this distortion and tartuffery of which he speaks, Nietzsche’s next example is *Don Quixote*, Cervantes’ masterpiece of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (released mere years after *The Merchant of Venice*). He warns that modern audiences and their sensibilities would be offended by the abuse and general mistreatment the protagonist suffers at the hands of the Duchess, but impresses that audiences of Cervantes’ time would have had no qualms with such behavior. In fact, it would seem only natural that a member of such a class as the Duchess would have the right to handle their subordinates as roughly as they deemed pleasurable. Indeed, the torment which Quixote suffers in the court of the Duchess was comedic gold in its time. The bloody drive of Shylock, though legal and fair, was roundly derided as barbaric, yet the same instinct for violence, although in a different, more advanced form, was celebrated when it came from the Duchess. Because, according to

Nietzsche, regardless of how man and his society may twist it, hide it, or revile it, “To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more: this is a hard saying but an ancient, mighty, human, all-too-human principle to which even the apes might subscribe.” Cruelty is an entrenched aspect of humanity, a permanent part of the human condition, as involved in and necessary to the enjoyment of life as any other part. To dismiss it, to outlaw it, is a crime against man’s own nature.

### **Section 7**

“Let me declare expressly that in the days when mankind was not yet ashamed of its cruelty, life on earth was more cheerful than it is now that pessimists exist.”

These pessimists of whom Nietzsche speaks are those who would condemn a natural part of man’s being, his desire for violence and the expression of force, turn their backs on it, and then bemoan the world that contains it. These pessimists see the world as dark and depressed, *but only because they color it that way themselves*. These men feel shame at what they are, and thus certainly are prone to angst, depression, and rejection of life. Saying ‘No’ to what they are and thus saying ‘No’ to life, these men, who seek to transform man from an animal into something supposedly divine, have done no more good for humanity than weeds which choke out the life of those around them. The weed will grow, but nothing else. In rejecting the true nature of man, in becoming “ashamed of all his instincts,” man has created an image for himself not in accordance with his abilities. All of this progressed to the point at which man could barely stomach himself, as evidenced by Pope Innocent the Third’s

catalogued condemnation of the human condition. Man was left with nothing except the stark difference between his reality, and the ought he could never attain.

One of the symptoms of this existential sickness is a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the nature of the world, more accurately the role of pain and violence in said world. After rejecting the more primal, violent yet perfectly natural, instincts of man the animal, man was left living in a world surrounded, and molded, by such instincts, also natural, yet alien to the new conception. Such is the case with modern man, that they mourn the existence of suffering in the world and view it as the singular fantastic flaw in the otherwise spectacular phenomenon that is life on Earth. This flaw is so great as to topple ideas as grandiose as the gods, spawn a reactionary discipline in opposition – *theodicy*, and even arouse doubt as to the value of existence itself. But this adverse reaction to the nature of the world, the suffering inherent to living, is not necessary to the human condition; it is man's forgetting of his natural, powerful self, and a time when "men were unwilling to refrain from *making* suffer and saw in it an enchantment of the first order, a genuine seduction *to* life," that leaves man miserable and out of place.

But the only thing that could make this suffering more unpalatable to the modern sensitive man was the *senselessness* of it. Suffering seemingly at random is an insult to the newly dignified conception of man and his mission. This is at the heart of spiritual creation, whether it be the Christian or any other mythology; a desire to make sense of the suffering in the world. Earlier conceptions made sense of suffering by creating a supernatural spectator, a cosmic watcher who dealt suffering for

pleasure or justice. The stories and motivations would differ, but the end result was the same — *suffering had a reason*. “So as to abolish hidden, undetected, unwitnessed suffering from the world and honestly to deny it, one was in the past virtually compelled to invent gods and genii of all the heights and depths, in short something that roams even in secret... and will not easily let an interesting painful spectacle pass unnoticed.” The Christian mythology later arrived at the idea that this observation would bring salvation to the observed; a softer touch to a primeval attempt at comfort.

Primeval, but primitive? This seemingly simple attempt to justify the “evil” or injustice in the world is startlingly effective. The vein runs deep through the course of human philosophy, “merely consult Calvin and Luther.” Before that, there is no doubt that this belief undergirded the culture and customs of the Greeks; our intellectual and philosophical fathers; pedestal-dwellers in our modern age. The glory of the kill, the courage in combat, the honor gained at the edge of a blade; all foci of the Greek myths and legends, from Hercules to Hector, are values and attributes dependent on the spectator. The trials of Odysseus would be meaningless without the backdrop of divine play, but as it is, his tenacity and ingenuity have passed down through the ages.

This insistence, that the lives and deeds of men were under close cosmic scrutiny, once conceived, permeated all aspects of Greek culture. It became an integral part of even their daily moral philosophies. As a precursor to the Christian conception of a watchful God; the Greeks believed all of their world to be as a stage

for the enjoyment of their gods. They were a "nation of actors" and as such could not imagine that the fruits of their labor and the products of their pain, their virtue and vice, would go quietly into the inky black. A watcher waited, hidden, celebrating even their most bitter defeat.

Irrevocably entwined in this paradigm, necessary to its continued belief, there arose the firm conviction in the existence of *free will*. Without it, how else could the gods be eternally engrossed by the machinations of mortal man? "The absolute spontaneity of man in good and in evil, was devised above all to furnish a right to the idea that the interest of the gods in man, in human virtue, *could never be exhausted*." So naturally, Nietzsche notes with some sarcasm, the philosophers were left with no real choice but to dispose of the deterministic world. The ancient world, of public spectacles and festivals, had a fondness for and felt an obligation toward the Spectator, as filling an important natural role in the world, "and, as aforesaid, even in great *punishment* there is so much that is festive!"

### **Section 8**

"The feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, had its origin, as we saw, in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship, that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: it was here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first *measured himself* against another."

Every configuration which modern study would deem fit to bestow upon the title of *civilization* has included some sort of interpersonal measuring akin to the



creditor-debtor relationship. This unique and natural composition allows for a material balance with which to weigh one individual against another. The measure of what is had and what is owed, what can the individual provide for itself and what does it require from others, was and is an effective method of judging the value of the individual. This earliest form of communication, nay *community itself*, was the heart of human growth and evolution. From the simplest trade, the mind of man wrapped around this notion and it grew with a thousand customs, bylaws, traditions, and exceptions. The creditor-debtor relationship spurred the intellectual growth of the human animal, further separating it from the rest of the kingdom; and this did not pass unnoticed by its practitioners. Here we see the beginning of man's impressive mental faculties and the belief that it somehow put him above the fray.

“Buying and selling, together with their psychological appurtenances, are older even than the beginnings of any kind of social forms of organization and alliances.” It was the valuating eye, accustomed and trained by the enthusiastic embrace with which man held fast to his apparent evolution to the complexities of the creditor-debtor relationship, which colored the creation of all other social compacts. Buying and selling, measuring, and the like became the lens through which man viewed his world; he learned to “size things up,” and judge with his eyes on a basis of marketable value. As Nietzsche says is typical for a budding animal, wallowing in its own exceptional nature and its apparent success, it sank its teeth into the notion and never let go. This type of evaluation became a lifestyle, no longer quartered to one sliver of interaction; “characteristic of the thinking of primitive mankind, which is

hard to set in motion but then proceeds inexorably in the same direction." Emerge a world newly conceptualized by the maxim: Everything has a price.

Thus was minted a new notion of Justice. All moral and ethical suppositions stem from this flow; this idea that every action can be translated into a giving and a taking; that an objective value can be placed on every action. The natural conclusion being that these evaluations can be manipulated as easily, and with as seamless finality, as the numbers between a creditor and a debtor. This is how comparable powers grew to interact and understand one another, on a basis of give-and-take, but only comparable powers. The strong and the weak became further separated, as the weak could not contend on the same ground as the strong; the notion that these rules should transcend the boundaries of power is an all too modern idea. The strong could continue as they always had, but the weak had no recourse but to find their own way to stand next to the strong, in a way which they could not individually.

## **Section 9**

"The community, too, stands to its members in that same vital basic relation, that of the creditor and the debtors."

Entering into a community, living within its boundaries and enjoying the freedoms and securities that it so offers, is, like many great men such as Locke and Hobbes have theorized, akin to entering into a contract among men. The advantages of society are numerous and mostly taken for granted in this day and age, as living without a society seems nigh impossible. The existence of the community and its

rules, as they have been agreed upon or enforced, either through democracy or tyranny, it makes little necessary difference in the spirit, protects the individual from the inequities of life among the lawless and the harshness of life among the elements. Rules, and the powers which enforce them, protect the individual and his property from those within and without the community; those within are trusted to behave according to the code or else face the consequences, and those outside the community are not trusted at all. The amassing of buildings and public works protect the lone man from battling the elements by his self, city walls protect all equally. But the citizen only enjoys these protections, and the liberties which they afford, as long as the citizen agrees to follow the rules laid down by the community. This is a give-and-take, as between creditors and debtors; the community will protect the citizen, if the citizen protects the community by obeying the rules.

“What will happen if this pledge is broken?” In this case, the community, which is the creditor, has the right to exact compensation, and this compensation will surely be grave. For a transgression against the community stands as a special sort of transgression, a uniquely spiteful violation of the age-old relation, oft broken, between creditor and debtor. Not only has the debtor already partaken of the goods of the creditor, by living within the walls and security of the community for a period of time and taking advantage of the nature of such a civilized community to the point of taking an action which would have been more personally defended against outside of the community, but has also attacked the creditor himself. The creditor in this case is the community as a whole, and as individuals, and the lawless debtor attacks all of

them when he violates the rule of law which makes community life possible. As a result, the creditor is within its rights to punish the offender, and what could be more effective than by reminding them how much the benefits of society are actually worth.

The debtor is therefore exiled, forced to dwell once more in a savage world, unrefined by a code of conduct or rule of law. Stripped of all protection, the offender can truly know what it is that has been enjoyed, and betrayed, at the creditor's expense. At this point, the offender is not only at the mercy of the elements and the exiled, but also the community to which they no longer belong. "Punishment' at this level of civilization is simply a copy, a *mimus*, of the normal attitude toward a hated, disarmed, prostrated enemy, who has lost not only every right and protection, but all hope of quarter as well." Those which violate the contract between society and the individual are at war with the society, as repeated and growing attacks from within will destroy a small society as surely as any outside force, thus the punishments and traditions regarding lawbreakers within the society are derivations of the practices of war in the society.

## **Section 10**

"As its power increases, a community ceases to take the individual's transgressions so seriously, because they can no longer be considered as dangerous and destructive to the whole as they were formerly."

At its formation is when a society is most vulnerable. As time passes, institutions, traditions and customs cement themselves into the minds and hearts of

the people. Ideally, their devotion to society will renew and invigorate these societal norms as required until eventually it becomes second nature. Once a society has proven itself over time to be an effective way of life, it will be maintained by those which it maintains. The most important tradition in a civilized society is law. As society grows and strengthens, the rule of law evolves. The stronger the society, the more forgiving the code.

In the beginning, a society is held together only by the will of the people, a conscious, daring will that is necessary when undertaking any great task, not the will which compels most citizens to follow through with the expectations which generations of society have forged. Thus any crime reflects a faltering in the general will and poses a great threat to the ideological experiment which is the creation of a society. For this reason, early codes of behavior and the punishments for violation were extremely strict. As Nietzsche noted, those debtors which would harm the creditor-state were cast out and treated as hostile enemies of war. But as the years march on, a great inversion occurs, and it requires more will to break out of societal norms than to follow them; the nation-state achieves a level of stability and security.

At this point, it is no longer necessary to completely destroy and defile those who would cast offense against the state. The state holds a power decidedly larger than any individual and thus feels comfortable in allowing the offender to atone or make up for his crimes. Exile and death become the exception, not the rule. Minor offenders are allowed back into the fold, and only those whose actions direly threaten the safety of society, actions such as treason or mass murder, are treated as enemies of

war. All other minor offenders, though they attacked the benevolent creditor, are protected from the whims of the injured and instead are dealt with according to the rules of the now strengthened state. The desire of the state has changed; whereas before, harshness and cruelty served to dissuade all potential dangers to the state, now the state is interested in quarantining any disturbance so that it cannot *grow* and become a danger to the state. One murder will not tear down a powerful state, riots may.

Once offenses to the societal norms are no longer viewed as necessarily treasonous to some degree, the need for other punishments arises. At this moment the legal code is forced to evolve. In the case of Western civilization, there arose the idea that for every harm there would be a manner of recompense which would not necessarily right the wrong, but would serve as penance for the violator. The legal system began codifying equivalent punishments for various crimes, instead of exiling all violating debtors. At the same time as this idea, that for all wrongdoing there was a path to make it right, began; there also began a systematic distancing of the agent from the action. An individual could compensate the state or the citizens for wrongdoing and then continue, unblemished. These evolutions demonstrate marked change from the bloodthirsty "law" of old, but they only last as long as the state feels powerful. When society finds itself on precarious ground, it will again declare war upon all dishonest debtors. Until then, "How much injury he can endure without suffering from it becomes the actual *measure* of his wealth."

"The justice which began with, 'everything is dischargeable, everything must

be discharged,' ends by winking and letting those incapable of discharging their debt go free: it ends, as does every good thing on earth, by *overcoming itself*." Nietzsche identifies this phenomenon, one above justice, above creditors and debtors, as mercy. The greatest power resides within those who hold so much power, that they have no need to exercise it.

### Section 11

"Here a word in repudiation of attempts that have lately been made to seek the origin of justice in quite a different sphere – namely in that of *ressentiment*."

Nietzsche notes that it may have been in vogue in his time to search for the origins of justice in the reactive, bitter feelings of the injured, these psychologists had it completely wrong. By their reasoning, justice rose from revenge and thus had nothing more at its core than a kneejerk reaction to being wronged; nothing more, nothing less. This marked but one part of a larger academic wave which sought to institutionalize and aggrandize the reactive notions of those too small, too weak, or too scared to act. Nietzsche sees no problem with addressing these reactive feelings, which are a natural part of being human, but the answer should be to overcome these, quite literally, base reactions in lieu of positive, active modes of expression. Fittingly, Nietzsche states that at the core of such aggrandizement of *ressentiment* lies *ressentiment* itself! In the spirit of "scientific fairness" by which the weaker minds seek to find the good in every flaw, so as to not call it a flaw but merely difference, the reactive emotions such as jealousy, revenge and mistrust, hallmarks and keystones of

the weakest, are lauded. However, this same vision, which claims to find the utility and goodness in even the darkest places, shuts its eyes tightly against the uglier active equivalents, such as the lust for power, and condemns them. It condemns them even though the active forces inside mankind brought him farther than the reactive ever could. Of course, fear makes it easy to condemn power in others, as easy as it is to praise impotence.

“As for [the] specific proposition that the home of justice is to be sought in the sphere of reactive feelings, one is obliged for truth’s sake to counter it with a blunt antithesis: the *last* sphere to be conquered by the spirit of justice is the sphere of reactive feelings!” Because, quite simply, an individual who is just treats a man fairly, according to what is just, and not based on a personal reaction such as jealousy or revenge. Those reactive tendencies actually cause the mind to stray *from* justice, not draw towards it. The reactive man cannot help but take into special account the personal wrongs felt at the hands of the one being judged. The active man does not wait for the world around him to influence his judgment and tell him how to feel. The active man is comfortable in his own self-worth and thus hands down justice as is fitting, regardless of his personal stake in the matter. He is “a hundred steps closer to justice than the reactive man... has in fact also had at all times a *freer* eye, a *better* conscience on his side: conversely, one can see who has the invention of “bad conscience” on his conscience – the man of *resentiment!*”

Nietzsche suggests that we turn to history to discover the true nature of justice and law. The impetus behind the formation of society and the codes which govern its



people and practices is certainly not in the reactive side of the populace. The reactive do not create from nothing; they hijack the already instituted and morph them from the inside. This may not all necessarily be incorrect or misguided; but it is certainly not responsible for creation nor is it revolutionary. Creation and revolution are acts of force and will. They are undertakings which are demanding, physically and mentally, upon all who would attempt them. The “active, strong, spontaneous, aggressive” individuals in society are the ones who create the world around them, and create the world around their fellow citizens. The reactive population simply lives there and reacts. In fact, according to Nietzsche, far from finding its roots in the reactive; the law is the result of the efforts of the active and aggressive who wished to protect the people and society from the oft-overwhelming and unthinking bilious nature of the reactive; the reactive whose justice is clouded by personal grudges and emotions.

Justice in society is the suppression of the natural instincts of the reactive, the *ressentiment*, by the stronger powers in society, whether they be individuals, or the institutions they leave behind. Institutions of justice serve to distract the reactive rabble from their feelings of injustice and anger; to transform their wrath, or at least dilute it into something more akin to justice, something quite different from revenge. These institutions do this in three ways. They take the erring debtor out of the hands of those that have been wronged and into the impartial fold of the justice system, which theoretically is unbiased and procedurally sound. They divert anger from the offending agent by portraying the real enemy as being the destruction of law and

order, from either side, and not one individual offense. Lastly, they codify what have been determined as proper compensatory measures for catalogued offenses, offering intellectual assurance that justice can be achieved through tried and tested means.

The combination of all three is what is called the institution and rule of law. Once this has been established, the society will, ideally, gather around the protection of its theory of justice not the individual. Before the inception of law, there was nothing for the citizenry to rally around except self-interest.

The concept of justice, *justice itself*, was created by man upon the creation of the institutions and rules of law. Outside of the rules of man, there is no such thing as a just or unjust action, there is simply *action*. Life acts out of necessity, and the animal kingdom reflects this. Killing, theft, and deception are natural acts which animals perform in order to survive. It is a bloodthirsty world for the animal kingdom, one which humans are a part of no matter how hard they may try to separate themselves, and there are no rules. There is no right and wrong, there is only survival. Violence and destruction are some of the “basic functions” of life and it “simply cannot be thought of at all without this character.”

It follows from this, the necessity of violence for survival, that any rules which would impair an individual’s ability to discharge and act upon these instincts are “exceptional conditions,” that is, they are jettisoned at the first sign of mortal danger. The legal codes are exactly that, exceptional conditions, and therefore so is the creation dependent on them – *justice*. Justice, because it is directly opposed to the will of life, is an artificial restriction; and being a restriction that can be broken should the

will be strong enough, is surely not a real restriction at all. But it serves a grand purpose; placed high enough on the pedestal and it serves as a beacon to follow and an avatar to protect, gaining supremacy over all as an arbiter between powers in order to prevent conflict from arising and consuming the state. But while such a creation would empower the state and the theory of justice, it would serve to impede even the strongest-willed men. Even those strong enough to assert their power beyond the moral boundaries of their fellow men would be forced to deal with the repercussions of the assembled wrath of the masses; such a wrath that even the strongest may not be able to endure. According to Nietzsche, this constriction was “an agent of the dissolution and destruction of man, an attempt to assassinate the future of man, a sign of weariness, a secret path to nothingness.”

## Section 12

“Yet a word on the origin and the purpose of punishment – two problems that are separate, or ought to be separate: unfortunately, they are usually confounded.”

In seeking the answers to these questions, Nietzsche again finds the work that was laid down by genealogists that had come before him as insufficient and egregiously flawed. Their efforts were doomed to fail because they misunderstood the fundamental laws behind the evolution of an entity, be it an animal, custom, or law. Previous genealogists sought the origin of the thing *within* its purpose, believing that finding the purpose of a custom, even if it were centuries old, revealed the reason for its inception. This, according to Nietzsche, is not true for the purpose of law and is

not any truer for punishment. The most important notion to remember when attempting to understand anything on an historic scale is that "the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart;" this flies in the face of years of historiographer's theories.

The conflation of the origin and the purpose of a thing ignores the fact that everything in the world is a product of cycles of subduing powers, cycles of evolution. That is the fundamental aspect that historiographers of the past failed to realize. All action in the world is a process of subjugation, as worldly powers combat for dominance and the winner paints the world according to his tastes. Every time this occurs, the meaning and purpose of the objects within the world changes; because of this, the contemporary purpose of the thing has no necessary bearing on the context of its creation. This applies as equally to the schoolhouse turned barracks in a conquered state as it does to the values and morals held by the populace.

"Purposes and utilities are only *signs* that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function." Thus, the history of a thing is the story of successive wills; an unbroken evolution of reinterpretation which does not necessarily follow *any* logical progression. There is no preordained goal, no plan set in motion at the moment of inception, simply the first will shaping the world and exposing its creation to the wills around it. What remains as the end of the day, when the dust has settled, likely holds little in common with the original. "The form is fluid, but the 'meaning' is even more so."

These same rules, which govern the evolution of concepts and customs, such

as punishment, can also be seen in the evolution of individual organisms. Even with regards to mental processes and creations, evolution is organic, and sometimes violent. When the organism as a whole evolves, it is common for the purpose of the mechanisms, the organs, which maintain the organism to morph as well. Growth means pain, and sometimes this pain means the destruction of component parts, shedding outdated organs or appropriating the resources elsewhere. But this destruction, the shedding of formerly important, perhaps *necessary*, elements, should not be viewed as a weakening; removal or elimination of superfluous organs "can be a sign of increasing strength and perfection." As the thing evolves, it retains efficiency by no longer maintaining the parts it does not need. It is the way of the world, as mentioned above, that every change occurs as the result of a stronger power subduing any number of smaller powers. But their consequent deaths do not mean that the sum total is a loss; what results could, *should*, be stronger than what remained, as well as different. Nietzsche goes as far as to say that the magnitude of this change, and the strength of the resultant entity, could be measured by the mass of what had to be sacrificed in order to achieve it.

"I emphasize this major point of historical method all the more because it is in fundamental opposition to the now prevalent instinct and taste which would rather be reconciled even to the absolute fortuitousness, even the mechanistic senselessness of all events than to the theory that in all events a *will to power* is operating." Nietzsche decries these modern theories, one he says is the result of a "democratic idiosyncrasy," which would rather believe in romantic views of progress which preserve the illusion

of complete interpersonal equality than face the brutal reality of a world forged by *will*. Former genealogists placed their faith in a Hegel-esque idea of a progressive spirit which guides the nature of the world towards a "fortuitous" end; warmed by the idea that despite their worst mistakes, the world will get better. That; or they subscribed to the belief that the world moved with *no* guidance, from a divine spirit or human action. In both cases, the believer is able to find solace; either in the idea that their present or future is being guided, or, at least, that it is not completely a result of their strength or lack thereof. Both of these exculpate the agent from the situation in which he may find himself. They grant this salvation by denying the truth; that life is a battle of wills and one has only oneself to blame for their station. As Machiavelli asserted in *The Prince*, fortune only topples those who are too weak or unprepared to combat it.<sup>1</sup> But it is the way of modern man, to deny that one man is better than another in any meaningful way. They will accept that the world is a violent place, but never that the will to dominate is the only thing that makes it turn.

This fantasy, this unwillingness to embrace the active nature of the human experience, has permeated every aspect of society, according to Nietzsche. It has gone far beyond menial matters of interpersonal relationships or mass media and spread to the educational loci of the state. Any study of the natural world and the study of man has been hijacked by the prejudice *against* the value of activity and will. Instead, the reactive side of man has been magnified and the secondary activity has

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<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Edited by Harvey Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. Page 60.

been raised supreme. Reaction is always secondary to action, and to place supremacy on the secondary, to praise and recommend a life in the secondary sphere is to cripple the possibility of man. To live in a state of reaction is to lead a life of passivity; to realize true potential, one has to take *action* and create the life and world that is desired. Modern cowardice and weakness has led to a distaste and disdain for any sign of aggressive expansion or *dominance*, and the social drive which was once meant to foster such attempts at greatness now serves to constrict it. Nietzsche warns, however, that it is only through these “form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions” that adaptation takes place, and the organism *as a whole* evolves.

### Section 13

“To return to our subject, namely *punishment*, one must distinguish two aspects: on the one hand, that in it which is relatively *enduring*,... on the other, that in it which is *fluid*.”

Nietzsche further disentangles the evolutionary past of what is now called ‘punishment’ by first distinguishing between *act* and the *intention*. The act of punishing, those physical motions which entail punishment, are the enduring aspect. They are not metaphysically connected with any certain, fixed intention. The intention behind punishment is the fluid aspect, and this is the purpose; the purpose which Nietzsche earlier said was mistakenly used to chart its origin. The intention and the act are separate; this allows for the intention to change through time although

the act, aside from various technological bells and whistles, stays the same. The mechanics of punishment had existed for a long time before the concept of punishment was transplanted onto it.

This fluid element, the purpose, is the result of generations of wills, each subduing those before it and creating new purpose in the freshly forged world. Because of this, the history of the purpose of a thing is immensely hard to determine, nigh impossible. Loaded into the investigation is the entire history of the act, not the purpose, and all of the purposes for which the act was once important. As mentioned above, these transformations are the result of battles for dominance, *strength*, not logic. The chain of purposes does not necessarily have any reasonable path which can be tracked. Unraveling this mystery today is most likely impossible; says Nietzsche, "only that which has no history is definable." One has to look earlier in man's history, his prehistory, to seek the simpler, more original purpose behind the act of punishment; before the wills of men, or eventually society, man *en masse*, reshaped it. Each time the transformation pushed new aspects to the foreground, emphasized different ideals; Nietzsche theorized that the last transformation place deterrence above all else.

To emphasize this lack of understanding, perhaps the impossibility of ever understanding, Nietzsche points out the multitude of purposes which punishment now serves, all and none. The point being, that this act which plays such a large role in society, in so many *important* arenas, has no definitive purpose. Although the act is concrete, it can be applied in countless ways: to render harmless the dangerous; compensation to the injured; to isolate a disturbance by removing the agent from



informal retribution; to strike fear into the populace; to celebrate the defeat of one's enemies; to make a memory; etc. Punishment has so many applications in society, but today people do not really *why*. There is not an answer as to the utility of the act or why it was ever begun in the first place. At an early age, perhaps the concept of punishment could have been understood and maybe even directed, but at this point, in this high society, the reasons for brutality are quite accidental.

#### **Section 14**

“It is clear that punishment is overdetermined by utilities of all kinds. All the more reason, then, for deducing from it a *supposed* utility that, to be sure, counts in the popular consciousness as the most essential one.”

This essential utility, which, beyond all of the other countless reasons, justifies the brutal nature and the bloody history which punishment brings into society, is the notion that punishment from society is the surest way in which to make the guilty party punish *itself*. That is, punishment serves to invigorate the conscience which must have been absent before the deed was done. The backlash from society, somehow, is the only way that the guilty party can be made to realize they are, in fact, guilty. Put it this way, punishing someone could be viewed as making them a better person because it is awakening the better part of their nature. This is a gross misunderstanding of the human condition, and its psychological reactions to violence and it is this misunderstanding which also gave birth to what Nietzsche calls the “bad conscience;” the barriers and feelings which ascetics have created and tried to

legitimize through punishment.

The one gaping flaw which Nietzsche points out is that these men being punished, these individuals who have already shown disregard for society and the other people in it, are not the type of people who are prone to these sorts of feelings in the first place. If these individuals were susceptible to them, they likely would not have violated the law at all. No, these are not the people whom punishment makes better, if any such exist; "Generally speaking, punishment makes men hard and cold." In the strong, the truly dangerous, punishment has the opposite effect as intended; it isolates but empowers. It instills self-reliance and destroys empathy, precisely the opposite of what is needed to rehabilitate one into society. Those whom punishment does not strengthen, it destroys utterly, and the sight of a broken man should appeal to none.

This outcome, opposite as intended, is easily explained by looking into the history which man has left. In Nietzsche's estimation, it is exactly punishment which, for generations, served to most effectively destroy feelings of guilt in the punished individual. Not only does the individual experience the isolation and self-reliance nurtured by punishment, but the act of punishing also prevents the supposed violator from viewing his actions as wrong, morally, in themselves. The very actions of the justice system can mirror those of the perpetrator, extended to but not limited to violence, coercion, and kidnapping (imprisonment, if you prefer), but somehow these actions are viewed as suitable for society. This is compounded by the fact that the justice system has no emotional motive; its only supposed motive is a reaction to the

improper action of another; yet it indulges in the supposedly immoral actions to punish. The lesson which the punished learn from such an incident is not that any of the particular actions taken as being categorically wrong, but only when taken by certain people within the hierarchy and towards certain ends. The question left, then, is how to gain the power necessary for society to allow such expression of power.

These people, these alienated loners, are not the ones who gave birth to guilt, morals, or the bad conscience. These are the ones who expressed their will to power as best they could and dared society, the true holders of the bad conscience, to stop them. In fact, for the longest time in the history of punishment, the entire concept of guilt was alien to both the judge and the judged. The offender did not suffer himself, punishing himself for his 'wrongs,' and the judge did not harm the offender in defense of any moral claim. An offender was merely something harmful that society would be better off without, like glass on the road. Any individuals which would place the society in danger are dealt with as such.

### Section 15

"This fact once came insidiously into the mind of Spinoza, when one afternoon, teased by who knows what recollection, he mused on the question of what really remained to him of the famous *morsus conscientiae*"

Spinoza, like Nietzsche after him, asserted that the moral categories of good and evil were nothing more than human creations and had no correlation with the natural, or godly, world. To Spinoza this was self-evident, as these concepts could not

possibly have any place in the world of an omniscient, omnipotent God. God is only truly all-powerful if there are no such constraints on his behavior. Spinoza's God is a free god, at liberty to take whatever action at any time; Nietzsche seeks to free man in the same way. Similar to Spinoza, Nietzsche is taking humanity back to a more innocent age, an innocent world, where the moral constructions of man do not limit their potential and vilify the natural world.

But the question would remain for Spinoza: what has happened to the *morsus conscientiae*, the bad conscience? For Spinoza, an unfortunate outcome, be it punishment, pain, or even death, is not cause for guilt or self-abasement. Instead, there is merely a feeling of sadness, of disappointment, that whatever had preceded this moment was not what had been hoped. Instead of wallowing in feelings of moral despair, one is expected to learn and overcome. For centuries, this had been the case; as captured criminals thought not of their moral failings, but of their misfortune at being caught. The error, it would seem to them, was in the planning or execution, not the idea. Punishment was not a moral judgment, but a pragmatic one; and would be faced as such.

It is only logical that the wrongdoers would then learn their lesson in pragmatic terms. Punishment did not serve to bolster the moral standing of the punished; it instead sharpened a sense of prudence in the punished. Upon receiving punishment, the lesson learned was to *not get caught*, not to be a better person. Punishment was the price of crossing the boundaries of one's own abilities. Receiving a punishment from society would then be comparable to sustaining wounds in a hunt.

The problem is not one of morality, but of ability. A man must train and take care in order to hunt the most glorious prey; similarly, he must plan and take care when asserting his will over fellow men. Being caught and punished merely means that one was not strong, quick, or fast enough. Punishment lets man know where his limits are; at least temporarily; but it does not instill moral value, it does not 'better' him. What can be expected, according to Nietzsche, is "an increase in fear, a heightening of prudence, mastery of the desires: thus punishment *tames* men, but it does not make them 'better' – one might with more justice assert the opposite." A tame man is one who does not press the boundaries of himself or society. A tame man is one who does not strive for, or achieve, greatness. A tame man is not remembered.

### **Section 16**

"At this point I can no longer avoid giving a first, provisional statement of my own hypothesis concerning the origin of the 'bad conscience'...I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced – that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and peace."

To Nietzsche, this tremendous change, from a world of complete self-reliance and fear of the elements to a communal understanding and apparent safety, was as disconcerting as the shift from life in the sea to life on land. Man, in society, finds himself out of his element. Just as the first land creatures were forced to abandon age-old instincts and adaptations, man was forced to forgo the fundamental aspects of

survival which had led him so well for so long. Society was as new an environment for man, as dry land once was to all creatures. All of the instincts and drives which had guided man through the world became quite suddenly obsolete and improper. Man was forced to live in a completely new way, and such a transformation is not easy. All new solutions had to be discovered in the face of all new challenges. The instincts which were man's nature were no longer sufficient and all he had to rely on was consciousness, which Nietzsche calls the "weakest and most fallible organ." This organ was the only remaining tool which men had to seek the new answers, to develop new instincts, which would guide them through a completely new world. But the instincts of old were not dead, and the appetites which man previously could, and *should*, indulge did not die either. These urges, which could not be killed without killing the animal, were forced to find subtler, hidden discharges.

"All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man." This inward action, this conglomerate of drive and instinct, is what Nietzsche identifies as the soul of man. The soul is not something divine or spiritual, but the fettered energy of man's instincts which once roamed free, when man was free. The inner world of man the animal used to be minimal, as man was free to express his desires, wants, and views. Man was once able to shape the world as much as he could possibly wish, expending energy and power when the whim would strike. The emergence of society, and the binding of man to the rules which dictate it, put an end to this free expression and forced its power inward, toward the individual. Punishment arose as the capital means of prohibiting these

dangerous expressions of will and power from destroying society, and this pressure from the multitudes reflected these powerful, dangerous instincts back upon those who would exercise them. Punishment was, and is, the all too human desire for aggression; violence, and pain distorted and reflected back against the originators. This, according to Nietzsche, is the bad conscience.

This hypocritical distortion was the impetus for man's most destructive illness - man becoming sick *of himself*. Once man was made to see his own instincts as morally wrong, once he was made to see that he himself, by nature, was inherently bad, he bound himself. The very instincts which has led man to his success, which had allowed him to propagate, survive, and thrive, were shunned and man was left in the dark. But in this darkness, under attack from his very soul, man created something hitherto unseen on earth, the divine. Created to justify his eternal, internal suffering, man gave birth to god, so that all could see his pain. But as crippling and damaging as this may have been, and surely the effects can still be seen today, these unique conceptions also made man something entirely different from any other animal and as such became open to an entirely different future which could lead to unfathomable heights or depths.

### **Section 17**

“Among the presuppositions of this hypothesis concerning the origin of the bad conscience is, first, that the change referred to was not a gradual or voluntary one...Secondly, however, that the welding of a hitherto unchecked and shapeless

populace into a firm form was not only instituted by an act of violence but also carried to its conclusion by nothing but acts of violence.”

Nietzsche's theory demands a particularly cruel history of the formation of the state. Unlike the biological organism which slowly finds itself adapted to the world around it, the change in the life of man the animal, from the shifting nature of the nomad to the solid position of a member of society, was sudden and disruptive. Man did not ease into a new lifestyle, but was jarred into it, and the only remaining question is how. To this Nietzsche proposes the only rational answer he can provide, discounting the divine, mystical, or otherwise illogical explanations such as the Hegelian Spirit, and that is the force of other men. This force would naturally be violence. Oppression of the many to the will of the powerful few is what makes a state from a wandering crowd.

The rise of the first state, according to Nietzsche, had nothing to do with contracts, such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes would have people believe. These ideas are nothing more than noble sentimentalism by those unwilling to accept the basic nature of man as a conqueror, not a contractor. The first state was made through violence, as the first conquerors, being undisputed masters of combat and coordination, warfare and organization, were able to force the many to the will of the few. This conquering tribe, first to realize the importance and *possibility* of the subjugation of the weak for the strong, had no place in their hearts for contracts. The powerful do not contract with the powerless, they force their way upon them. That is simply the nature of the powerful; they shape the world to their will, not out of spite



or grand designs, but by instinct.

The true masters of men cannot help but transform the world. Like great artists, they do not smother themselves with doubt, they do not regret their creations, and they cannot stop. They are what they are and act accordingly with no thought for guilt or responsibility to the other. Their creation, their expression of their will, is of paramount importance. "It is not in *them* that the 'bad conscience' developed... but it would not have developed *without them*."

The imposition of order, of a place in the new *state*, had an undeniably huge impact on the evolution of man. Though the prehistoric conquerors did not create the bad conscience, their subjugation of the weak made it an eventuality. Drafted into a society they did not create or rule, the weak were forced into a low place with little power and no rights. The weak, above all else, lost their freedom to the conquerors. And once this instinct for freedom, which is present in all men, was oppressed, it, as mentioned above, turned inward. The desire for freedom, for power, unable to discharge outwardly from the weak, festering inside; is the origin of the bad conscience.

### **Section 18**

"Fundamentally it is the same active force that is at work on a grander scale in those artists of violence and organizers who build states, and, that here, internally, on a smaller and pettier scale... creates for itself a bad conscience and builds negative ideals."

The natural desire in man to dominate, to violently form the world to his image, is the same power which the corrupted man used to tear himself apart. The same *will to power* which drove the blonde beasts of old to conquer those beneath them and create a state which could magnify their power, the same drive which possessed the potency to change the world forever, also, aimed within, at oneself, transformed the nature of man. As forcefully as it defeated the wandering tribes of prehistoric times, the will to power, now forced within seeks to defeat the very man who wields it. In the absence of any external discharge, and no longer free to ravage the other, this violent instinct of man, which cannot be avoided, ravages the ancient ideals and instincts. With no one else to torture, man endeavors to make himself suffer. This utterly negative creation, the likes which the world had never before seen, "a soul voluntarily at odds with itself," this new and fertile and terrible inner landscape brought forth all of the ideals of man's construction, the negative and the positive. With this insight into the nature of man's 'soul' and suffering, one can finally decode the mystery of the supposed beauty of selflessness, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. This abuse of the self represents the most satisfactory expression of violence and delight in cruelty that is not only socially acceptable, but praised. The joy of the ascetic is the same joy once felt by the ancient tribes when destroying the other. Thus, the moral value of the "unegoistic" becomes questionable to say the least — "Only the bad conscience, only the will to self-maltreatment provided the conditions for the *value* of the unegoistic."

## Section 19

“The bad conscience is an illness, there is no doubt about that, but an illness as pregnancy is an illness.”

With this, Nietzsche is saying that although the creation of the bad conscience may be seen as something usurping or even damaging that which created it, it also marks the possibility of the rise of something new. Perhaps, like a child, this is something that could be formed, guided into a creation worthy of the demise of the creator. But to understand exactly what potential this bad conscience may have held for the human race, and to understand exactly what animal man was when he first became pregnant with the bad conscience, one must again delve into the prehistory of man. As before, the relationship between the debtor and the creditor rises to the top. However, in this case, the relationship is not between individuals, but generations.

Early societies, societies whose existence could not be taken for granted by its members and whose collapse was consistently imminent, were marked by a particularly strong connection between the generations. The young generation was acutely aware of a debt upon its shoulders, a debt owed to the older generations which made not only their individual existence possible, but their communal existence. This indebtedness was especially felt towards the originators, those who created the society. This made perfect sense to them, that their ancestors worked and sacrificed to create a community, and so as members of the community, and enjoying the benefits of society, the present generations would owe their ancestors and “has to *pay them back.*” This payback could come in many forms. It could be through sacrifice

or it could be by conquering the surrounding world in the name of the ancestors. But no matter the size of the feast or the empire, as each generation passes the debt grows. Every milestone which society sets bolsters the honor of the founders and thus the debt never diminishes. In time, it became clear that the most potent display of indebtedness to one's ancestors is obedience. The customs and traditions of society reflect the will of the ancestors, those to whom one is most indebted, following these orders from beyond the grave is the highest worship a member of society can bestow upon his ancient benefactors. Then again, in frenzied times, when the debt weighs heaviest, some societies found they could only lighten the burden through blood.

Despite the magnitude or multitude of sacrifices, the debt can never be paid. In fact, the success of a society; its longevity, and its survival, only serve to increase the debt. The stronger a society becomes, the more impressive the ancestors seem. As society grows, so does fear of the power of those who created it, and the debt owed to them. This feeling grows inside of each and every member of society, and social life becomes synonymous with indebtedness. This fear of the ancestors and their power, this debt, can only be eradicated by the destruction of the society and the memory of all it had achieved. Just as the growing strength of the state feeds the memory of the ancestors, each time this strength is lessened and the power of the state wanes, so does the fear and the debt; for if the creation has failed, of what use is the creator.

Conversely, the states which achieve the most success, which grow unimpeded to the heights of human creation, truly their ancestors are the things of legends. These ancient tribesmen, who forged the great states from the fires of an untamed world,

whose might rules for centuries beyond the grave, ascend to the title of gods. Thus, Nietzsche finds the origin of divinity in fear. Those noble hallmarks of divinity — piety, grace; compassion — were not inherent in the early gods and had nothing to do with their worship.

### Section 20

“History shows that the consciousness of being in debt to the deity did not by any means come to an end with the organization of communities on the basis of blood relationship.”

Indeed, these primitive, personal gods and their burdens did not leave man's soul at peace. They did not leave even as the tribes which spawned them transformed into states unlike their forbears had ever imagined, as they became empires. The populations of the world, most at the feet of some tyrannical tribe or another, inherited the gods of their masters, and their values. Whether they were forced to by the edge of a blade or coerced by social pressure, the oppressed will eventually adopt the habits of their slavers, bit by bit, piece by piece, the ingrained feeling of indebtedness to the divine ancestors was no exception, nor was the need to be relieved of it. Through their empires, the early masters, the artists whose medium is the world around them, began a project millennia in the making, deep within the soul of man.

Millennia did pass, and what was started at the dawn of man, hissing in his soul, grew too great and closely approaches its critical mass. The burden grew on men's backs and in their souls; the guilt and the debt multiplied by generations of life

unpaid for. A cancer this malignant always displays symptoms in its host, mankind is no exception. In direct correlation with the growth of the burden, so have the concepts of God and divinity. Unable to discharge the debt of their ancestry through life, and unwilling or unable to give that life for the debt; man was forced to be clever. Through the creation of deities, divinity, noble qualities, and dogma, man found a way to live *for* the discharge of their debts! The debt, and the proper understanding of to whom the debt was owed, led the tribe to discover an answer as to the question of how to live. An answer, not necessarily the right one or even a good one. Thus, the early history of the tribes of men is preserved in the epics of their gods. Every action and struggle amongst the gods of the people reflects their own wandering through issues of nationality, race, custom and value. As the tribes morphed, died, and grew so did their influence on the world around them. The strongest tribes would survive and expand, bringing more and more people into their world; into their values and under their gods. This influx would in turn leave its own mark upon the world into which it had entered.

“The advance toward universal empires is always also an advance toward universal deities.” As the empire grows, so must the religion adapt so as to be compatible with the increasingly diverse beliefs of the realm. Religion serves a real purpose, to relieve the burden of living in debt, a feeling deep in the soul of man which cannot be ignored, and so must be able to reach all of the populace. Therefore, the larger the empire becomes the simpler the religion becomes, to an extent, for the common man. This is best represented by the tendency for major

empires to eventually resort to monotheism. This is exemplified most clearly, to Nietzsche, in the Christian God; the avatar of a monotheistic religion which arrived at its current form through centuries of compromise and transformation as its empire spread and incorporated the religious values and festivals of the conquered people. It worked, and the empire grew unceasingly, as did the weight of the burden, the debt.

But Nietzsche also presumes that the empire could be falling, that Christianity's hold on the soul of man could be slipping. As faith declines, Nietzsche affirms a "considerable decline in mankind's feeling of guilt," leading him to believe that the fall of the Christian God could be the saving grace of humanity. Atheism, to Nietzsche, shall set you free. Atheism perhaps could destroy even the *belief* in a burden upon the soul of man, "Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together."

## Section 21

"So much for a first brief preliminary on the connection of the concepts 'guilt' and 'duty' with religious presuppositions: I have up to now deliberately ignored the moralization of these concepts... as if these concepts were now necessarily doomed since their presupposition, the faith in our 'creditor,' in God, had disappeared. The reality is, to a fearful degree, otherwise."

In reality, the joining of the bad conscience and God was far more powerful than man has yet been able to overcome. The primal instincts of guilt and duty and the violent, joyous discharge, that had slowly but all too swiftly been deprived of man as he entered the catacombs of society, drove deep into the soul of man, into his bad

conscience. This inner turmoil, in conjunction with the perfection of God and the promise of afterlife, worked to halt the progression toward the second innocence Nietzsche described.

Having already been denied the fundamental discharge natural to man and forced to realign his action to the 'moral' compass of his bad conscience, the birth of God pushed man even deeper into his irreconcilable debt. The existence of God, of an even higher perfection, aims to "preclude pessimistically, once and for all, the prospect of a final discharge." Man is to forever remain in debt, as the moralization of guilt and duty turn the concepts not only against the debtor, as it has always been, but upon the creditor. The existence of the divine shames even the most worthy of man's tribal ancestors, and being the creator of man itself, not merely its society, represents an even larger debt. Man's history is forever changed; no longer does he come from noble, proud stock, but from the wretched and indebted. Whether it's the Christian myth of Adam, the cursed ancestor, or a distrust of the natural world, so prone to evil, or, at its most egregious, a turning away from existence, finding it "*worthless as such*, for not being divine, upon the arrival of God, the bad conscience of man rejected the world in its entirety.

Thus enters the master stroke of Christianity; in a world definitionally unfit by the existence of God, populated by sinners and the imperfect, saddled with more debt than ever conceived but no way to discharge it, the Christian God takes it all upon himself and sacrifices himself for his creations. "The creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of *love*, out of love for his debtor!" Then, at the will of the creator, can



man continue to live in the world, but again at a price, to pay a debt which can never be paid.

## Section 22

“You will have guessed *what* has really happened here, *beneath* all this: that will to self-tormenting, that repressed cruelty of the animal-man made inward and scared back into himself, the creature imprisoned in the ‘state’ so as to be tamed, who invented the bad conscience in order to hurt himself after the *more natural* vent for this desire had been blocked – this man of the bad conscience has seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor.”

The creation of God, the conception of the divine, brings man to his most crushing shame and unrelenting guilt. Having already brought himself as low as he could on his own, the arrival of perfection, in the form of an all-loving God, thrusts into man’s view the “ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts.” In God, man finds a being completely lacking in all of the things which the bad conscience has taught man to hate. As well as shoving man’s ‘faults’ into sharp relief, the existence of a creator who, in his own perfection, is lacking all man’s instincts yet loves him anyway, makes all of man’s instincts *imperfection* and, worse, a revolt against the perfection and the divine by their very existence. Natural man, the conqueror and creator; falls one step further, from shameful to demonic.

In conjunction with this discovery, the same malicious artifice which earlier in

the history of man twisted the natural, active discharge of man's will into a vice by celebrating the weak, reactive machinations of the herd, disguises this horrible denial of man's self, and sells it as the grandest of affirmations. Caging the animal in man, neutering his spirit, and killing his instincts is not denial of man, these people say, but affirmation of God and perfection. Thus, the destruction of man is a positive ideal, as it is done for the creator and all the divine that it represents. Man condemns himself, as an impure, shameful creation, to a lifetime of servitude and groveling, and then praises himself for it.

But as horrible as this transformation and subsequent prostration may be, it is also notable for the sheer amount of *will* that it takes to happen, according to Nietzsche. The force of will necessary for an animal as strong as man to cage himself, for all eternity and with no hope of salvation until death, has been unequalled in the history of the world. As completely and drastically as the early "blonde beasts" strove to shape their world and dictate its future, the men of bad conscience "poison the fundamental ground of things," and created a world more akin to a cage than early man ever thought possible. Yet he constructs this world and holds his warden as his Savior.

"What *bestiality of thought* erupts as soon as he is prevented just a little from being a *beast in deed*... Here is *sickness*, beyond any doubt, the most terrible sickness that has ever raged in man."

### Section 23

“This should dispose once and for all of the questions of how the ‘holy God’ originated.”

The existence, even the worship, of gods in the world of men, in no way necessitates the self-destruction and imprisonment which the arrival of the Christian God laid upon modern man. According to Nietzsche, the premiere example of the existence and worship of gods, to the *benefit* of human life, is the Greek culture. The Greek pantheon of gods existed as a celebration and confirmation of everything that made life beautiful. These gods were active, violent, aggressive entities who fought for what their hearts desired. Their worshipers molded the world in their image, unapologetic and unafraid, and their gods inspired them to push themselves in life, not deny it; “these Greeks used their gods precisely so as to ward off the bad conscience.”

As evidence, Nietzsche cites the words of Zeus from Homer’s, “*Strange how these mortals so loudly complain of the gods! We alone produce evil, they say; yet themselves make themselves wretched through folly, even counter to fate.*” “Folly” is what the Greeks, speaking through their highest of deities, found themselves suffering from; not guilt, not immorality, not impurity, *not sin*. The difference is immense. The Greeks saw even the most disappointing or painful outcomes as mere mistakes, unwanted results which one could learn from and use to their advantage when they act next. They did not shoulder guilt or debt from their gods or any divine morality, prostrating themselves and condemning themselves to a life of servitude; instead they embraced a life of

action. Most interesting, is the fact that the existence of their gods served as justification for the Greeks to live free of guilt, in direct opposition to the role of the Christian god. The Greeks, sure of their own worthiness, placed the blame for evil or irrationality *on their gods*. When the worst among men would rear its head, the Greeks did not blame the nature of man; they blamed the gods for *directly* causing such atrocities which they were sure would not come unbidden from as noble a creature as the conquering man. Their gods were their salvation, but because they shouldered the guilt in the present, not promised paradise in the future. The Greeks would accept the punishment for their 'folly,' and learn heartily from it, but they would not carry the guilt for the rest of their lives. Such sentiments would be entirely antithetical to the Greeks' love for a life of action. "In this way the gods served in those days to justify man to a certain extent even in his own wickedness, they served as the originators of evil — in those days they took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt."

#### **Section 24**

"What are you really doing, erecting an ideal or knocking one down?"

But the creation of any ideal necessarily has a cost. To erect an ideal, something pure and true, reality has to be tempered; or in Nietzsche's words "misunderstood and slandered." These lies must then become more important than reality. Man's conscience must be twisted, to accept this new "reality." Because the creation of an ideal necessarily demands an effect, particular to the ideal, on the

psyche of those in its presence, the old ideals, sustained by their own worldview, are challenged.

Modern man sits at the feet of millennia of shaping by bad conscience and craven ideals. This self-hatred is all modern man has known, all he has practiced, and by now, he is a master of the dark art. By now the bad conscience has become so inseparably intertwined with man's natural inclinations that to disentangle modern man from this quandary seems impossible.

Who among modern man has the strength to turn bad conscience against the unnatural inclinations which it was born from and has since sustained? Who can take the mighty will that destroyed man, and become its salvation? All that this world labels is good, comfortable, reconciled, sentimental or weary would stand against this man; nothing is more sure to exile a man from his fellow men, then to poke a hole in this façade of respectability man has created. No, the comfortable "man" of this world desire only sameness and affirmation. Affirmation of their lifestyles and beliefs, that is, not affirmation of their own vitality.

The man such as this, that could reverse this foul process, is extremely unlikely in this environment. This man must be a warrior, lusting for battle, conquest, danger and welcoming pain as affirmation of life. It requires a strong man, unafraid of the elements; to face them and beat them. And it requires a sort of "sublime wickedness, and ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge that goes with great health." This "great health" is at the root. Whether this is possible today is unsure, but in the future this Redeemer may come. A man of "great love and

contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond, whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight from reality -- while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration into reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the redemption of this reality." This Redeemer will save us from both nihilism and God.

### Section 25

"But what am I saying? Enough! Enough! At this point it behooves me only to be silent; for I shall usurp that to which only one younger, 'heavier with future,' in stronger than I has a right -- that to which only Zarathustra has a right, Zarathustra the goddess."

Thus Nietzsche ends the second essay on the Genealogy of Morals with a cry to Zarathustra. Throughout his essay Nietzsche has gone to great lengths to show how the moralization and the supposed ennobling of man has crippled him and diverted him from his true path and his amazing potential. He has described the mental sickness of morality and Christianity, embedded deep within the psyche of modern man, and brought it to the light of day so all could see it for the cancer that it is. It is precisely the unnatural and dishonest ideals of a tamed man which has led modern man to the Great Depression of the soul in which he now finds himself lost. Only by breaking away, by affirming one's existence as man, as such, and not as a failed experiment, destined for unworthiness, can man once again find joy in life. What man could this be? Who will be this redeemer and how can modern man

recognize him? Nietzsche's answer is simple, Zarathustra.

Zarathustra is alone among men. He does not look to the outside for affirmation, but within. He lives alone, not needing the trappings of society or honor of others to feel fulfilled. He proclaims God's death happily, having no need for a divine purpose, for what could be more divine than man at his highest?

### **Conclusion**

It is obvious to those who would look past Nietzsche's colorful prose and vitriolic vocabulary, and who bother to read him generously and in his entirety, that Nietzsche is not a pessimist, or a nihilist. Quite to the contrary, Nietzsche is an optimist of the highest order and one with clear values which draw him far closer to existentialism than nihilism. This is why he dedicates the first third of his essay proclaiming the great potential of man.

This potential is exemplified most clearly, according to Nietzsche, in the instance of a promise. A promise which is more than words; it is an expression of the will of an individual to map the world according to his desire, to force fate and nature into submission. Importantly, as Nietzsche mentions first and foremost, this is an ability uniquely human. The human animal has the power, more than any other creature on Earth; to create the world around them. This, according to Nietzsche, is the *key* to man's potential, if only he had the will to use it.

And this is why Nietzsche writes so extensively on the conquering tribes of man's prehistory. These men were men of will. They were brutal, violent, and

merciless; joyously engaging in what the modern man would proclaim barbarism, but they were *happy*. They were not burdened by the creation of morality or the oppressive gaze of a creator; they were the creators. These men, which modern society and morality would deem primitive and base, were actually fulfilling their potential as human beings far more than the most moral man today. This belief is what makes Nietzsche more than a nihilist. He is fighting for what he believes to be the best course for humanity; he is striving to instill the values of old, which raised his ancestors to the highest peaks despite the harshness of a prehistoric world, into the people of today's society. And to understand the importance of this great return, one must understand the folly and hypocrisy of the current model, thus Nietzsche's preoccupation with the destruction of the Judeo-Christian morality which has infected the modern Western World.

This is why Nietzsche rages so violently and loudly against the ennoblement and aggrandizement of the modern conceptions of justice and the punishment connected to it. Modern man touts his sense of justice, his civic pride, and his laws as the apex of civilization and the lighthouse to guide man through the stormy waters of the world. He proclaims it a higher conception than any before it; an evolved, sophisticated way of living, far beyond the knuckle-draggers of the past. But it is all pretense; the violence is still there, the brutality is still there. It bathes the roots of justice and flows through its body, whether modern man would care to acknowledge it or not; for the key to all modern ideals lies hidden in the sanguine past of the most original, and most honest, of man's conception of interaction, the creditor-debtor



relationship. It is this relationship, the materialistic notion of payment and debts owed, which eventually morphed into what men call justice. It was not born a noble ideal, but a violent instinct.

If any doubt the bloodlust of modern man, or cannot see it hidden behind tradition and custom, one has only to look at the place of punishment in human society. The modern world holds punishment as something sacred. Punishment is reserved for those actions which serve to instill the proper feelings of guilt and encourage the growth of a moral center in those who have caused injury to the state or its citizens. It is specified violence. If the receiver were not found guilty of a crime, it would not be called punishment. If the act was not aimed at correcting the individual and merely at causing pain, then it would not be called punishment. But all of these distinctions are folly; they exist only to assure those who would enjoy such acts can do so with a clean conscience. Punishment is violence dressed up as piety, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, and that conclusion is easily reached upon examination of the birth and evolution of punishment in human society.

Naturally, the proponents of modern society would argue that even given the underlying violence found in the institution of justice and execution of punishment, the sum total of violence in the world is less than it was without them. This is the crucial disagreement which Nietzsche has with them. According to Nietzsche, the violence has not gone away, it has simply been internalized. This is the bad conscience. In a world in which discharging the natural violent instincts of man is deemed immoral and illegal and holds dire consequences, the instincts do not die.

They are merely turned inwards upon the self. The bad conscience, the disgust with humanity, its nature and its instincts, is self-mutilation; the invention of good and evil, oppressive restrictions. Morality has not freed man from violence. Far from it, it has doomed man to be his own destruction. The world is still a violent and painful place, but man does it to himself and hides it behind the ideal, *piety*. This is the root of Nietzsche's conflict with the Judeo-Christian God

The advent of this God, in conjunction with the bad conscience, nearly doomed man. In the face of God, man found any further justification which he needed to confirm his own worthlessness. The Judeo-Christian God represented everything which man was not, and made man the animal unworthy. Everything about itself which mankind had been rejecting was "confirmed" by the presence of the divine. Not even in debt to its own kind anymore, God became that thing to which man could enslave himself. The appearance of supposed perfection brought man lower than he ever had been before, and left no apparent escape.

At this moment, Nietzsche's lament is clear. Man has brought himself low. Formerly the conquering creators of the world, man has shackled himself to false idols and behaviors contrary to his own happy nature, and, in doing do, risk squandering the potential which took millennia of prehistory to create. The human soul, the bad conscience, which Nietzsche describes as a great inward extension, a maw, is, in this sense, much like the Platonic cave. The bad conscience colors the world so that man cannot see the reality of his existence. The largest difference may be that in this case the people are not merely viewing shadows, they *are* shadows. They are slaves to the

bad conscience and God, not even knowing what they truly are, what they could be.

They see only unworthy creatures at the mercy and whim of the creator. Nietzsche is trying to be the one to lead man out of the cave, so that he can see the world, and himself, free of artificial constrictions.

This is the crux of what Nietzsche wanted to illuminate in his essay, the stark differences between the happy conquerors of old and the dour subjects of today.

Unfortunately, man has betrayed himself and chained himself under the illusion that modern society was more noble, more fulfilling, more *human*. But sadly, according to Nietzsche, none of it is true. There is nothing noble about the false ideals of man.

There is nothing more fulfilling in living a life denying one's instincts instead of embracing them. And there is certainly nothing human about denying the very drives and urges which made humans what they were in the first place. Human beings have the power to accomplish great things if only they would first *overcome themselves*. For Nietzsche, this means finding the strength to accept the true nature of the world and the true nature of human beings, and having the will to abandon the illusions which mankind has believed for so long; a return to innocence, a return to a world without evil, without good and without God.

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