



Friedrich Nietzsche

## The Transvaluation of Values

**A**lthough he was descended through both his parents from theologians, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) made his reputation in philosophy through a “campaign against morality.” No hint of his widespread influence on European thought is given by the facts of his history. He was born in the Prussian city of Röcken, and his father’s premature death left Friedrich to be petted and spoiled as the only male in a household consisting of his mother, a younger sister, and other female relatives. His home life and early education were entirely in keeping with the family tradition of piety, but when he was a student at the universities of Bonn and Leipzig, Nietzsche’s thinking underwent a radical transformation. He was much impressed by the vitality of the ancient Greco-Roman civilization and by the grim realism of the contemporary principle of the “survival of the fittest.” These influences, together with the pessimistic, antirationalistic philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, were the chief external sources of Nietzsche’s extreme revulsion at the ideals of his time; to him, European civilization appeared despicably weak and decadent.

Throughout his life, Nietzsche was plagued by physical disability. An injury suffered in military training in 1867 made active duty impossible, but he later interrupted his academic career to seek the stimulation of the military scene as a volunteer in the hospital corps during the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Illness contracted while he was in service—the beginning of a lifetime of increasing physical suffering—forced him to leave the army, and he returned to the academic world. On the strength of his exceptional academic ability, he had been appointed professor of classical philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland at the age of twenty-four. By the time he was thirty-five, poor health obliged him to resign, and for nearly a decade, he traveled through Europe in a vain search for an environment in which he might recover his health.

Despite the wretchedness of protracted sickness and loneliness, Nietzsche produced a succession of brilliant books. His first important work, *The Birth of Tragedy from*

*the Spirit of Music* (1872), was probably influenced by his brief attachment to the famous composer Richard Wagner. Of his major philosophical works, many express in their titles his protest against the accepted ideals of his time: *Thoughts Out of Season* (1876), *Human All-Too-Human* (1880), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), and *The Antichrist* (1889). Nietzsche's more positive and constructive writings include *The Dawn of Day* (1881), *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882), and the dramatic *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1884). His final work—a collection of fragments—was *The Will to Power* (1889). A violent seizure, early in 1889, followed by insanity, terminated Nietzsche's career; his sister, Elizabeth Foerster-Nietzsche, edited his unfinished works and saw to their publication.

Perhaps more than any other philosopher, Nietzsche stands in need of defense against the tendency to evaluate ideas in terms of the man rather than on their own merits. Against the view sometimes expressed that Nietzsche's extremist theories and emotional style were the expression of a warped mind, there stands the fact that his works are distinguished for brilliance of insight, shrewdness of argument, and soundness of scholarship. Moreover, his radical ideas have been welcomed by many conscientious thinkers in literature, art, pedagogy, politics, religion, and ethics, who, with him, have been alarmed by the decline of individuality and free expression in the "machine age."

Fortified with the conviction that philosophers must serve as "the bad conscience of their age," Nietzsche attacks relentlessly what he sees as the decadence and hypocrisy of traditional European morality—a morality that, he predicts, will inevitably lead to the eclipse of Western civilization. To avert this disaster, Nietzsche proposes a moral countermovement:

After thousands of years of error and confusion, it is my good fortune to have re-discovered the road which leads to a Yea and to a Nay.

I teach people to say Nay in the face of all that makes for weakness and exhaustion.

I teach people to say Yea in the face of all that makes for strength, that preserves strength, and justifies the feeling of strength.<sup>a</sup>

Nietzsche holds up to ridicule the accepted ideals of the Judeo-Christian religion and Greek rationalism, describing them as *reversals* of the true values. To implement the needed moral revolution, he presents a corrected table of virtues: in place of humility, pride; in place of sympathy and pity, contempt and aloofness; in place of love of one's neighbor, no more than tolerance. However, Nietzsche does not intend this doctrine of the *transvaluation of values* for the "common herd," but for the few "free spirits" of the day who are intellectually fit to receive it.<sup>1</sup>

In a series of pungent aphorisms, replete with invective and wit, Nietzsche addresses himself to the aristocracy of free spirits. He exhorts them to prepare for the highest stage in human development, the Superman. For Nietzsche, the Superman

<sup>1</sup>Nietzsche's works are frequently, but erroneously, regarded as philosophical support for the National Socialist (Nazi) movement in Germany. A few themes from his philosophy may support the Nazi doctrines, but there are fundamental differences—for example, in the opposition of Nietzsche's principle of radical creative individualism to the Nazi principle of the priority of the state over the individual.

symbolizes the unfettered spirit, reveling in his magnificent strength and his own worth. Although humanity in its present condition may be regarded as the highest form of existence, our dominance over nature is still precarious. Indeed, "Man is something to be surpassed." The Superman represents a higher level of mastery over nature.

Although the conception of evolution is fundamental in Nietzsche's ethical system, his interpretation of it departs from the widely accepted Darwinian hypothesis. In Darwin's theory, evolution is conceived as passive and mechanical adaptation to the environment, but Nietzsche finds the true meaning of evolution in an aggressive "will to power" to dominate the environment: "The strongest and highest Will to Life does not find expression in a miserable struggle for existence, but in a Will to War, a Will to Power, a Will to Overpower!" There is in evolution no progress toward a goal: Each thing in the universe manifests a ceaseless, blind striving for power, shifting back and forth between success and failure in the competition for mastery.

Our struggle for dominance over the environment is hampered by the teachings of false moralities. The true morality, Nietzsche holds, must build from the immediate sense of power that all people can feel within themselves. Like numerous moralists before him, Nietzsche approves as good whatever conforms to nature and condemns as bad whatever is contrary to it. But he dismisses as unrealistic the description of nature as a rational or providential order. Nature is essentially the will to power, a brutal and savage contest of strength, characterized by frightfulness and tragedy, bloodshed, suffering, and cruelty. Affirming the values that enhance the will to power, saying "yea" to life as it actually is, constitutes for Nietzsche the true morality.

From the point of view of the Nietzschean morality, all ethical theories that conceal the hard facts of existence and teach the repression of the will to power are insidious. Nietzsche therefore castigates Christians and Jews, Germans and Englishmen, philosophers and scientists—and women—for preferring life-denying values. The Judeo-Christian ethic is singled out as the most pernicious source of antinatural morality. Its perversion of the will to power is seen in clergymen seeking mastery under cover of hypocritical sermons on meekness, and its repression of the will to power is seen in the "botched and bungled" masses who are taken in by the deceptions of the priests.

The rationalism of traditional philosophy, because it too misrepresents reality, is regarded as reinforcing the debilitating influence of Christianity. In holding up the ideal of a human being as a rational animal, the philosophers mistakenly elevate reason to the preeminent position in human nature. In actuality, the essence of an individual is not reason, but will—the will to power. In the Nietzschean scheme, the role of reason is to facilitate the functioning of the drive for power by organizing efficiently the conditions of action. Nietzsche uses the Greek gods Dionysus and Apollo to dramatize the relationship between the will and the reason. Dionysus, the frenzied and passionate, is revered as the symbol of the undisciplined will to power. Apollo, representing rationality and order, must be the instrument by which the will to power can increase its mastery. With the Apollonian element supporting rather than suppressing the Dionysian, humans can defy God and dominate the universe: The moral person "lives dangerously."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Nietzsche is notoriously difficult to understand. Roughly speaking, there are "tough" and "gentle" interpretations. Ours falls in the former category.

1. Drawing on his knowledge of philology and history for evidence, Nietzsche contradicts the main currents of the liberal, democratic thought of his time. The cardinal distinction of his ethical theory is that between the "master-morality" of the noble and free spirits and the "slave-morality" of the common run of people.

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

The noble type of man regards *himself* as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: "What is injurious to me is injurious in itself"; he knows that it is he himself only who confers honor on things; he is a *creator of values*. He honors whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of plenitude, of power, which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of a wealth which would fain give and bestow:—the noble man also helps the unfortunate, but not—or scarcely—out of pity, but rather from an impulse generated by the superabundance of power. The noble man honors in himself the powerful one, him also

who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silence, who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and hardness, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard. . . .

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

2. There are, then, different ethical terms for the two moralities: the distinction between "good" and "bad" is made by the

aristocrat, whereas the opposition of “good” and “evil” is the invention of the slaves. Motivated by resentment, the latter call “evil” those characteristics that the aristocrats most honor in themselves.

The guidepost which first put me on the *right* track was this question—what is the true etymological significance of the various symbols for the idea “good” which have been coined in the various languages? I then found that they all led back to *the same evolution of the same idea*—that everywhere “aristocrat,” “noble” (in the social sense), is the root idea, out of which have necessarily developed “good” in the sense of “with aristocratic soul,” “noble,” in the sense of “with a soul of high calibre,” “with a privileged soul”—a development which invariably runs parallel with that other evolution by which “vulgar,” “plebeian,” “low,” are made to change finally into “bad.” . . .

The revolt of the slaves in morals begins in the very principle of *resentment* becoming creative and giving birth to values—a resentment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action, are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge. While every aristocratic morality springs from a triumphant affirmation of its own demands, the slave morality says “no” from the very outset to what is “outside itself,” “different from itself,” and “not itself”: and this “no” is its creative deed. . . .

What respect for his enemies is found, forsooth, in an aristocratic man—and such a reverence is already a bridge to love! He insists on having his enemy to himself as his distinction. He tolerates no other enemy but a man in whose character there is nothing to despise and *much* to honor! On the other hand, imagine the “enemy” as the resentful man conceives him—and it is here exactly that we see his work, his creativeness; he has conceived “the evil enemy,” “the evil one,” and indeed that is the root idea from which he now evolves as a contrasting and corresponding figure a “good one,” himself—his very self!

The method of this man is quite contrary to that of the aristocratic man, who conceives the root idea “good” spontaneously and straight away, that is to say, out of himself, and from that material then creates for himself a concept of “bad”! This “bad” of aristocratic origin and that “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred—the former an imitation, an “extra,” an additional nuance; the latter, on the other hand, the original, the beginning, the essential act in the conception of a slave-morality—these two words “bad” and “evil,” how great a difference do they mark, in spite of the fact that they have an identical contrary in the idea “good.” But the idea “good” is *not* the same: much rather let the question be asked, “Who is really evil according to the meaning of the morality of resentment?” In all sternness let it be answered thus:—*just* the good man of the other morality, just the aristocrat, the powerful one, the one who rules, but who is distorted by the venomous eye of resentfulness, into a new color, a new signification, a new appearance. This particular point we would be the last to deny: the man who learned to know those “good” ones only as enemies, learned at the same time not to know them only as “evil enemies,” and the same men who *inter pares* [between equals] were kept so rigorously in bounds through convention, respect, custom, and gratitude, though much more through mutual vigilance and jealousy *inter pares*, these men who in their relations with each other find so many new ways of manifesting consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship, these men are in reference to what is outside their circle (where the foreign element, a *foreign* country, begins), not much better than beasts of prey, which have been let loose. They enjoy their freedom from all social control, they feel that in the wilderness they can give vent with impunity to that tension which is produced by enclosure and imprisonment in the peace of society, they *revert* to the innocence of the beast-of-prey conscience, like jubilant monsters, who perhaps come from a ghostly bout of murder, arson, rape, and torture, with bravado and a moral equanimity, as

though merely some wild student's prank had been played, perfectly convinced that the poets have now an ample theme to sing and celebrate. It is impossible not to recognize at the core of all these aristocratic races the beast of prey; the magnificent *blond brute*, avidly rampant for spoil and victory; this hidden core needed an outlet from time to time, the beast must get loose again, must return into the wilderness.<sup>c</sup>

3. Nietzsche argues that creativity is the privilege and gift of the aristocratic—that is, the barbarian, ferocious components of society. Only they, he claims, have accomplished improvements in human nature.

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

upon weaker, more moral, more peaceful races (perhaps trading or cattle-rearing communities), or upon old mellow civilizations in which the final vital force was flickering out in brilliant fireworks of wit and depravity. At the commencement, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their superiority did not consist first of all in their physical, but in their psychical power—they were more *complete* men (which at every point also implies the same as “more complete beasts”).<sup>d</sup>

4. The psychical impotence of the “herd” is reflected in the morality it produces. The basic principle of all slave-morality, Nietzsche tells us, is *resentment* of the aristocratic spirit. For example, altruism, a typical slave ideal, denies the value of creative egoism that is central to the master-morality.

The preponderance of an altruistic way of valuing is the result of a consciousness of the fact that one is botched and bungled. Upon examination, this point of view turns out to be: “I am not worth much,” simply a psychological valuation; more plainly still: it is the feeling of impotence, of the lack of the great self-asserting impulses of power (in muscles, nerves, and ganglia). This valuation gets translated, according to the particular culture of these classes, into a moral or religious principle (the preeminence of religious or moral precepts is always a sign of low culture): it tries to justify itself in spheres whence, as far as it is concerned, the notion “value” hails. The interpretation by means of which the Christian sinner tries to understand himself, is an attempt at justifying his lack of power and of self-confidence: he prefers to feel himself a sinner rather than feel bad for nothing: it is in itself a symptom of decay when interpretations of this sort are used at all. In some cases the bungled and the botched do not look for the reason of their unfortunate condition in their own guilt (as the Christian does), but in society: when, however, the Socialist, the Anarchist, and the Nihilist are conscious that their

existence is something for which someone must be *guilty*, they are very closely related to the Christian, who also believes that he can more easily endure his ill ease and his wretched constitution when he has found someone whom he can hold *responsible* for it. The instinct of *revenge* and *resentment* appears in both cases here as a means of enduring life, as a self-preservative measure, as is also the favor shown to *altruistic* theory and practice. The *hatred of egoism*, whether it be one's own (as in the case of the Christian), or another's (as in the case of the Socialists), thus appears as a valuation reached under the predominance of revenge; and also as an act of prudence on the part of the preservative instinct of the suffering, in the form of an increase in their feelings of cooperation and unity. . . . At bottom, as I have already suggested, the discharge of resentment which takes place in the act of judging, rejecting, and punishing egoism (one's own or that of others) is still a self-preservative measure on the part of the bungled and the botched. In short: the cult of altruism is merely a particular form of egoism, which regularly appears under certain definite physiological circumstances.

When the Socialist, with righteous indignation, cries for "justice," "rights," "equal rights," it only shows that he is oppressed by his inadequate culture, and is unable to understand why he suffers: he also finds pleasure in crying;—if he were more at ease he would take jolly good care not to cry in that way: in that case he would seek his pleasure elsewhere. The same holds good of the Christian: he curses, condemns, and slanders the "world"—and does not even except himself. But there is no reason for taking him seriously. In both cases we are in the presence of invalids who feel better for crying, and who find relief in slander.<sup>e</sup>

5. Continuing in the same vein, Nietzsche condemns the ideals of peace and universal equality, exposing their life-denying qualities. Exploitation and competition, he argues, characterize all living things,

because they are the very essence of the will to power.

To refrain mutually from injury, from violence, from exploitation, and put one's will on a par with that of others: this may result in a certain rough sense in good conduct among individuals when the necessary conditions are given (namely, the actual similarity of the individuals in amount of force and degree of worth, and their co-relation within one organization). As soon, however, as one wished to take this principle more generally, and if possible even as *the fundamental principle of society*, it would immediately disclose what it really is—namely, a Will to the *denial* of life, a principle of dissolution and decay. Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation;—but why should one forever use precisely these words on which for ages a disparaging purpose has been stamped? Even the organization within which, as was previously supposed, the individuals treat each other as equal—it takes place in every healthy aristocracy—must itself, if it be a living and not a dying organization, do all that towards other bodies, which the individuals within it refrain from doing to each other: it will have to be the incarnated Will to Power, it will endeavor to grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendancy—not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life is precisely Will to Power. On no point, however, is the ordinary consciousness of Europeans more unwilling to be corrected than on this matter; people now rave everywhere, even under the guise of science, about coming conditions of society in which "the exploiting character" is to be absent:—that sounds to my ears as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions. "Exploitation" does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the

*nature* of the living being as a primary organic function; it is a consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power, which is precisely the Will to Life.—Granting that as a theory this is a novelty—as a reality it is the *fundamental fact* of all history: let us be so far honest towards ourselves!<sup>f</sup>

6. Nietzsche assigns to Judaism and Christianity the primary responsibility for the dishonest morality that is exhausting European civilization.

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

The *morality of paltry people* as the measure of all things: this is the most repugnant kind of degeneracy that civilization has ever yet brought into existence. And this *kind of ideal* is hanging still, under the name of “God,” over men’s heads!!

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

The *law*, which is the fundamentally realistic formula of certain self-preservative measures of a community, forbids certain actions that have a definite tendency to jeopardize the welfare of that community: it does *not* forbid the attitude of mind which gives rise to these

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

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

This was also the case in regard to the first Christian community (as also the Jewish), the primary condition of which was the absolutely *unpolitical* Jewish society. Christianity could grow only upon the soil of Judaism—that is to say, among a people that had already renounced the political life, and which led a sort of parasitic existence within the Roman sphere of government. Christianity goes a step *further*: it allows men to “emasculate” themselves even more; the circumstances actually favor their doing so.—*Nature* is *expelled* from morality when it is said, “Love ye your enemies”: for *Nature’s* injunction, “Ye shall *love* your neighbor and *hate* your enemy,” has now become senseless in the law (in instinct); now, even *the love a man feels for his neighbor* must first be based upon something (*a sort of love of God*). *God* is introduced everywhere, and *utility* is withdrawn; the natural *origin* of morality is denied everywhere: the *veneration of Nature*, which lies in *acknowledging a natural morality*, is *destroyed* to the roots . . .

What is it I protest against? That people should regard this paltry and peaceful mediocrity, this spiritual equilibrium which knows nothing of the fine impulses of great accumulations of strength, as something high, or possibly as the standard of all things.<sup>g</sup>



**7.** Nietzsche sums up his case against Judaism and Christianity, stressing their unsuitability for the evolutionary struggle.

Among men, as among all other animals, there is a surplus of defective, diseased, degenerating, infirm, and necessarily suffering individuals; the successful cases, among men also, are always the exception; and in view of the fact that man is *the animal not yet properly adapted to his environment*, the rare exception. But worse still. The higher type a man represents, the greater is the improbability that he will *succeed*; the accidental, the law of irrationality in the general constitution of mankind, manifests itself most terribly in its destructive effect on the higher orders of men, the conditions of whose lives are delicate, diverse, and difficult to determine. What, then, is the attitude of the two greatest religions above-mentioned to the *surplus* of failures in life? The endeavor to preserve and keep alive whatever can be preserved; in fact, as the religions for *sufferers*, they take the part of these upon principle; they are always in favor of those who suffer from life as from a disease, and they would fain treat every other experience of life as false and impossible. However, highly we may esteem this indulgent and preservative care (inasmuch as in applying to others, it has applied, and applies also to the highest and usually the most suffering type of man), the hitherto *paramount* religions—to give a general appreciation of them—are among the principal causes which have kept the type of “man” upon a lower level—they have preserved too much *that which should have perished*. One has to thank them for invaluable services; and who is sufficiently rich in gratitude not to feel poor at the contemplation of all that the “spiritual men” of Christianity have done for Europe hitherto! But when they had given comfort to the sufferers, courage to the oppressed and despairing, a staff and support to the helpless, and when they had allured from society into convents and spiritual penitentiaries the broken-hearted and distracted: what else had they to do in order to work systematically in that fashion, and with a good conscience,

for the preservation of all the sick and suffering, which means, in deed and in truth, to work for *deterioration of the European race*? To reverse all estimates of value—that is what they had to do! And to shatter the strong, to spoil great hopes, to cast suspicion on the delight in beauty, to break down everything autonomous, manly, conquering, and imperious—all instincts which are natural to the highest and most successful type of “man”—into uncertainty, distress of conscience, and self-destruction; forsooth, to invert all love of the earthly and of supremacy over the earth, in hatred of the earth and earthly things.<sup>h</sup>

**8.** The moral philosophers, no less than the priests, teach the denial of life, and Nietzsche attacks the “superstitions which heretofore have been fashionable among philosophers.” False psychology, faulty logic, and a misunderstanding of the role of reason serve the philosophers in their hatred of life.

In the whole of moral evolution, there is no sign of truth: all the conceptual elements which come into play are fictions; all the psychological tenets are false; all the forms of logic employed in this department of prevarication are sophisms. The chief feature of all moral philosophers is their total lack of intellectual cleanliness and self-control: they regard “fine feelings” as arguments: their heaving breasts seem to them the bellows of godliness. . . . Moral philosophy is the most suspicious period in the history of the human intellect . . .

*Why everything resolved itself into mummery.*—Rudimentary psychology, which only considered the *conscious* lapses of men (as causes), which regarded “consciousness” as an attribute of the soul, and which sought a will behind every action (*i.e.*, an intention), could only answer “*Happiness*” to the question: “*What does man desire?*” (it was impossible to answer “*Power*,” because that would have been *immoral*);—consequently behind all men’s

actions there is the intention of attaining to happiness by means of them. Secondly: if man as a matter of fact does not attain to happiness, why is it? Because he mistakes the means thereto.—*What is the unfailing means of acquiring happiness?* Answer: *virtue*—Why virtue? Because virtue is supreme rationalness, and rationalness makes mistakes in the choice of means impossible: virtue in the form of *reason* is the way to happiness. Dialectics is the constant occupation of virtue, because it does away with passion and intellectual cloudiness.

As a matter of fact, man does *not* desire “happiness.” Pleasure is a sensation of power: if the passions are excluded, those states of the mind are also excluded which afford the greatest sensation of power and therefore of pleasure. The highest rationalism is a state of cool clearness, which is very far from being able to bring about that feeling of power which every kind of *exaltation* involves. . . .

[Slave moralists] combat everything that intoxicates and exalts—everything that impairs the perfect coolness and impartiality of the mind. . . . They were consistent with their first false principle: that consciousness was the *highest*, the *supreme* state of mind, the prerequisite of perfection—whereas the reverse is true.

If one should require a proof of how deeply and thoroughly the actually *barbarous* needs of man, even in his present state of tameness and “civilization,” still seek gratification, one should contemplate the “leitmotifs” of the whole of the evolution of philosophy:—a sort of revenge upon reality, a surreptitious process of destroying the values by means of which men live, a *dissatisfied* soul to which the condition of discipline is one of torture, and which takes a particular pleasure in morbidly severing all the bonds that bind it to such a condition.

The history of philosophy is the story of a *secret and mad hatred* of the prerequisites of Life, of the feelings which make for the real values of Life, and of all partisanship in favor of Life. Philosophers have never hesitated to affirm a fanciful world, provided it contradicted this world, and furnished them with a weapon

wherewith they could calumniate this world. Up to the present, philosophy has been the *grand school of slander*: and its power has been so great, that even today our science, which pretends to be the advocate of Life, has *accepted* the fundamental position of slander. . . . What is the hatred which is active here?

I fear that it is still the *Circe of philosophers*—Morality, which plays them the trick of compelling them to be ever slanderers. . . . They believed in moral “truths,” in these they thought they had found the highest values; what alternative had they left, save that of denying existence every more emphatically the more they got to know about it? . . . For this life is *immoral*. . . . And it is based upon immoral first principles: and morality says *nay* to Life.<sup>1</sup>

9. The life-seeking values of cruelty and Homeric deception are rediscovered by Nietzsche in the search for values that will stand up alongside the brute facts of existence.

Even obvious truths, as if by the agreement of centuries, have long remained unuttered, because they have the appearance of helping the finally slain wild beast back to life again. I perhaps risk something when I allow such a truth to escape; let others capture it again and give it so much “milk of pious sentiment” to drink, that it will lie down quiet and forgotten, in its old corner.—One ought to learn anew about cruelty, and open one’s eyes; one ought at last to learn impatience, in order that such immodest gross errors—as, for instance, have been fostered by ancient and modern philosophers with regard to tragedy—may no longer wander about virtuously and boldly. Almost everything that we call “higher culture” is based upon the spiritualizing and intensifying of *cruelty*—this is my thesis; the “wild beast” has not been slain at all, it lives, it flourishes, it has only been—transfigured. That which constitutes the painful delight of tragedy is cruelty; that which operates agreeably in so-called tragic sympathy, and at the basis even of everything sublime, up

to the highest and most delicate thrills of metaphysics, obtains its sweetness solely from the intermingled ingredient of cruelty. What the Roman enjoys in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at the sight of the faggot and stake, or of the bullfight, the present-day Japanese who presses his way to the tragedy, the workman of the Parisian suburbs who has a homesickness for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who, with unhinged will, “undergoes” the performance of “Tristan and Isolde”—what all these enjoy, and strive with mysterious ardor to drink in, is the philtre of the great Circe “cruelty.” . . . Finally, let us consider that even the seeker of knowledge operates as an artist and glorifier of cruelty, in that he compels his spirit to perceive *against* its own inclination, and often enough against the wishes of his heart:—he forces it to say Nay, where he would like to affirm, love, and adore; indeed, every instance of taking a thing profoundly and fundamentally, is a violation, an intentional injuring of the fundamental will of the spirit, which instinctively aims at appearance and superficiality,—even in every desire for knowledge there is a drop of cruelty.

In this connection, there is the not unscrupulous readiness of the spirit to deceive other spirits and dissemble before them—the constant pressing and straining of a creating, shaping, changeable power: the spirit enjoys therein its craftiness and its variety of disguises, it enjoys also its feeling of security therein—it is precisely by its Protean arts that it is best protected and concealed!—*Counter* to this propensity for appearance, for simplification, for a disguise, for a cloak, in short, for an outside—for every outside is a cloak—there operates the sublime tendency of the man of knowledge, which takes, and *insists* on taking things profoundly, variously, and thoroughly; as a kind of cruelty of the intellectual conscience and taste, which every courageous thinker will acknowledge in himself, provided, as it ought to be, that he has sharpened and hardened his eye sufficiently long for introspection, and is accustomed to severe discipline and even severe words. He will say:

“There is something cruel in the tendency of my spirit”: let the virtuous and amiable try to convince him that it is not so! In fact, it would sound nicer, if instead of our cruelty, perhaps our “extravagant honesty” were talked about, whispered about and glorified—we free, *very* free spirits—and some day perhaps *such* will actually be our—posthumous glory!”

**10.** The ennobling character of suffering can be appreciated only by the aristocrat. Despising as weakness the longing of the “herd” for freedom from pain, free spirits revel in the elevating power of suffering, for it spurs them on to raise the will to life to an “unconditioned Will to Power.”

What they would fain attain with all their strength, is the universal, green-meadow happiness of the herd, together with security, safety, comfort, and alleviation of life for everyone; their two most frequently chanted songs and doctrines are called “Equality of Rights” and “Sympathy with all Sufferers”—and suffering itself is looked upon by them as something which must be *done away with*. We opposite ones, however, who have opened our eye and conscience to the question how and where the plant “man” has hitherto grown most vigorously, believe that this has always taken place under the opposite conditions, that for this end the dangerousness of his situation had to be increased enormously, his inventive faculty and dissembling power (his “spirit”) had to develop into subtlety and daring under long oppression and compulsion, and his Will to Life had to be increased to the unconditioned Will to Power:—we believe that severity, violence, slavery, danger in the street and in the heart, secrecy, stoicism, tempter’s art and devilry of every kind,—that everything wicked, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and serpentine in man, serves as well for the elevation of the human species as its opposite:—we do not even say enough when we only say *this much*; and in any case we find ourselves here, both with our speech and our science, at

the *other* extreme of all modern ideology and gregarious desirability, as their antipodes perhaps? What wonder that we “free spirits” are not exactly the most communicative spirits? that we do not wish to betray in every respect *what* a spirit can free itself from, and *where* perhaps it will then be driven? And as to the import of the dangerous formula, “Beyond Good and Evil,” with which we at least avoid confusion, we *are* something else than “*libres-penseurs*,” “*liberi pensatori*,” “free-thinkers,” and whatever these honest advocates of “modern ideas” like to call themselves. Having been at home, or at least guests, in many realms of the spirit; having escaped again and again from the gloomy, agreeable nooks in which preferences and prejudices, youth, origin, the accident of men and books, or even the weariness of travel seemed to confine us; full of malice against the seductions of dependency which lie concealed in honors, money, positions, or exaltation of the senses: grateful even for distress and the vicissitudes of illness, because they always free us from some rule, and its “prejudice,” grateful to the God, devil, sheep, and worm in us; inquisitive to a fault, investigators to the point of cruelty, with unhesitating fingers for the intangible, with teeth and stomachs for the most indigestible, ready for any business that requires sagacity and acute senses, ready for every adventure, owing to an excess of “free will”; with anterior and posterior souls, into the ultimate intentions of which it is difficult to pry, with foregrounds and backgrounds to the end of which no foot may run; hidden ones under the mantles of light, appropriators, although we resemble heirs and spendthrifts, arrangers and collectors from morning till night, misers of our wealth and our full-crammed drawers, economical in learning and forgetting, inventive in scheming; sometimes proud of tables of categories, sometimes pedants, sometimes night-owls of work even in full day; yea, if necessary, even scarecrows—and it is necessary nowadays, that is to say, inasmuch as we are the born, sworn, jealous friends of *solitude*, of our own profoundest midnight and midday solitude:—such kind of men are we, we free spirits! And

perhaps *ye* are also something of the same kind, ye coming ones, ye *new* philosophers?<sup>k</sup>

**11.** The philosophers of the future, understanding the values dictated by the will to power, will stand apart from the masses. They will be aristocrats, not levelers like the philosophers of the present. True freedom, rather than the false freedom sought by slaves, will be their doctrine.

Will they be new friends of “truth,” these coming philosophers? Very probably, for all philosophers hitherto have loved their truths. But assuredly they will not be dogmatists. It must be contrary to their pride, and also contrary to their taste, that their truth should still be truth for everyone—that which has hitherto been the secret wish and ultimate purpose of all dogmatic efforts. “My opinion is *my* opinion: another person has not easily a right to it”—such a philosopher of the future will say, perhaps. One must renounce the bad taste of wishing to agree with many people. “Good” is no longer good when one’s neighbor takes it into his mouth. And how could there be a “common good”? The expression contradicts itself; that which can be common is always of small value. In the end things must be as they are and have always been—the great things remain for the great, the abysses for the profound, the delicacies and thrills for the refined, and, to sum up shortly, everything rare for the rare.

Need I say expressly after all this that they will be free, *very* free spirits, these philosophers of the future—as certainly also they will not be merely be free spirits, but something more, higher, greater, and fundamentally different, which does not wish to be misunderstood and mistaken? But while I say this, I feel under *obligation* almost as much to them as to ourselves (we free spirits who are their heralds and forerunners), to sweep away from ourselves altogether a stupid old prejudice and misunderstanding, which, like a fog, has too long made the conception of “free spirit” obscure. In every

country of Europe, and the same in America, there is at present something which makes an abuse of this name: a very narrow, prepossessed, enchained class of spirits, who desire almost the opposite of what our intentions and instincts prompt—not to mention that in respect to the *new* philosophers who are appearing, they must still more be closed windows and bolted doors. Briefly and regrettably, they belong to the *levelers*, these wrongly named “free spirits”—as glib-tongued and scribe-fingered slaves of the democratic taste and its “modern ideas”: all of them men without solitude, without personal solitude, blunt, honest fellows to whom neither courage nor honorable conduct ought to be denied; only, they are not free, and are ludicrously superficial, especially in their innate partiality for seeing the cause of almost *all* human misery and failure in the old forms in which society has hitherto existed—a notion which happily inverts the truth entirely.<sup>1</sup>

**12.** The further progress of humanity requires a *transvaluation of values* that will give the will to power its rightful place.

Transvalue values—what does this mean? It implies that all spontaneous motives, all new, future, and stronger motives, are still extant; but that they now appear under false names and false valuations, and have not yet become conscious of themselves.

We ought to have the courage to become conscious, and to affirm all that which has been *attained*—to get rid of the humdrum character of old valuations, which makes us unworthy of the best and strongest things that we have achieved.

Any doctrine would be superfluous for which everything is not already prepared in the way of accumulated forces and explosive material. A transvaluation of values can only be accomplished when there is a tension of new needs, and a new set of needy people who feel all old values as painful,—although they are not conscious of what is wrong.

The standpoint from which my values are determined: is abundance or desire active? . . . Is one a mere spectator, or is one’s own shoulder at the wheel—is one looking away or is one turning aside? . . . Is one acting spontaneously, or is one merely reacting to a goad or to a stimulus? . . . Is one simply acting as the result of a paucity of elements, or of such an overwhelming dominion over a host of elements that this power enlists the latter into its service if it requires them? . . . Is one a *problem* one’s self or is one a *solution* already? . . . Is one *perfect* through the smallness of the task, or *imperfect* owing to the extraordinary character of the aim? . . . Is one genuine or only an *actor*; is one genuine as an actor, or only the bad copy of an actor? Is one a representative or the creature represented? Is one a personality or merely a rendezvous of personalities? . . . Is one ill from a disease or from surplus health? Does one lead as a shepherd, or as an “exception” (third alternative: as a fugitive)? Is one in need of dignity, or can one play the clown? Is one in search of resistance, or is one evading it? Is one imperfect owing to one’s precocity or to one’s tardiness? Is it one’s nature to say yea, or no, or is one a peacock’s tail of garish parts? Is one proud enough not to feel ashamed even of one’s vanity? Is one still able to feel a bite of conscience (this species is becoming rare; formerly conscience had to bite too often: it is as if it now no longer had enough teeth to do so)? Is one still capable of a “duty”? (there are some people who would lose the whole joy of their lives if they were *deprived* of their duty—this holds good especially of feminine creatures, who are born subjects). . . .

It is only a question of power: to have all the morbid traits of the century, but to balance them by means of overflowing, plastic, and rejuvenating power. The *strong* man.<sup>m</sup>

**13.** Before the new philosophy of strength can become effective, there is a task that must be performed: The truth must be shown to those who are fit to receive it. This is the task to which Nietzsche devotes himself.

Meanwhile—for there is plenty of time until then—we should be least inclined to deck ourselves out in such florid and fringed moral verbiage; our whole former work has just made us sick of this taste and its sprightly exuberance. They are beautiful, glistening, jingling, festive words: honesty, love of truth, love of wisdom, sacrifice for knowledge, heroism of the truthful—there is something in them that makes one's heart swell with pride. But we anchorites and marmots have long ago persuaded ourselves in all the secrecy of an anchorite's conscience, that this worthy parade of verbiage also belongs to the old false adornment, frippery, and gold dust of unconscious human vanity, and that even under such flattering color and repainting, the terrible original text *homo natura* must again be recognized. In effect, to translate man back again into nature; to master the many vain and visionary interpretations and subordinate meanings which have hitherto been scratched and daubed over the eternal original text, *homo natura*; to bring it about that man shall henceforth stand before man as he now, hardened by the discipline of science, stands before the *other* forms of nature, with fearless Oedipus-eyes, and stopped Ulysses-ears, deaf to the enticements of old metaphysical bird-catchers, who have piped to him far too long: "Thou art more! thou art higher! thou hast a different origin!"—this may be a strange and foolish task, but that it is a *task*, who can deny!"<sup>n</sup>

## Questions

1. In what sense is Nietzsche the "conscience of his age"?
2. Explain Nietzsche's doctrine of the "transvaluation of values," illustrating his meaning with specific ideals.
3. Contrast the master and slave moralities. What differences in ethical vocabulary are required to express their opposed ethical themes?
4. What are the underlying principles that lead Nietzsche to attach Christianity, pacifism, and democracy?

5. What are Nietzsche's criticisms of traditional moral philosophy? What is his conception of the "true" philosopher?
6. What does "Superman" symbolize in Nietzsche's ethical theory? How does this fit in with his doctrine of "following Nature"?
7. Nietzsche advises us to "live dangerously." What benefits does he anticipate from following this rule of life?
8. Examine critically the Nietzschean theory of the "will to power." Is the conception of nature it involves more or less true to fact than that of such philosophers as Epictetus?
9. What is the relationship between reason and emotion in Nietzsche's ethics? Compare his views with those of the Greek Sophists and of Socrates.
10. Adopting Nietzsche's viewpoint, criticize twentieth-century America.

## Key to Selections

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vols. XII, XIII, XVI, O. Levy, ed., New York, Macmillan, 1924. With the kind permission of the publishers.

From *The Will to Power* (tr. A. M. Ludovici)

<sup>a</sup>No. 54.

<sup>e</sup>No. 373.

<sup>g</sup>No. 200–201,

No. 204,

No. 249.

<sup>i</sup>No. 428,

No. 434,

No. 461.

<sup>m</sup>No. 1007–1009,

No. 1014.

From *The Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay (tr. H. B. Samuel)

<sup>c</sup>No. 4,

No. 10–11.

From *Beyond Good and Evil* (tr. H. Zimmern)

<sup>b</sup>No. 260.

<sup>d</sup>No. 257.

<sup>f</sup>No. 259.

<sup>h</sup>No. 62.

<sup>j</sup>No. 229–230.

<sup>k</sup>No. 44.

<sup>l</sup>No. 43–44.

<sup>n</sup>No. 230.