Glad Tidings of a Crisis without Equal on Earth:

An Interpretation of Nietzsche's Theory of Morality


An Honors Paper for the Department of Government and Legal Studies

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# Introduction

> I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up *against* everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man, I am dynamite. (EH, 326)

With these self-assured words, Friedrich Nietzsche begins the final chapter of *Ecce Homo*, the philosophical autobiography he wrote in the months leading up to his mental collapse in 1888. The message he provides in this chapter, entitled "Why I Am a Destiny," is ominous yet joyful. It is the message of a philosopher who wants to convey the implications of his philosophy for the future of mankind. These implications are terrible ("we shall have upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes, a moving of mountains and valleys, the like of which has never been dreamed of") and yet he is proud of this terribleness ("I am a bringer of glad tidings like no one before me") (EH, 326). Nietzsche, the self-described "annihilator *par excellence*," appears like a mischievous madman who delights in opening Pandora 's box with full knowledge of the contents contained within. But why does he consider himself "the most terrible human being that has existed so far" and yet perhaps "the most beneficial" (EH, 327)? What does he think he has done and why is it so wonderful despite its ghastliness? And is there any rhyme or reason behind his megalomania?

The "*revaluation of all values*," he proclaims, "that is my formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity" (EH, 327). Nietzsche seeks to invert the already inverted values of mankind and believes that this inversion will constitute the

"crisis without equal on earth." Furthermore, this inversion involves the overthrowing of morality in two important ways:

> Fundamentally, my term *immoralism* involves two negations. For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent. And then I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself—the morality of decadence or, more concretely, *Christian* morality. (EH, 328)

Nietzsche is unclear about the "type of man" he negates since his identification of this type as "benevolent" and "beneficent" suggests that it is influenced by "the morality of decadence," which, as we will see, stresses the goodness of selflessness. This interpretation, however, fails to explain why Nietzsche claims to provide two negations of morality. Therefore, I understand the "type of man" in question as representative of any man who is considered good by a moral mode of valuation. Consequently, Nietzsche seeks to overthrow both *morality itself* and a particular morality along with it. He considers the "second contradiction the more decisive one," since the current incarnation of morality is especially objectionable; however, morality qua morality also poses its own set of unacceptable problems (EH, 328). He understands that the so-called "self-overcoming of morality" will be experienced by mankind as "a real catastrophe," but he simultaneously believes that this catastrophe is necessary to free mankind from the hostility to life that morality sustains (EH, 328, 333).

In several places throughout this chapter, Nietzsche poses the following question to both himself and his readers: "Have I been understood?" This question is meant to encourage readers to slow down and reassess whether they truly do understand Nietzsche,

his philosophy, and its implications. It also reflects Nietzsche's concern that no one may understand him. He believes that he has uncovered a truth of unmatched importance and yet fears that the world has been blinded for so long that it may not appreciate his revelation. The appreciation he desires, however, would avoid two extremes. On the one hand, he does not want to be simply dismissed as a "buffoon"; on the other, he does not want to be "pronounced *holy*," as he claims that "there is nothing in me of a founder of a religion" (EH, 326). Therefore, he wants his philosophy to be properly evaluated so that it becomes neither ignored nor abused.

I will attempt to provide a better understanding of Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of all values by presenting a comprehensive interpretation of his theory of morality. I believe that he does provide a coherent and internally logical moral philosophy, one developed over the span of his philosophical career that provides cogent arguments against the desirability of morality in modern society. Accordingly, I will analyze three of his main works: *Human, All Too Human*; *Daybreak*; and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. While all of his works could be examined to better understand his theory of morality, these three are the most relevant to his development of that theory. In addition to analyzing these works by Nietzsche, I have chosen to examine the moral philosophies of two other nineteenth-century philosophers—Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Paul Rée (1841-1901)—because their ideas profoundly influenced Nietzsche's theory of morality. Thus, I will begin by looking at what they had to say about the nature of morality, and I will later relate Nietzsche's thoughts about morality back to their own.

My investigation into Nietzsche's theory of morality culminates in a critical examination of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the book that has been given the most attention by scholars interested in Nietzsche's moral philosophy. I will provide an interpretation of this work that fits into my interpretation of his theory as a whole, and I will engage the secondary literature related to this work to demonstrate how *On the Genealogy of Morals* can be better understood if viewed in light of Nietzsche's entire moral philosophy. I will conclude by considering a peculiarity of his relationship with morality and by providing some remarks concerning the political implications of his immoralism.

# Chapter 1 – Schopenhauer and Rée

To understand how Nietzsche's theory of morality developed, we must first come to grips with the moral philosophies of Schopenhauer and Rée. Nietzsche developed his theory largely in response to their philosophies, because he found them attractive yet troubling. Nietzsche's relationship with Schopenhauer was entirely spiritual, as the two never met (Schopenhauer died when Nietzsche was only sixteen years old). Nietzsche's relationship with Rée, however, was quite real, as the two developed a philosophical friendship while living together in Sorrento in 1876. I will use this chapter to focus on who Schopenhauer and Rée were and what they said without yet attempting to describe how their ideas influenced Nietzsche. Such description will come in later chapters when I analyze Nietzsche's works in light of those who influenced him.

My overview of each of these philosophers will begin by providing a sketch of each philosopher's life and career. In the case of Rée, my overview will also include a description of his opportune affiliation with Nietzsche. I will then provide an exegesis of each of these philosophers' most important works concerning morality. Schopenhauer's most important such work was an essay entitled *On the Basis of Morality* (1840), which later formed half of the work entitled *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* (1841). The theory of morality contained within both works relied on a metaphysical principle of selflessness against which Nietzsche reacted vehemently. Rée's most important piece of moral philosophy was perhaps his greatest work overall and was entitled *The Origin of Moral Sensations* (1876). The theory presented by this work applied a philosophical

method that appealed to Nietzsche, but Rée's use of that method was ultimately rejected by Nietzsche. When reviewing these works, I will investigate how Schopenhauer and Rée were respectively influenced by particular philosophers to put their theories in context as well.

**Introduction to Schopenhauer's Life and Primary Works on Morality**

Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Danzig in 1788 to a merchant family of Dutch heritage.[1] While his father desired to see the young Schopenhauer become an international businessman, Schopenhauer absorbed himself in philosophy at the University of Göttingen starting in 1809 and then at the University of Berlin starting in 1811. In 1813, he wrote *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* for which he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy by the University of Jena. Between 1814 and 1818, he wrote his most famous work, *The World as Will and Representation*, and in 1820, he began lecturing in philosophy at the University of Berlin.

Apparently out of disdain for G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), who also lectured at the University of Berlin at the time, Schopenhauer scheduled his lectures to conflict with those of Hegel. Unfortunately for Schopenhauer, Hegel's lectures were far more popular than his own, and Schopenhauer left teaching to travel for a few years starting in 1822. While he tried unsuccessfully to teach again in 1825, he eventually ended up moving to Frankfurt in 1833, where he remained for the rest of his life. Over the course of his twenty-seven years in Frankfurt, he wrote *On the Will in Nature* (1836), *On the Freedom*

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[1] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Arthur Schopenhauer"; available from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/; Internet; accessed 4 May 2007.

*of Human Will* (1839), *On the Basis of Morality* (1840), and *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851). While two of these works—*On the Will in Nature* and *Parerga and Paralipomena* —addressed a variety of topics, the two others—*On the Freedom of Human Will* and *On the Basis of Morality*—focused on issues of morality in particular and consequently were consolidated into a book entitled *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* (1841). Schopenhauer finally began receiving recognition for his work in 1853 but died soon afterward in 1860.

Out of the two works that formed *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, the later work entitled *On the Basis of Morality* presents Schopenhauer's theory of morality most thoroughly. Schopenhauer wrote this work in response to an essay contest held by the Royal Danish Society of Scientific Studies in 1837 (BM, ix). The society posed the following question:

> Are the source and foundation of morals to be looked for in an idea of
> morality lying immediately in consciousness (or conscience) and in the
> analysis of the other fundamental moral concepts springing from that idea,
> or are they to be looked for in a different ground of knowledge? (BM, ix)

While Schopenhauer was the lone entrant in the contest, he was (much to his chagrin) not awarded the contest's prize. The Society rejected his entry for several reasons. In its judgment, Schopenhauer misunderstood the question posed by the contest, relegated the most pertinent part of his essay (his treatment of metaphysics) to an "appendix," failed to support adequately his assertion "that compassion is the foundation of morality," and spoke of "several distinguished philosophers of recent times…in a manner so unseemly

as to cause just and grave offense" (BM, 216). In response to the Society's offensive criticism, Schopenhauer railed against the Society in both prefaces that later introduced the published version of his essay.

Despite the Society's harsh opinion, David E. Cartwright has claimed that *On the Basis of Morality* may very well have been as influential as other important nineteenth-century works on ethics such as Hegel's *Natural Law and Political Science in Outline: Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) *Utilitarianism*, and Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (BM, xi). Cartwright points out that, while Hegel, Mill, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer were all critics of Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) landmark theory of morality, Schopenhauer was perhaps the most astute critic of Kant's theory. He also provided an alternative theory to Kant's that differed radically from those of Hegel, Mill, and Nietzsche. While Nietzsche's theory of morality was indeed radically different from Schopenhauer's, we will see in later chapters that his theory retained several important elements of Schopenhauer's, even if Nietzsche did not accept the fundamental principles of morality presented by Schopenhauer.

In *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer presents his theory of morality in three main parts. Recognizing that his theory is largely a response to Kant's theory, Schopenhauer spends almost the entire first half of the essay refuting Kant's view of morality. He then spends most of the second half explaining how morality is based on the feeling of compassion (*Mitleid*) and not pure reason (*Reinen Vernunft)*, as Kant had argued. In the final pages of the essay, Schopenhauer speculates on the metaphysical basis for compassion, which he suggests lies in the universality of the will. Thus, by the

end of the essay Schopenhauer has tied his theory of morality to the centerpiece of his philosophy as a whole, the idea that the thing-in-itself, or the noumenon, is pure will.

**Schopenhauer's Criticism of the Basis Given to Ethics by Kant**

Schopenhauer's critique of Kant's theory of morality in the first part of the essay is particularly interesting because, as we will see, Schopenhauer presents many ideas with which Nietzsche later agrees. Generally speaking, Schopenhauer was a Kantian philosopher. He can be labeled as such because his philosophy relies entirely on Kant's greatest contribution to Western philosophy—the distinction between the world as it appears to us (the phenomenon) and the world as it is in itself (the noumenon). However, despite Schopenhauer's acknowledged indebtedness to Kant, Schopenhauer believed that Kant had overestimated the ability of pure reason to provide *a priori* knowledge when he developed his theory of morality.

Kant had argued – first in *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) – that humans (and all rational beings, for that matter) could use the power of reason to determine the fundamental principle of morality, and consequently know right from wrong, without resorting to any empirical data whatsoever. Furthermore, he believed that the use of pure reason led rational beings to obey the "categorical imperative," or law of morality, that orders one to "act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it would become a universal law."[2] Kant believed that rational beings

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[2] Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), 30.

were compelled to obey the categorical imperative out of a sense of duty and not out of a desire to produce the most fortunate outcomes. Therefore, his moral philosophy depended entirely on the belief that reason alone could both prescribe rules of behavior and compel rational beings to follow those rules.

Schopenhauer objects to Kant's theory on many grounds. However, before considering his objections, it will be useful to point out the one aspect of Kant's theory that Schopenhauer actually commends explicitly and one aspect of which he shows appreciation implicitly. Schopenhauer asserts that almost all of the ethical systems prior to Kant's were eudaemonistic. By "eudaemonistic" he means that these ethical systems valued moral behavior because that behavior produced or coincided with happiness. The ethics of the ancients, he contends, were eudaemonistic because they held that "virtue and supreme happiness were identical," as were the ethics of the moderns (prior to Kant) because they held that "supreme happiness [was] the consequence of virtue" (BM, 49). Schopenhauer appears to have works such as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in mind when describing ancient ethics and the New Testament in mind when describing modern ethics. Unlike either of these ethics, Kant's ethics held that favorable consequences were irrelevant to the moral worth of actions. Rational beings, according to him, ought to act out of a sense of duty, not out of a desire to become happier. Therefore, Schopenhauer applauds Kant for "having purged ethics of all *eudaemonism*" (BM, 49).

Schopenhauer also appreciates that Kant did not overtly base his theory of morality on theological grounds, although he neglects to express his appreciation explicitly. As we will see shortly, Schopenhauer criticizes Kant's theory for sharing a

fundamental quality with ethical systems that do overtly base themselves on the will of God. He objects to the existence of this quality in Kant's theory because he believes that it can only be justified by the role of God in moral matters. Since Schopenhauer argues that Kant should have avoided the incorporation of this quality, and not that he should have incorporated God, we can infer that he appreciated Kant's omission of God from his theory. The reason for this appreciation will become clear later when see that Schopenhauer's theory was not theological.

The first major criticism that Schopenhauer directs toward Kant's theory concerns the idea of moral laws. Schopenhauer claims that Kant's "first false step" was to assume without justification that moral laws even existed (BM, 52). Kant claimed that "in a practical philosophy we are not concerned with stating reasons for what happens, but with giving laws as regards what *ought to happen, even though it may never happen*" (BM, 52). Schopenhauer considers this approach a *petitio principii*, and argues that "the student of ethics as well as the philosopher generally must be content with the explanation and interpretation…of what actually is or happens" (BM, 52). He admits that there are natural laws, such as the law of motivation (or the principle of sufficient reason) and those put forth by Kant in *Metaphysics of Nature*, but he asserts that "*moral* laws, apart from human ordinance, State institution, or religious doctrine, cannot be assumed as existing without proof" (BM, 53).

Schopenhauer also objects to Kant's use of moral laws by claiming that his idea of them is absurd for either of two reasons. On the one hand, if we are to understand a moral law, like the law of motivation, as implying "absolute necessity," as Kant does in the

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preface to *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, that law must be obeyed in all circumstances and at all times (BM, 53). However, Schopenhauer asserts that moral laws are "frequently, indeed as a rule, ineffective" (BM, 53). On the other hand, if we are to understand a moral law as creating a duty that may or may not be fulfilled, as Kant also does in the first section, then those who obey the law, according to Schopenhauer, must have a sufficient incentive to do so (BM, 54). Schopenhauer claims that "every *ought* derives all sense and meaning simply and solely in reference to threatened punishment or promised reward" (BM, 55). Because Kant's categorical imperative imposes an obligation on rational beings and yet presents neither threat of punishment nor promise of reward, Schopenhauer concludes that Kant's idea of duty is meaningless.

Furthermore, Kant's assertion that there are natural laws of morality tends to undermine the limited praise that Schopenhauer has for his theory. While his theory is not overtly theological, Schopenhauer believes that Kant surreptitiously derived his sense of duty from the Mosaic Decalogue. Therefore, he suggests that "from theological morals Kant had borrowed [the] *imperative form* of ethics tacitly and without examining it" (BM, 57). Kant's theory is therefore theological in nature even if it lacks the central theological element, God.

Kant's idea of natural moral laws also undermines the praise Schopenhauer has for the theory's supposed rejection of eudaemonism. Schopenhauer claims that "everything done with respect to reward or punishment is necessarily an egoistic transaction, and as such is without purely moral value" (BM, 56). Because Kant claims that rational beings have a duty to act morally, and that duty implies punishment or

reward whether or not there is a mechanism for either punishment or reward, Schopenhauer believes that Kant's moral actions are inherently selfish and therefore not moral at all. This selfishness comes from acting morally for the sake of avoiding punishment or obtaining reward, and therefore maximizing personal happiness, rather than out of any type of impersonal motivation. Schopenhauer suggests that Kant even discreetly provided a mechanism for reward in an idea of the "highest good." Therefore, he claims that Kant's theory of morality is ultimately eudaemonistic by asserting that the eudaemonism "Kant had solemnly thrust as an intruder from the front door of his system…now creeps in again at the back under the name of the highest good" (BM, 56).

In addition to criticizing Kant's theory for its incorporation of moral laws, Schopenhauer criticizes Kant for basing his ethics entirely on *a priori* knowledge. Kant believed that knowledge of moral principles and rules could be obtained solely by the use of pure reason and without the assistance of any information gathered by experience. He wrote that morality "must not be sought in man's nature (the subjective) or in the circumstances of the world (the objective)," and that "here nothing whatever can be borrowed from knowledge relating to man, i.e., from anthropology" (BM, 61). In other words, he believed that *a posteriori*, or empirical, knowledge was completely useless to someone who wanted to determine the nature of morality. As Schopenhauer puts it, "by discarding every empirical basis of morals [Kant] rejects all inner, and even more definitely all outer, experience" (BM, 62).

Schopenhauer has three primary objections to Kant's rejection of empiricism and his theory's reliance on pure reason. All three objections convey Schopenhauer's

skepticism that the faculty of reason alone is as powerful and fundamental to human knowledge and behavior as Kant thought it was. First, he doubts that pure reason, unaided by experience, can adequately inform a philosopher about the nature of morality. He asserts that Kant's insistence that pure reason could do so led him to a "few [moral] concepts which are entirely abstract, wholly insubstantial, and likewise floating about entirely in air" (BM, 62). Furthermore, Schopenhauer believes that empiricism is essential to the knowledge of moral principles and foundations. He begins his own investigation of morality by "first looking around a little at the lives of men" rather than depending on "intuitive apprehension" (BM, 121).

Secondly, Schopenhauer rejects Kant's conception of reason and its relation to human beings. He contends that Kant believed pure reason was "the inner and external essence of man," as well as "something existing by itself" (BM, 64, 63). As the essence of man, reason was treated by Kant as the only thing that could possibly lead men to moral behavior. As something existing by itself, it was something that could be possessed by other "possible rational beings" (BM, 63). Consequently, Kant believed that morality could hypothetically apply to non-humans. Schopenhauer, however, claims that reason is "the exclusive attribute of the human race," yet also "something secondary and appertaining to the phenomenon…whereas the real kernel in man…is *his will*" (BM, 64). The importance of these distinctions will become clear when we examine Schopenhauer's theory of morality, which bases itself on the power of the will rather than that of reason.

Schopenhauer's emphasis on the will rather than the faculty of reason is also evident in his third and final objection to the reliance of Kant's theory on pure reason.

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Schopenhauer believes that pure reason cannot suffice to control "the violence and fury of passions" that compel men to act in immoral ways (BM, 75). He declares that "like every motive that moves the will, the moral stimulus must certainly be one that announces itself automatically and hence works positively, and consequently be one that is *real*" (BM, 75). Pure reason, he claims, does not ordinarily move the will because men do not "automatically…look around for and inquire about a *law* for [their] will" (BM, 74). In effect, Schopenhauer is claiming that the will (which is influenced and directed by the passions) ordinarily exerts more control over human behavior than reason, and any moral stimulus that would regularly prevent the will's egoistic tendencies from leading men to immoral behavior must be ever-present and strong enough to subdue that will. He seems to suggest that even if reason did provide a legitimate moral law for men to obey out of duty, men would ordinarily not obey that moral law because they would fail to consult their reason as a guide for most of their actions. Thus, as we will see next, Schopenhauer presents an alternative moral impetus that he thinks *is* strong enough to move the will and therefore alter human behavior – namely, the will itself.

**Schopenhauer's Principle and Foundation of Ethics**

At one point during his critique of Kant's theory of morality, Schopenhauer usefully distinguishes between the *principle* and *foundation* of ethics. He proposes that the principle "is the shortest and concisest expression for the line of conduct prescribed by [morality]" whereas the foundation is "the ground or reason" for that principle (BM, 68). In other words, the principle answers the question, "What does morality entail?",

while the foundation, only after the principle has been identified, answers the question, "Why does it entail that?"

As we will see in later chapters, Nietzsche sought to determine both the principle and the foundation of morality. He also questioned whether there was only one possible principle and one possible foundation and whether the principle and foundation were permanent. Schopenhauer, however, believed that there was only one principle and one foundation and that these inextricably defined the very idea of morality. Furthermore, he believed that the principle was quite obvious whereas the foundation was much more difficult to ascertain. Thus, he claimed that "concerning [the principle's] purport all teachers of ethics are really in agreement" while the "establishment [of that principle] is the constant endeavor of all teachers of morals" (BM, 69).

Schopenhauer believed that the principle of morality could be expressed best by the following proposition: "Injure no one; on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can" (BM, 69). This principle, considered in light of his claim that "intention alone decides the moral worth or worthlessness of a deed," suggests that morally good behavior is that which is intended to help someone else (BM, 66-67). Conversely, morally bad behavior is that which is intended to hurt someone else. Less clear from the outset is whether behavior that is intended neither to help nor hurt someone else is morally good, bad, or neutral. The principle's insistence that you "help everyone as much as you can" seems to suggest that one's actions are good if intended to promote the well-being of others as effectively as possible and bad if they are not intended to do so. However, as we

will see, Schopenhauer interprets this principle differently by claiming that actions intended to neither help nor hurt others are neither good nor bad.

Despite his insistence that the principle of morality is obvious and widely acknowledged, Schopenhauer spends much of *On the Basis of Morality* elaborating upon the preconditions of that principle, specifically the various motives that determine human behavior. He contends that "there are generally only three fundamental incentives of human actions, and all possible motives operate solely through their stimulation" (BM, 145). The first is egoism (*Egoismus*), which "desires one's own weal," or well-being; the second is malice (*Bosheit*), which "desires another's woe," or misery; and the third is compassion (*Mitleid*), which "desires another's weal" (BM, 145). Cartwright points out that Schopenhauer was keenly aware of a fourth fundamental incentive that desired one's own woe and could be called "asceticism."[3] However, Schopenhauer claimed in a letter to have omitted this incentive from the discussion in *On the Basis of Morality* because that essay "was written in the spirit of the ethics prevailing in Protestant Europe."[4]

Out of these three incentives, Schopenhauer claims that egoism is by far the most powerful and "most intimately connected with [man's] innermost core and essence" (BM, 131). He describes the overbearing nature of egoism at length, claiming that "egoism is boundless; man has the unqualified desire to preserve his existence, to keep it absolutely free from pain and suffering, which includes all want and privation" (BM, 131). He asserts, furthermore, that man "desires to have the greatest possible amount of well-being

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[3] David E. Cartwright, "Nietzsche's Use and Abuse of Schopenhauer's Moral Philosophy for Life," in *Willing and Nothingness*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 125.

[4] Ibid.

and every pleasure of which he is capable" (BM, 131). Schopenhauer calls egoism the "antimoral force" because under the influence of egoism man acts according to the motto "everything for me and nothing for the others" (BM, 133, 132). Thus, while egoism provides the incentive for actions that "from a moral point of view, are…neither good nor bad," it relentlessly motivates men to act in accordance with only their own well-being and therefore forms "the first and principal, although not the only force with which the *moral incentive* has to contend" (BM, 145, 134).

Compassion, while not nearly as powerful as egoism, is the drive most central to Schopenhauer's theory of morality. Indeed, for Schopenhauer compassion is the moral incentive itself and the key concept in his foundation of morality. He claims that "the absence of all egoistic motivation is…the criterion of an action of moral worth" (BM, 140). While "actions of pure malice and cruelty" are strictly speaking not egoistic, Schopenhauer disqualifies them for supposedly obvious reasons and asserts that actions of compassion are the only ones that are can be considered morally good (BM, 140). Compassion, he says, is the ability of one person to identify with "the weal and woe of another," or in other words, "the immediate participation…primarily in the suffering of another" (BM, 143). This identification process, which Schopenhauer admits is "certainly astonishing, indeed, mysterious," motivates men to act in ways that promote only the well-being of others, even if they must sacrifice their own well-being in the process (BM, 143, 144).

This selfless promotion of the well-being of others can take either a negative or a positive form. The negative form, which he calls justice, occurs when "compassion

prevents [a man] from causing suffering to another and hence from becoming…the cause of another's pain" (BM, 148). The positive form, which he calls philanthropy or loving-kindness, occurs when compassion "incites [a man] to active help" (BM, 148). The idea of justice corresponds to the principle's proposition to "injure no one" whereas the idea of philanthropy corresponds to the principle's proposition to "help everyone as much as you can" (BM, 149, 147). The difference between these two "cardinal virtues" is, according to Schopenhauer, simply a matter of the degree of compassion felt by the actor in any given situation and consequently the extent to which the actor attempts to promote the well-being of another (BM, 148).

After establishing that all morally good actions are motivated by compassion, Schopenhauer provides a metaphysical explanation for the existence of that compassion. In what he considers a supplement to the essay, Schopenhauer "leave[s] the firm ground of experience…in order to look for final theoretical satisfaction in a realm that cannot possibly be reached by any experience" (BM, 203). He finds theoretical satisfaction in the idea that compassion is the feeling one gets when one somehow realizes, if only temporarily, that "plurality and separateness belong only to the phenomenon [and] it is one and the same essence that manifests itself in all living things" (BM, 209). Schopenhauer's metaphysical philosophy, which relies heavily on Kant's *Transcendental Aesthetic* and is developed most thoroughly in *The World as Will and Representation*, presents the idea that the world as it really is (the thing-in-itself) is pure, undivided *will*. The thing-in-itself, however, is ordinarily not accessible to us directly but is rather obscured by the world as it appears to us (the phenomenon). The phenomenon, which is

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shaped fundamentally by the concepts of space and time, presents things as individuated even though the thing-in-itself is not actually divided into separate entities at all. This *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation) leads men to consider other men, among other things, as entirely separate entities from each other. However, because at base all things are actually one and the same, this perception is merely illusory. Compassion is felt when a man realizes that he shares the same essence—or more specifically, the same will—with other men. That man is then motivated by compassion to promote the well-being of other men because he "recognizes and loves his own inner nature and self in all others" (BM, 213).

Schopenhauer defends his metaphysics of morals by claiming that the doctrine of the universally shared essence "existed long before Kant [and] might be said to have existed from time immemorial" (BM, 207). He claims that the writers of the ancient Hindu Upanishads, Pythagoras, the Neoplatonists, Scotus Erigena, Spinoza, and Kant all presented the doctrine in one form or another (BM, 208). However, despite this impressive list of thinkers who supposedly accepted the doctrine, Schopenhauer's metaphysical basis for compassion remains perhaps the hardest notion for readers to accept in his entire theory of morality since the idea of a will underlying everything can only be affirmed with a stretch of the imagination. As we will see, Rée and Nietzsche both found the idea that morality could have such grounding entirely unacceptable.

Before going on to discuss Rée's theory of morality, which was largely formulated in response to Schopenhauer, it will be useful to mention a final important feature of Schopenhauer's theory. Schopenhauer believed wholeheartedly in the proposition *operari*

*sequitur esse* ("what we do follows from what we are"). This proposition holds that man's character is essentially unalterable, particularly through learning. Consequently, man cannot be made to be more compassionate through moral instruction. Schopenhauer contends that "as something original, character is unchangeable, and therefore impervious to all improvement by means of a rectification of knowledge" (BM, 190). He asserts, furthermore, that "the difference of characters is innate and ineradicable. The wicked man is born with his wickedness as much as the serpent is with its poisonous fangs and glands; and he is as little able to change his character as the serpent its fangs" (BM, 187). When a man appears to change over the course of his lifetime, his character is only "stand[ing] out more clearly and distinctly" (BM, 191). For these reasons, and out of a concern for "personal freedom and individual development," Schopenhauer warns against "distort[ing] the State into an institution for spreading morality and edifying instruction" (BM, 153).

The proposition *operari sequitur esse* also has implications for the idea of bad conscience. Schopenhauer claims that because we cannot change who we are, we cannot feel guilty about particular actions that we have performed. Rather, he claims we can only feel guilty about our inborn character. He recalls "Kant's doctrine of the coexistence of freedom with necessity" (which he actually considers "Kant's greatest and most brilliant merit in the service of ethics") to support the idea that guilt reflects our judgment about who we essentially are (BM, 109, 195). According to this doctrine, a man has no freedom with regard to his actions, and consequently a man's "actions could never [have taken] a different course from the one they did"; in other words, the world is entirely deterministic

(BM, 112). The doctrine holds that man does, however, somehow have freedom with regard to initially choosing his *esse* (what he is). It seems that man must exercise this freedom before he is actually born, as his character is unchangeable from the very start of his life. Accordingly, such an exercise of freedom requires that man must exist supernaturally before entering the physical world. Schopenhauer fails to clarify how men are free to choose their characters in such a way and merely cites the tenth book of Plato's *The Republic* as a mythical illustration of this idea. Nevertheless, he sustains a belief in freedom with regard to one's *esse* so as to assert that when a man feels guilty, he laments the fact that he chose a character that would lead him to perform regrettable actions, not that he chose to perform those actions.

**Introduction to Rée's Life and Primary Works on Morality**

Less is known about Paul Rée's life than Schopenhauer's, and most of what we do know about him concerns his relationship with Nietzsche. Rée is also less widely studied than Schopenhauer, let alone studied as a philosopher in his own right apart from Nietzsche. However, there is enough information about Rée to provide a general sketch of his life, and as we will see, Rée's moral philosophy was both sophisticated and highly influential for Nietzsche, if also underdeveloped in many regards.

Rée was born in Pomerania, an area between modern-day Germany and Poland along the Baltic Sea, to a wealthy Jewish family in 1849 (BW, xi). He studied philosophy and law at the University of Leipzig starting in 1869 and earned a doctorate from Halle in 1875 after writing about Aristotle's ethics for his dissertation. Like Nietzsche who was

enabled by a university pension to live nomadically, Rée was supported by a monthly allowance from his family, which enabled him to travel throughout Western Europe instead of settling down into a traditional academic career. He became particularly fond of three writers – Schopenhauer, Charles Darwin (1809-1882), and François de La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680) – whose ideas were to become fundamental to his own philosophy. He also developed a philosophical friendship with Nietzsche that blossomed between the publications of Rée's two most important works.

Rée and Nietzsche were introduced by a common friend in Basel in 1873, whereupon Rée provided Nietzsche with a manuscript of his upcoming work entitled *Psychological Observations* (1875). When this work was published anonymously two years later, Nietzsche recognized the work as Rée's and sent him a letter of commendation. Rée wrote back, overwhelmingly flattered by Nietzsche's approval of his philosophy. Nietzsche soon invited Rée to join him, his student Albert Brenner, and his friend Malwida von Meysenbug in Sorrento, situated on the western coast of Italy, in the fall of 1876.

These four intellectuals spent that fall and the following spring living closely with one another and regularly discussing philosophy and literature. During their "Sorrento Idyll," which has been examined in detail by Robin Small in *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship* (2005), Rée and Nietzsche exchanged ideas and began work on their next publications – *The Origin of Moral Sensations* (1877) and *Human, All Too Human* (1877). Consequently, and as we will see when we turn our attention to Nietzsche's early moral philosophy in the next chapter, these two works share startlingly similar ideas.

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Furthermore, it appears as though Rée changed Nietzsche's philosophy far more than Nietzsche changed Rée's, as *Psychological Observations* (written before Rée's friendship with Nietzsche) and *The Origin of Moral Sensations* (written afterward) do not differ significantly in their treatment of the same topics. However, *Human, All Too Human* was a surprising departure by Nietzsche from his earlier work, which was produced under heavy Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian influences. Therefore, an analysis of Rée's work is essential to an understanding of the sea change in Nietzsche's philosophy that followed his split from Wagner in 1876. Rée's ideas provided the basis, or at least the material, for Nietzsche's new philosophical outlook, and his new moral philosophy in particular.

After their time in Sorrento, Rée and Nietzsche did not see each other again until 1882. Meanwhile, Rée attempted to become a professor of philosophy at either a German or a Swiss university. The historical nature of his philosophy, however, did not impress the departments to which he applied and his attempts at entering academia were ultimately unsuccessful.[5] Following their reunion in 1882, Rée and Nietzsche made plans to move to Paris with a new female companion, Lou Salomé, and to revive the intellectual arrangement that had benefited them so greatly in Sorrento. However, after Rée and Nietzsche began vying for Salomé's attention and devotion, Rée went off to live in Berlin with Salomé in 1883, leaving Nietzsche alone and distraught. Rée and Salomé lived with each other until Salomé married a Persian scholar in 1886, whereupon Rée himself was now alone and distraught.

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[5] Robin Small, *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 130.

In 1885, however, Rée had published *The Origin of Conscience* (1885), which was intended to "add a positive historical content to his philosophical theory, drawing upon jurisprudence, history, and anthropology to provide empirical evidence for an account of the development of punishment as a social institution" (BW, xiv). The work received little attention and he decided to become a medical practitioner. After studying in Berlin and Zurich, he began nearly ten years of work as a country physician in Munich in 1890. After his older brother sold the family estate in 1900, thereby removing Rée's financial support, Rée moved to Switzerland where he died the following year after mysteriously falling from a mountain path.

**Overview of Rée's Moral Philosophy**

Reé's theory of morality is presented most methodically in *The Origin of Moral Sentiments*, but *Psychological Observations*, a collection of aphorisms and a single essay that provides many ideas that are reproduced in *The Origin of Moral Sentiments*, contains passages that highlight certain features of his theory particularly well. Therefore, I will consider the two works as basically presenting the same theory of morality and will consequently refer to both in my explanation of that theory. Rée's theory is less straightforward than Schopenhauer's, as Rée introduces historicism to the subject and also tries to reconcile ideas that he adapts from the writings of Darwin, Schopenhauer, and La Rochefoucauld. Therefore, I will also attempt to identify the various strands of his thought and show how they are intended to relate to one other.

As Small points out in an introduction to Rée's writings, "Rée's primary [moral] model is Schopenhauer's essay *On the Basis of Morality*" (BW, xx). As we will see, Rée clearly echoes many of the ideas presented by Schopenhauer. However, Small also asserts that Rée "accepts Schopenhauer's answer to the question about the basis of morality, but not his further speculation" (BW, xxi). This is quite a different statement to make and one that is only partially accurate. Small means to suggest that Rée agrees with Schopenhauer's claim that compassion forms the basis of morality but disagrees with Schopenhauer's claim that metaphysics provides an explanation for that compassion. However, while Rée does indeed agree with Schopenhauer that the prevailing morality bases itself on compassion, he suggests that all morality has a more fundamental, *historical* basis. Rée's proposed historical basis of morality is particularly important, because as we will see in later chapters, Nietzsche frees it from the entanglement of Schopenhauer's philosophy and uses it to develop his own elaborate genealogy of morals.

Before going into the non-Schopenhauerian basis of morality that Rée presents, however, it will be necessary to describe how Rée does endorse Schopenhauer's basis of morality up to a point. His advocacy of Schopenhauer's theory of morality is most evident in the chapter of *The Origin of Moral Sentiments* entitled "The Origin of the Concepts 'Good' and 'Evil.'" Rée simplifies Schopenhauer's four incentives by asserting that "every person combines two drives within himself, namely the egoistic drive and the non-egoistic drive" (BW, 89). The egoistic drive is the same as the egoism described by Schopenhauer and the non-egoistic drive is the same as compassion. Like Schopenhauer, Rée describes egoism as the more powerful drive by contending that "the egoistic instinct

is the older and stronger, and the non-egoistic instinct is the later and the weaker" (BW, 96). He indicates that he shares the exact same idea of compassion as Schopenhauer by specifying that non-egoistic actions cannot even be motivated by a desire to relieve one's own pain or receive pleasure from ameliorating the suffering of others (BW, 90). Thus, Rée agrees with Schopenhauer that actions motivated by the non-egoistic drive exist and that the non-egoistic drive is entirely untainted by considerations of self-interest.

Furthermore, Rée agrees with Schopenhauer that non-egoistic actions are considered morally good, while differing in a relatively insignificant way in what he considers morally bad actions. Rée asserts that "non-egoistic actions in which the acting person, sometimes at the expense of his own well-being, seeks the well-being of others for their own sake or refrains from harming others for their own sake…are felt as morally good and praiseworthy" (BW, 93). On the other hand, "those egoistic actions in which the acting person gains his well-being at the expense of others…are felt by each of us as morally bad and blameworthy" (BW, 93). His view of morally bad actions differs from Schopenhauer's in that Schopenhauer believed morally bad actions were those that involved the intention to harm others, whereas Rée does not appear to think that any such intention is necessary. Nevertheless, they both agree that "whenever we want to pass judgment on the moral value of an action, we investigate its motive and describe the action as morally good only if it has the well-being of others as its motive" (BW, 93).

Rée's theory of morality, however, begins to quickly diverge from Schopenhauer's as soon as Rée brings historicism into the discussion. While Schopenhauer assumes that men have always had their particular drives and that non-

egoistic actions have always been considered morally good, Rée believes that evolutionary and social forces have played vital roles in shaping men and morality into what they are today. Rée's ideas concerning the role of evolutionary forces are extensions of Darwinian thought, and his ideas concerning the role of social forces are largely extensions of Rochefoucauldian thought. As we will see, by denying the permanence of Schopenhauer's basis of morality, he ends up undermining that very basis and suggesting a more social-historical one.

Rée first disagrees with Schopenhauer regarding the metaphysical basis of morality. Rée gives Schopenhauer credit for making an attempt to explain where the non-egoistic drive comes from, especially since philosophers before Schopenhauer, such as Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) and David Hume (1711-1776), simply assumed this drive did not need an explanation (BW, 90). However, Rée contends that Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation, in which compassion results from the suspension of the *principium individuationis*, "must give way to Darwin's simpler explanation" (BW, 90). Furthermore, he claims that Schopenhauer was wrong "to make the non-egoistic sentiment by itself the object of speculation, without attention to the history of its origin" (BW, 92). He generalizes this statement by claiming that "the nature of any sensation is clear only to the extent that the history of its origin is also clear" (BW, 92). Therefore, he believes metaphysical explanations for human characteristics are not only unnecessarily complex but they also ignore the development of those characteristics in the phenomenal world by assuming incorrectly that they did not need to develop at all.

The Darwinian explanation that Rée gives for the rise of the non-egoistic drive is relatively straightforward, if also rather incomplete and consequently unconvincing. He claims that we inherited the non-egoistic, or so-called "social drive," from "our ancestors the apes" (BW, 92). He suggests that the social drive in these apes arose "from an extension of the parental instinct and [was] then maintained and strengthened by natural selection, that is, by the fact that the animal species whose members were most closely bound together by social instincts displaced other species and so continued alone" (BW, 92). Rée makes two assertions in this statement that are particularly important to examine.

First, he claims that there originally developed a parental instinct of an essentially non-egoistic manner. Presumably, he means that parent apes came to possess a non-egoistic drive with regard to their children alone, because that drive promoted the well-being and survival of their children and consequently the survival of their own traits. This claim is quite plausible given the direct and immediate relationship between the survival of progeny and the survival of a parent's genotype.

Secondly, he claims that this parental instinct somehow broadened so that parent apes no longer discriminated between whom they felt compassionate about. He assumes here that a prevalence of non-egoistic feeling in a community of apes promotes the well-being of the individuals in that community and its survival as a unit. Furthermore, he assumes that non-egoism in an individual could possibly evolve even though that trait puts the individual himself at an evolutionary disadvantage to other individuals in a community. Whereas the first assumption about the power of reciprocity to improve the

fitness of a community is relatively unproblematic, the second assumption is highly questionable because it implies the natural selection of opposite drives (egoistic and non-egoistic). Because Rée does not explain how such opposite drives can simultaneously be selected for in an individual, his evolutionary explanation for the emergence of non-egoism is ultimately unpersuasive.

Regardless of whether Rée's explanation for the existence of compassion is more persuasive than Schopenhauer's, Rée agrees with Schopenhauer that the basis of morality is compassion. Therefore, his use of Darwinism does not put him in disagreement with the main part of *On the Basis of Morality*, just its supplement. However, Rée endeavors to show how actions arising from the non-egoistic drive came to be considered morally good and actions arising from the egoistic drive came to be considered morally bad. In doing so, Rée suggests that non-egoistic actions are not inherently good, thereby contradicting Schopenhauer's central assumption that they are. Furthermore, he shows that the historical attribution of non-egoistic actions as morally good depended on considerations of social welfare, and consequently, could have been made differently had those considerations been different. Eventually, Rée's theory of how the non-egoistic drive became associated with moral goodness leads him to a different basis of morality than that posed by Schopenhauer.

Rée claims that non-egoistic behavior came to be considered morally good because communities praised it for its utility. He asserts that prehistorically "each person [found] himself, so to speak, in competition with others" because the "human being… [had] not only the drives of hunger and sexuality, which are at least satisfied from time to

time, but other drives as well" (BW, 95). This state of competition "pushed the non-egoistic drive…so much into the background that, for example, true friendships… belong[ed] to mythology" (BW, 95). Rée thinks that modern human beings are still overwhelmingly egoistic. However, he suggests that prehistoric men developed mechanisms to combat this egoism. In order to settle "the war of all against all within a community," men instituted punishment to keep individuals in restraint out of fear (BW, 96). Furthermore, men began to praise people "who were useful to other members of the community and refrained from harming them, whatever the motives of their actions may have been" (BW, 96). Eventually, men began to praise people for the non-egoistic motivations behind their actions, because they realized that men who acted unegoistically would promote the community's well-being more consistently than those who promoted the community's well-being incidentally. The praise of non-egoism led men to behave in ways that promoted the well-being of the community, because men felt "the satisfying feeling of having done what is good and praiseworthy with [their] own non-egoistic actions" (BW, 96). Thus, men began equating the non-egoistic drive with moral goodness because of that drive's social utility and the ability of praise to change men's behavior.

Rée recognizes that modern men automatically associate selfless behavior with moral goodness and selfish behavior with moral badness, but he insists that this association is not, strictly speaking, necessary (in the sense that given different conditions, men would still necessarily associate selflessness with moral goodness). He quotes the following passage from John Stuart Mill (1806-1873):

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> When we have often seen and thought of two things together, and have never in any one instance either seen or thought of them separately, there is by the primary law of association an increasing difficulty, which may in the end become insuperable, of conceiving the two things apart. (BW, 101)

Rée claims that this is exactly what has happened with non-egoism and moral goodness. He contends that "nowadays…we do not praise the good because of its useful consequences, but instead it appears to us praiseworthy in its own rights, independently of all consequences" (BW, 98). Modern men, including Schopenhauer, consider non-egoistic behavior as intrinsically morally good simply because they have always seen non-egoism and moral goodness associated with one another.

Furthermore, Rée asserts that social conditioning could even invert the prevailing morality, despite the apparent usefulness of non-egoism for society. He claims that if "anyone from his childhood…heard hard-heartedness, envy, and malicious pleasure called good and praised, and selflessness in contrast called bad and blamed," that person would learn to consider egoism morally good and non-egoism morally bad (BW, 100). He cites the "diversity of the customs prevailing in different nations" as confirmation of the idea that morals are ultimately decided by whoever teaches them. Thus, Rée believes that moral goodness is not necessarily attributed to non-egoistic behavior but rather to whatever quality a community wishes to attribute it.

Rée's insistence that morality has been determined by communal considerations drastically undercuts Schopenhauer's theory of morality by portraying morality as a socially constructed phenomenon rather than an unchangeable fact of human nature. Whereas Schopenhauer identifies compassion as the basis of morality, Rée identifies

social custom. Rée does not discard Schopenhauer's theory, because social custom does indeed hold compassion to be the basis of the prevailing morality. However, Rée realizes that the applicability of Schopenhauer's theory depends on the coincidence that social custom currently holds non-egoistic behavior to be morally good. Thus, Schopenhauer's theory is reduced to an account of how morality currently is, rather than an account of how it must be.

In addition to providing a new basis of morality, Rée undermines the role that the non-egoistic drive plays in human behavior by attributing much of human behavior to vanity. As we have seen already, he believes that non-egoistic behavior was originally praised because of its social utility, and that praise was meant to encourage men to act more selflessly. However, there is a contradiction in the very idea that you can encourage selfless behavior by praising it. When praise gives men an incentive to do something, it unavoidably appeals to their egoism, because men receive pleasure from being praised (and conversely, pain from being blamed). Therefore, the attribution of non-egoistic behavior as morally good does not actually lead to more non-egoistic behavior but rather to more egoistic behavior that just appears unegoistic. As Rée puts it, "the consequence of the fact that people find non-egoism good and egoism bad is that, far from openly satisfying [the] egoistic drive, we never let it be seen but conceal it and affect non-egoistic feelings in its place" (BW, 142). More pointedly, he makes the following Rochefoucauldian conclusion: "from this results an encompassing state of illusion: everyone acts as if they were highly interested in the well-being of others, when in fact they are highly interested only in their own well-being" (BW, 142). Thus, while the

prevailing morality considers non-egoistic action morally good, socially beneficial behavior results mostly (and quite ironically) from vanity, which is a powerful form of egoism.

Rée provides several aphorisms in *Psychological Observations* that highlight his belief that men often appear morally good despite their selfish motivations. In aphorism 49 he claims that "our moral behavior can be improved by experience and instruction, but our moral character is constant" (BW, 13). By this he means that the strength of a man's non-egoistic drive is inborn whereas the extent to which a man acts in a praiseworthy manner can be affected by social conditioning. In aphorism 85, he contends that "good morals are a constraint that one imposes on oneself out of fear of sickness or punishment or disgrace" (BW, 17). Here he points out the selfish motives behind men's seemingly selfless behavior. And finally, he asserts in aphorism 331 that "whether the world speaks well or badly of us depends least of all on whether we are actually good or bad," thereby emphasizing the notion that praise of non-egoistic behavior is routinely misdirected (BW, 53).

In the next chapters, I will describe how Nietzsche developed Rée's idea that social custom forms the basis of all morality. Before proceeding, it will be useful to point out Rée's views concerning moral responsibility and punishment. He agrees with Schopenhauer that there is no freedom of the will. Consequently, he believes that the idea that men could have acted differently in the past is a "deceptive illusion that commonly misleads people" (BW, 105). However, he does not believe, as Schopenhauer and Kant did, that men possess "a mysterious intelligible freedom" (BW, 108). Rather, he believes

that "we have received our innate character not through any fault of our own" (BW, 108). Therefore, he contends that men have no freedom whatsoever and should not be held accountable, either by themselves or by others, for their past deeds. This stance has implications for both remorse and punishment. With regard to remorse, he asserts that men ought not to feel badly about having committed a blameworthy action, because they could not have acted any other way in the past. With regard to punishment, he believes that men are punished not with the purpose of retribution, which assumes men could have acted differently, but with the purpose of deterrence, which aims to prevent blameworthy actions from being repeated in the future by creating a disincentive. He asserts that "the feeling of justice…arises out of two errors, namely, because the punishments inflicted by authorities and educators appear as acts of retribution, and because people believe in the freedom of the will" (BW, 115). Thus, Rée believes that neither society nor the individual ought to dwell on past misdeeds, because those misdeeds could not have been avoided.

While Rée applies his belief in determinism to emphasize the purpose of punishment as deterrence, he does not apply it to criticize morality for holding men accountable for their actions. As we will see in the next chapter, Nietzsche shares Rée's belief in determinism but applies that belief to additional ends. In *Human, All Too Human*, he too asserts that retribution is not an acceptable reason for punishment, but he also uses the idea of determinism as the basis for his first major criticism of morality.

## Chapter 2 – *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*

Nietzsche begins to develop his theory of morality in his third major work, *Human, All Too Human*, which was published in 1878. This groundbreaking book covers a wide range of topics, from religion to art to solitude, and contains a chapter dedicated to morality entitled "On the History of Moral Sensations." Notice immediately this chapter title's striking similarity to that of Reé primary work on morality, *On the Origin of Moral Sensations*. As we will see, Nietzsche pursues an agenda almost identical to Rée's in this chapter by attempting to provide an explanation for morality based on developments that took place in the very distant past.

In 1881, Nietzsche published his next great work entitled *Daybreak*, which with the subtitle "Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality" formed his first collection of aphorisms dedicated primarily to moral inquiries. Nietzsche would later call this work the one with which his "campaign against morality" began (EH, 290). Indeed, *Daybreak* launches a philosophical attack on Christian morality in a way that makes the polemical *Human, All Too Human* look indulgent. However, unlike Maudemarie Clark who argues in her introduction to *Daybreak* that the work embodies a significantly different theory of morality than *Human, All Too Human*, I believe that *Daybreak* develops and extends ideas that were already present in *Human, All Too Human*. *Daybreak* certainly presents ideas of its own and should consequently be examined carefully to understand Nietzsche's theory of morality; however, *Daybreak*'s new ideas have their roots in

*Human, All Too Human* and cannot be said to constitute any sort of departure from the former theory.

After *Daybreak*, Nietzsche took several years off from focusing on morality during which he wrote *The Gay Science* in 1882 and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1883-1885. He returned to the treatment of morality in earnest with *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886. However, his remarks on morality in this work are largely criticisms aimed at moralists who fail to challenge the social acceptance of morality, and it is not until *On the Genealogy of Morals* in 1887 that he substantially develops his theory for the first time since *Daybreak*. In this work, he attempts to make a largely abstract theory of morality, as developed in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*, into a more concrete one by providing an intricate history of the development of Western morality. Given the differences in nature and purpose between *On the Genealogy of Morals* and its precursors, I will treat that work separately in the third chapter and focus on *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* in this chapter.

**Human, All Too Human**

There are two chapters in *Human, All Too Human* of particular interest to us in our attempt to understand Nietzsche's theory of morality. The first is the book's opening chapter, which is entitled "Of First and Last Things." This chapter, while touching upon issues of morality in a few places, provides us with a general sense of Nietzsche's philosophical orientation, which will enable us to appreciate his theory of morality more fully later. The second chapter, as mentioned previously, is entitled "On the History of the

Moral Sensations." This chapter provides us with the first inklings of Nietzsche's theory of morality, which he later expounds in *Daybreak*. If one examines this chapter closely, one will see most of his theory already available in embryonic form. Thus, a careful examination of both of these chapters, and a comparison of the ideas presented within with those of Rée and Schopenhauer, will put us well on our way to understanding his theory.

Of First and Last Things

The first thing that ought to be said about *Human, All Too Human* is that it is a forcefully scientific book. By this I mean that it is a book with which Nietzsche vehemently pushes the scientific pursuit of knowledge and discredits any form of knowledge that claims to possess truth without basing itself on solid reason. He finds it necessary to champion science (taken generally to encompass all investigations of truth that are logically rigorous) because he sees a widespread, and mostly unquestioned, acceptance of false notions in modern European society; he believes these false notions result from unscientific thinking and can be corrected by stricter adherence to scientific ideals.

He blames two general tendencies in particular for the lack of truth in modern society. First, he blames people's faith in metaphysical explanations for human phenomena. He writes that "all that has begotten [metaphysical] assumptions is passion, error, and self-deception; the worst of all methods of acquiring knowledge, not the best of all, have taught belief in them" (HAH, 15). Nietzsche's concern lies primarily, if not

exclusively, in the knowledge people have of themselves as humans. While metaphysical beliefs, which include all supernatural religions, hold that man is the result of forces generated outside the perceived universe, Nietzsche contends that humans are simply human, all-too-human, in the sense that there has been no role of metaphysical forces in their formation. Consequently, to understand man one must deny the power of metaphysics to provide knowledge and rather look toward more empirical sources of information to construct theories concerning man.

Secondly, he blames superficial thinking, the power of feelings, and fallacious reasoning for producing and allowing the perseverance of much falsehood. Generally speaking, Nietzsche believes that there is much more to human phenomena than meets the eye. Consequently, he believes that careful psychological observation is required to make any ground in understanding enigmatic man. However, he realizes that, faced with the difficulty of actually understanding man, people have almost without exception lazily and comfortably chosen to accept underdeveloped notions of themselves. It is this realization that prompts him to suggest the following:

> It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages and men, which blind us and make us happy. (HAH, 13)

Such higher culture is contrasted with modern culture, which has largely accepted the "forms and symbols" handed down by spirits "not engaged in rigorous thinking" (HAH, 13). He claims that modern man believes in his notions of morality because he "deludes

himself" into thinking that "what he has essentially at heart must constitute the essence and heart of things" (HAH, 14). Finally, he points out "bad habits in drawing conclusions" such as the common tendencies to conclude "a thing exists, therefore it has a right to" and "an opinion makes happy, therefore it is a true opinion" (HAH, 27).

For all these reasons, Nietzsche does not presume it is a given that mankind should have a decent understanding of itself and he refutes that mankind does have such an understanding. Accordingly, he believes that knowledge would be enhanced greatly by so-called "free spirits" who avoid the common pitfalls and adhere to a strictly scientific method. Indeed, he not only wishes for science to become more prominent but suggests that science as a common mode of thought is already on the horizon. He contends that "the historical probability is that one day mankind will very possibly become in general on the whole skeptical" (HAH, 23). Furthermore, he suggests that the Age of Enlightenment will soon rise again in full force as a reaction to the unscientific "metaphysical need" of Schopenhauerian teaching, which pervaded European thought in the second half of the nineteenth century (HAH, 26). Nietzsche believes that to do his work successfully the free spirit must not be bound by any sort of obligation, and therefore suggests that we are already in an age more conducive to scientific thought when he asks rhetorically, "Who is there who still feels any attachment at all?" in an aphorism entitled "Age of comparison" (HAH, 24).

There is another notion vital to Nietzsche's idea of science and its ability to provide knowledge of man that should in one sense be familiar to the modern reader and yet in another quite unfamiliar. This is the notion that man is not an *aeterna veritas*

("something everlastingly true") but rather something that has been produced by a process of evolution (HAH, 12). He accuses philosophers of assuming that man has always been like he is today and, for that reason, of lacking an "historical sense" (HAH, 13). However, while Nietzsche certainly does not deny that we have evolved biologically from lower organisms, his emphasis is on the evolution that took place in man following his becoming human a long time ago. Accordingly, he claims that "everything essential in the development of mankind took place in primeval times, long before the four thousand years we more or less know about" (HAH, 13). While he believes that "during these years mankind may well not have altered very much," he notes that "the most recent manifestation of man…has arisen under the impress of certain religions, even certain political events" (HAH, 13). Thus, his conviction is that "everything has become" carries the belief that man had developed over the millennia as the result of forces that are not necessarily biological but perhaps even more importantly social and environmental (HAH, 13). The appearance of this conviction at the beginning of *Human, All Too Human* foreshadows the historical explanation of morality that he provides unsystematically in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* and systematically in *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

Even without having considered Nietzsche's theory of morality, we can anticipate how his theory will coincide with and differ from those of Schopenhauer and Rée. Nietzsche's insistence that any metaphysical knowledge, were it even attainable, "would be the most useless of all knowledge" certainly refutes Schopenhauer's grounding of compassion, and therefore morality, in a metaphysical will that underlies all forms of life (HAH, 15-16). On this point Nietzsche and Rée agree, as Rée sought an alternative to

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Schopenhauer's metaphysical foundation for compassion—an alternative he found in Darwinian evolutionary theory—because he too was not persuaded by Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Nietzsche already seems to agree with Rée on a number of other points as well. Like Rée, Nietzsche acknowledges the need for psychological observation to truly understand mankind. While we have not seen how Nietzsche will direct his psychological observation, Rée primarily directed his toward uncovering the vanity that lay behind men's actions. Nietzsche recognizes the need for a historical sense to understand how man became what he is. Rée's philosophy is also historical in nature, as he provides an historical explanation of how the concepts of "good" and "evil" arose; he states at one point that "the nature of any sensation is clear only to the extent that the history of its origin is clear" (BW, 92). Thus, while Rée's theory ultimately founds itself on Darwinian evolutionary theory and we do not yet have reason to believe that Nietzsche endorsed such a theory, it is already quite evident that both were dedicated to naturalistic philosophy.

Yet, for all the similarities observed so far between Nietzsche and Rée, a startling —and fundamental—dissimilarity appears in the first aphorism of *Human, All Too Human*, which is entitled "Chemistry of concepts and sensations" (HAH, 12). Nietzsche addresses the issue of "opposites," such as rationality and irrationality, the sentient and the dead, and logic and unlogic (HAH, 12). He claims that, whereas metaphysical philosophy "has hitherto…den[ied] that the one originates in the other…historical philosophy…has discovered…that there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular metaphysical interpretations" (HAH, 12). Thus, Nietzsche

believes that many things conventionally considered as opposites are actually not so different from one another. Furthermore, he contends that "a mistake in reasoning lies at the bottom of this antithesis" (HAH, 12). His refutation of opposites unearths the very roots of both Schopenhauer and Rée's philosophies, which depend on a real distinction between egoism and unegoism for the basis of the concepts of good and evil. Unlike Schopenhauer and Rée, who believe in the existence of compassion and selfless behavior, Nietzsche contends that "there exists, strictly speaking, neither an unegoistic action nor completely disinterested contemplation; both are only sublimations [of egoism], in which the basic element seems almost to have dispersed and reveals itself only under the most painstaking observation" (HAH, 12). Thus, he swiftly refutes Schopenhauer's theory of morality by denying the very existence of pure compassion; he also pushes Rée's theory back on its heels by denying its Darwinian underpinnings, which hold that natural selection led to the development of an unegoistic drive in man.

On the History of Moral Sensations

There is much more to be said about "Of First and Last Things," especially with regard to the ramifications Nietzsche thinks science will have on the future of mankind. However, Nietzsche tends to get ahead of himself so it would be best to develop a reasonably clear understanding of his theory of morality before considering the implications that it, along with the rest of science, will have on the course of human events. In the chapter "On the History of Moral Sensations," he presents his theory by approaching it from several different angles. I will attempt to discuss these angles in a

logical order so the reader can develop a clear conception of his theory and its relation to the theories of Schopenhauer and Rée.

The first major aspect of Nietzsche's theory is its denial of unegoistic motives and actions, as we saw briefly in the last section. He repeats this denial and provides various explanations throughout this chapter for why men have falsely believed the existence of selfless behavior. In an aphorism in which he lauds the use of psychological observation, he claims that older philosophies have founded "false ethics…on the basis of an erroneous analysis, for example that of so-called unegoistic actions" (HAH, 33). He certainly has Schopenhauer's ethics in mind and probably Rée's as well, although in neighboring aphorisms he calls Rée and La Rochefoucauld "skilful marksmen who again and again hit the bullseye…of human nature" and Rée in particular "the boldest and coldest of all thinkers" (HAH, 32, 33). Therefore, while Nietzsche derides the idea of unegoistic actions, he does not explicitly criticize Rée, whose moral theory must have been exceedingly familiar to him at the time. As we will see later, Nietzsche appears to appropriate a large part of Reé's theory—a part quite separate from the notion of unegoism—which leads me to presume that Nietzsche was inclined to ignore the unegoistic foundation of Rée's theory.

Nietzsche also says that the word "unegoistic…is never to be taken in a strict sense but only as a simplified form of expression" (HAH, 37). This statement reinforces the idea that he denies unegoism but also suggests that he recognizes certain actions that, while not at base motivated by concern for the interests of others, at least appear to be motivated as such. Furthermore, he believes that there are motivations that appear even to

the actor to possess a kernel of unegoism while in actuality they do not. Thus, he acknowledges the practical use of calling certain actions unegoistic because he recognizes that people have been led to falsely believe in unegoistic motivation; but he denies unequivocally that these actions are motivated by anything but self-interest.

Nietzsche appears to believe that two types of deception lead to the belief in unegoism: deception of others and deception of oneself. Furthermore, he suggests that the former tends to develop into the latter. This process is expressed in the closely related aphorisms "How appearance comes into being" and "The point of honesty in deception" (HAH, 39, 40). Nietzsche begins by claiming that "even when in the deepest distress, the actor ultimately cannot cease to think of the impression he and the whole scenic effect is making" (HAH, 39). Thus, Nietzsche believes that men are constantly concerned about the impression they make on others and adjust their behavior to make a certain effect on others that does not accurately represent their internal state. Nietzsche continues by asserting that "if someone obstinately and for a long time wants to *appear* something it is in the end hard for him to *be* anything else" (HAH, 39). Thus, the hypocrite in some fashion or another becomes that which he affects. As an example, he claims the man "who is always wearing a mask of a friendly countenance must finally acquire a power over benevolent moods without which the impression of friendliness cannot be obtained —and finally these acquire power over him, he *is* benevolent" (HAH, 39-40).

This is quite a startling proposition and one that confuses the notions of egoism and unegoism. Nietzsche implies that the actor originally deceives others out of a desire to fulfill his own self-interest. Others are bound to call his behavior unegoistic because he

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appears to them to act selflessly even though he knows full well what actually motivates him. Eventually, the actor himself becomes that which he postures. Nietzsche's description might seem to suggest that the egoistic man evolves into an unegoistic man. This would create a glaring contradiction in his philosophy, as he has already denied the existence of unegoistic behavior. However, the second aphorism under consideration provides an alternative suggestion that actually provides cogency to his philosophy rather than introducing a contradiction. He claims that "all great deceivers…are overcome with belief in themselves" (HAH, 40). Furthermore, he asserts that "self-deception has to exist if a grand effect is produced" (HAH, 40). Thus, it seems evident that those who deceive do not actually become unegoistic but simply deceive themselves thoroughly as to the real motivation behind their actions. This deception is so great that consciously the actor may very well think he acts out of a concern for the interests of others, while ultimately he only acts to serve his own. This may seem like an isolated phenomenon, but it will become apparent that the process of deception—whether active or passive, outward or inward—is the main reason for the near universal belief in unegoistic actions.

Nietzsche points out the actual egoism behind seemingly unegoistic actions to reinforce the idea that all actions are inherently egoistic despite our beliefs. In a clever play on Schopenhauer's notion of the *principium individuationis*, the feeling of individuality overcome by he who feels compassion, Nietzsche suggests that "man treats himself not as *individuum* but as *dividuum*" (HAH, 42). He contends that, rather than feeling unified with others when compelled to act morally, man "loves *something of himself,* an idea, a desire, an offspring, more than *something else of himself*" (HAH, 42).

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Consequently, a man "*divides* his nature and sacrifices one part of it to the other" (HAH, 42). Thus, Nietzsche realizes that seemingly unegoistic actions require sacrifices, but he asserts that they are for the benefit of the actor rather than the benefit of any other being with whom the actor might feel unified.

It is important to keep in mind that Nietzsche does not only have great unegoistic acts in mind but actually considers smaller, more frequent unegoistic acts more significant. He expresses that "every virtue has its privileges" and considers the everyday virtues of benevolence, honesty, and justness as prime examples (HAH, 44). He claims that benevolence—described as "that comfortable manner with which almost all human action is as a rule encompassed…is the continual occupation of humanity" (HAH, 38). Yet benevolent dispositions such as "good-naturedness, friendliness, [and] politeness of heart [have] very little of the unegoistic in them" (HAH, 38). Similarly, "almost all people tell the truth in ordinary life" for one of two reasons: because "it is easier; for lying demands invention, dissimulation, and a good memory," or because "it is advantageous," as "the route of authority and compulsion is more certain than that of cunning" (HAH, 40).

Finally, Nietzsche challenges the notion that justice is a concept intended to protect the weak by contending that "justice (fairness) originates between parties of approximately *equal power*" (HAH, 49). According to this view, "the characteristic of *exchange* is the original characteristic of justice" and, therefore, "justice goes back naturally to the viewpoint of an enlightened self-preservation" (HAH, 49). Nietzsche

suggests that the act of deception can take place over the course of many generations

when asserting the following:

> Men have *forgotten* the original purpose of so-called just and fair actions,
> and especially because children have for millennia been trained to admire
> and imitate such actions, it has gradually come to appear that just action is
> an unegoistic one. (HAH, 49)

Men can come to view their actions as unegoistic not only through the process of

deceiving themselves but also through inheriting a notion without inheriting a sense of

that notion's origin. Thus, when Nietzsche exclaims "How little moral would the world

appear without forgetfulness!" he means the forgetfulness of mankind as a social unit

(HAH, 49).

Before presenting Nietzsche's definition of morality, having already established

that he does not share Schopenhauer's compassion-based definition, it will be helpful to

draw a significant parallel between his philosophy and Rée's. The notion that vanity plays

a powerful, yet inconspicuous, role in human behavior exists in Nietzsche's philosophy as

it does in Rée's; indeed, vanity provides a motive for the deception Nietzsche has already

described. He claims that "the motives and intentions behind [an act] are seldom

sufficiently clear and simple"; however, if they were made clear they would incite

"revulsion, then suspicion" and gradually cause a man to be "altogether proscribed and

declared an outlaw in society" (HAH, 44). He asserts that such "agitations of the soul are

enveloped in vanity"; as such, vanity forms "the skin of the soul [that] makes the sight of

man endurable" (HAH, 48). Thus, while manifesting itself in deception, vanity regulates

men's behavior by appealing to their desire to look favorable in other men's eyes.

Aside from vanity's regulatory role, it also produces perverse effects on men's

behavior. Nietzsche argues that as a rule a man who acts out of vanity "wants to give

pleasure to himself but at the expense of his fellow men, inasmuch as he either seduces

them to a false opinion regarding himself or even aims at a degree of 'good opinion' that

is bound to be painful to others" (HAH, 48). Thus, while vanity tempers men's passions,

it also makes others feel bad about themselves. Yet the wicked effects do not stop there—

the vain individual's need to be seen favorably by others leads that individual to "go so

far as to neglect [his] own advantage" by arousing in his "fellow men ill-will, hostility

and envy" (HAH, 49). Thus, vanity has both hurtful and beneficial effects for both the

individual and society, and it can even induce individuals to inadvertently act against

their own self-interest. Nietzsche certainly agrees with Rée that it is an important

phenomenon to consider when attempting to understand human behavior. As we will see

shortly, vanity also plays a similar role in Nietzsche's theory of morality as it does in

Rée's.

With these notions in mind—that man is fundamentally selfish and yet appears, to

himself and to others, to be partly selfless, and he appears as such in part because of the

deception he has produced out of his vanity—we finally come to Nietzsche's definition of

morality. He provides a succinct, and quite simple definition, when stating that "to be

moral, to act in accordance with custom, to be ethical means to practice obedience

towards a law of tradition established from of old" (HAH, 51). Thus, morality for

Nietzsche is a purely social phenomenon. A community of arbitrary size establishes standards of behavior of arbitrary kind and these standards become treated as moral imperatives. However, Nietzsche recognizes that the goal of morality is not arbitrary; rather, moral precepts are "above all directed at the preservation of a *community*" (HAH, 51). Therefore, standards of behavior are established for individuals not for their own particular well-being but for the well-being of society as a whole. Hence, individuals are "called good because [they are] good 'for something'" or "useful" to the community rather than harmful to the community by acting in ways that threaten its preservation (HAH, 51).

With regard to motives, Nietzsche states that "whether one subjects oneself [to customs] with effort or gladly and willingly makes no difference, it is enough that one does it" (HAH, 51). However, he recognizes that "he is called 'good' who does what is customary as if by nature…that is to say easily and gladly" (HAH, 51). Thus, customs are ultimately concerned with a result—namely, the preservation of a community—rather than with whether men feel wholly devoted to the attainment of that result. Yet, the labels "good" and "bad" are attributed to those who seem devoted to customs, presumably because they contribute most consistently to the preservation of a community.

While Nietzsche believes that all morals are fundamentally intended to promote the well-being of a community, he explicitly denies the preeminence of any particular morality. In other words, he believes that customs can vary widely while all directing themselves toward the preservation of the community. Furthermore, he believes that there is no principle that must underlie all moralities. In reference to Kant, he states that "the

distinction between 'in accordance with custom' and 'in defiance with custom' [has] nothing to do…with any kind of immanent categorical imperative" (HAH, 51). Thus, rationality does not provide any duty that must be represented by all customs. Similarly, he asserts in clear reference to Schopenhauer that "'egoistic' and 'unegoistic' is not the fundamental antithesis…between good and evil" (HAH, 51). This denial that Schopenhauer's moral principle forms the basis for morality results from Nietzsche's disbelief in unegoism.

Moreover, this last statement is also a rejection of Rée's theory of morality on two levels. Rée maintains that evolution produced an unegoistic drive in man and the use of that drive was praised by society as "good" whereas the use of the egoistic drive was condemned as "bad." On one level, Nietzsche rejects Rée's presumption of the unegoistic drive just as he rejects Schopenhauer's. Additionally, Rée recognizes the overwhelming strength of the egoistic drive and claims that society began to praise unegoistic behavior precisely to counteract the naturally dominant egoistic drive. The presumption here is that the egoistic drive poses a threat to the community and that the neutralization of this threat is the goal of morality. Despite his agreement with Rée that the egoistic drive naturally holds sway over men's actions, Nietzsche does not agree with Rée that the purpose of morality must be to combat that egoism. Nietzsche is certainly aware that customs discouraging selfishness can form a type of morality and that the praise of selfless (or, more precisely, seemingly selfless) behavior *may* lead to the preservation of a community. However, he rejects the notion that moralities must rest, and have always rested, on this principle. Rather, he claims that the ancient Greeks even had a morality

that praised the exacting of revenge. Furthermore, he asserts that the morality of piety, in which individuals are expected to do whatever it takes to satisfy the gods, "is in any event a much older morality than that which demands unegoistic actions" (HAH, 53).

Throughout *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*, Nietzsche describes a variety of ways in which custom has established the moral distinction between good and bad, or good and evil. Some of his descriptions appear to highlight different aspects of the origin of a particular morality, whereas other descriptions appear to portray the origins of altogether different moralities. It is often difficult to determine which type of description he is providing in a given aphorism. For example, in the aphorism entitled "Twofold prehistory of good and evil" he describes a morality that arose out of caste divisions. He claims that mankind or society can be conceptually divided into two parts: "the ruling tribes and castes" and "the subjected, the powerless" (HAH, 36, 37). The ruling class, he suggests, defined good as the powerful and the bad as the powerless. In other words, they viewed people like themselves as good and those not like themselves (i.e. those of the lower class) as bad. The point of this moral distinction appears to be to reinforce "a sense of belonging together" by praising the quality that all individuals of the ruling class share, "the capacity for requital" (HAH, 37).

Nietzsche claims that the powerless, on the other hand, possess an altogether different morality in which "evil is the characterizing expression for man" (HAH, 37). This morality holds that everything is evil and nothing is good, and appears to reflect the fact that the powerless have no cohesiveness and no quality that unites them. Neither of these moralities on first blush appears to correspond with that of modern Europe.

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However, Nietzsche asserts at the end of the aphorism that "our present morality has grown up in the soil of the *ruling* tribes and castes" (HAH, 37). Yet, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* he seems to suggest the exact opposite—that modern European morality was shaped by the powerless. Addressing this confusion will be part of our task when we consider this book in Chapter 3.

Despite Nietzsche and Rée's difference of opinion regarding the inevitability of the egoism-unegoism dichotomy as the foundation of morality, they do share the idea that moral designations are socially constructed. While Rée does not imagine that a morality could arise in which unegoism is not praised, he recognizes that unegoistic behavior is not inherently good but only good because society has gradually learned to consider it as such. Thus, in a way Nietzsche is just taking Rée's theory that morality encourages socially beneficial behavior by attributing "good" and "evil" to things and purifying it of its Schopenhauerian assumptions. Seen in this way, their two theories are strikingly similar.

Nietzsche and Rée also share a sense of how morality as custom developed, although Nietzsche emphasizes different aspects of, and adds a few elements to, the development. According to Nietzsche, "the original founder of states [is] a man of violence [who] subjugates the weaker…to secure his existence through…fear-inspiring tests of his power" (HAH, 53). Nietzsche considers this subjection necessary for the establishment of morality because it "draws [men] out of their isolation and orders them within a collective" (HAH, 53). Thus, "morality is preceded by *compulsion*, indeed it is for a time itself still compulsion, to which one accommodates oneself for the avoidance

of what one regards as unpleasurable" (HAH, 53). In other words, morality is originally the set of requirements imposed by a more powerful individual on his subjects with the use of punishment. Later, the "collective individuality, for example society, the state" replaces the "greater individual" as the subjugator (HAH, 53). Furthermore, compulsion "becomes custom, later still voluntary obedience, finally almost instinct; then, like all that has for a long time been habitual and natural, it is associated with pleasure—and is now called 'virtue'" (HAH, 53). Therefore, morality evolves from something quite unfamiliar that must be actively and violently enforced to something quite agreeable that largely enforces itself.

Rée likewise sees the need for punishment in the establishment of the state, although he does not envision the dominant individual as the first imposer of order. However, he sees vanity as the main driver of men's acceptance of morality, as men desire to be praised rather than condemned for their behavior and consequently act quite willingly in ways that make them appear "good." Nietzsche, on the other hand, sees habit as the main reason why customs "grow milder and more pleasant in course of time" (HAH, 52). Granted, he agrees with Rée that vanity does play an important role in this process, claiming that "insofar as punishment and reward, blame and praise, operate most effectively upon vanity, [mankind's] utility also requires the continuance of vanity" (HAH, 57). However, he seems to think that the longer a society lives with a particular morality, the less they need the incentive provided by praise and blame to obey that morality because they become accustomed to obeying out of habit. Thus, Nietzsche

claims that "an important species of pleasure…originates in habit [and] even the strictest mode of life can become habitual and thus a source of pleasure" (HAH, 52).

We have so far seen much of what constitutes the definition and origin of morality for Nietzsche and how his definition and origin relate to those of Schopenhauer and Rée. Nietzsche defines morality in even more detail in *Daybreak* and we will consider what more he has to say about the definition and origin of morality in that book when we come to it. However, the *value* of morality is also a crucial topic in his philosophy. In fact, he seems to establish the definition of morality primarily so he can then evaluate the value of morality. In this sense, he differs fundamentally from Schopenhauer and Rée who are satisfied to simply provide their definition of morality. They certainly each question the logic of judging men for their actions; however, neither of their philosophies constitutes a significant commendation of or objection to morality. Their failure to question the value of morality in their philosophies stems from their inability to perceive the existence of morality in more than one way and their disinclination to view a morality that hallows selflessness as problematic.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, not only conceives of different moralities, he conceives of the absence of morality as well. This allows him to pose two questions concerning the value of morality in contemporary Europe: "Is the morality we have one that we ought to desire to have?" and "Ought we to desire to have a morality at all?" He answers both of these questions with a decisive "no" and, accordingly, protests against morality in two distinguishable ways. First, he denounces the value of the prevailing morality by describing its harmfulness; and secondly, he denounces the value of morality

qua morality by describing *its* harmfulness apart from its current incarnation. His moral philosophy therefore seeks to overthrow the very thing it describes in detail by exhibiting its deficiencies on two fronts.

Nietzsche launches his two-pronged attack on morality in *Human, All Too Human*. In the second chapter, we see relatively implicit criticisms of morality that are made more explicit in *Daybreak*. The first set of these criticisms concern the prevailing morality in modern Europe. I will consider this set of criticisms and then the set he levels at the value of morality qua morality. Finally, I will ascertain which set of criticisms plays the dominant role in *Human, All Too Human* and discuss the prescriptions he makes.

Although he does not say so explicitly until *Daybreak*, Nietzsche believes that current-day morality corresponds closely to the type of morality conceived by Schopenhauer and Rée. While Nietzsche does not agree with them that morality inherently depends on the egoistic-unegoistic dichotomy, he fully recognizes that the prevailing morality is fashioned after this dichotomy. This is not to say that he believes Schopenhauer and Rée even analyze the prevailing morality accurately, for they erroneously believe in the existence of unegoistic behavior. Rather, Nietzsche understands the present morality as one that labels seemingly unegoistic motives and behavior "good" and egoistic motives and behavior "bad." The entrenchment of this dichotomy helps to explain why Schopenhauer and Rée's theories portray morality the way they do. In Nietzsche's eyes, their fundamental mistake is to confuse the prevailing morality with morality itself by accepting this dichotomy as definitional. Having

corrected this mistake, Nietzsche's task is to demonstrate why a morality based on this dichotomy is undesirable.

The first way in which he does this is by refuting the value of praise for supposedly unegoistic behavior. The feeling that drives unegoistic behavior—*Mitleid*—is generally translated as "pity," rather than "compassion," in Nietzsche's writings. Since this feeling resides at the core of present-day morality, I will henceforth refer to this breed of morality as the "morality of pity." It will be important to keep in mind when I discuss Nietzsche's descriptions of pity that he never means to suggest that pity is inherently unegoistic, as Schopenhauer claims for compassion. Rather, Nietzsche always means to suggest that in every instance of pity either the actor or the witness erroneously believe in an unegoistic motive, or at the very least the behavior under consideration has customarily been attributed to empathy.

Nietzsche dissects the notion of pity and casts it in an unfavorable light in an aphorism entitled "The desire to excite pity." He claims that both La Rochefoucauld and Plato believed that pity "enfeebles the soul" by encouraging the possessor of pity to aid others not out of reason but out of feeling (HAH, 38). This condemnation of pity highlights two basic ideas in Nietzsche's thought. The first is that feelings are undesirable guides to action whereas one's faculty of reason is a desirable guide. This notion is reflective of his adherence to a particular conception of science. The second is that customs can be so strong as to induce certain feelings in men that cause them to act differently than they would have otherwise. This second idea is only partially represented in this condemnation since Nietzsche does not explicitly pinpoint the origin of pity in

custom until later in *Daybreak*. However, he clearly believes that "one should…manifest pity but not possess it" because actions based on feelings should be left to "the unfortunate [who] are so *stupid* that the manifestation of pity constitutes for them the greatest good in the world" (HAH, 38).

Nietzsche also attacks the notion of pity by arguing that the pitied are not so innocent and powerless as we assume. He claims that the pitied "fundamentally have the objective of *hurting* those who are with them" because they desire to exercise their "*one power*: the *power to hurt*" (HAH, 39). This idea hints at the more general idea of the "will to power" that Nietzsche develops over the course of his philosophical career. The idea of the will to power suggests that man's need to gain and exert power over others is very strong. He makes no exception here for the seemingly powerless; they too desire to exert their last bit of power by causing others to partake in their suffering. Accordingly, Nietzsche says "the thirst for pity is thus a thirst for self-enjoyment" and "causing pain gives pleasure" (HAH, 39). Therefore, he undermines our ideal of pity by revealing how the pitier is duped and taken advantage of by the pitied.

The third criticism of pity presented by Nietzsche concerns the harm and suffering that must be endured by those who pity. He suggests that the pitier's well-being is substantially diminished as a result of pitying by claiming that "there are cases in which sympathy for suffering is more painful than actual suffering" (HAH, 37). This statement suggests that pity involves the active participation of the pitier in another's suffering and, furthermore, that this act of participation can magnify the suffering of the pitied greatly. However, the effects of this magnification fall squarely on the shoulders of the pitier. The

pitied, as we have seen, actually gains satisfaction from the exchange. Thus, Nietzsche suggests that pity actually generates suffering in the pitier and this suffering causes the pitier harm regardless of the pitier's intentions. This appears as an important yet ironic point to make when we recall the Nietzsche's notion that a man acts only out of self-interest. According to this notion, the pitier must be egoistically motivated to pity his neighbor. Yet, the pitier ends up enduring a great amount of suffering because of his pity. Therefore, unless the pitier benefits in ways that outweigh his suffering (which Nietzsche does not seem to suggest), the pitier ultimately acts against his own interest despite his selfish intentions. This suggests that men do not always know how to satisfy their own interests effectively despite their egoism. We will come across this notion again when we discuss pity in *Daybreak*.

Nietzsche criticizes the morality of pity in a second way: by attempting to redeem the notion of selfishness from its tarnished image. Consequently, his attack on the morality of pity consists of both demoting the highly esteemed notion of pity and promoting the disgraced notion of selfishness. He defends egoism by making three main points: first, the value of selfishness to the individual should be better appreciated; second, the value of selfishness to society should be better appreciated; and third, given the nature of the egoistic drive and the remoteness of other's needs, we should be more accepting of those who act selfishly. Prompting all of these points is the belief that egoistic actions do not have any inherent value and, therefore, we should reexamine the negative value we attributed to such actions.

Nietzsche suggests that the morality of pity fails to appreciate the value of selfishness for the individual in an aphorism entitled "Revenge and the desire to revenge." He claims that the "desire to revenge" can either be a "fever which…passes" if satisfied by an act of revenge; or it can be a "chronic illness, a poisoning of body and soul" if unsatisfied (HAH, 42). He chides those who do not recognize that temporarily suffering from a fever is better, at least for the individual, than suffering from a chronic illness. Furthermore, he seems to imply that those possessing such a chronic illness lack "the strength and courage to carry out revenge" because morality has denied them that strength and courage (HAH, 42). At the very least, it is evident that he believes the morality of pity fails to encourage acts of revenge because it considers them evil. In either case, Nietzsche suggests that the morality of pity fails to recognize the need of individuals to act in selfish ways and even goes so far as to actively deny them the ability to fulfill those needs. The phenomenon of revenge is here used simply to exhibit this deficiency of the morality of pity.

Nietzsche extends this notion that we suffer from the morality of pity's under-appreciation of selfishness by claiming that society suffers simultaneously with the individual. He admits that "it was on account of their general utility that impersonal actions were universally commended and accorded distinction" (HAH, 50). However, he claims that it is no longer socially optimal to praise impersonal actions; rather, "it is in precisely the most *personal* possible considerations that the degree of utility is at its greatest also for the generality" (HAH, 50). It is unclear whether the morality of pity did at one point serve the common good effectively or if it established itself merely by

claiming to promote the common good. Nor is it altogether clear how more selfishness will increase the general welfare. Nevertheless, Nietzsche implores us to resuscitate "the all-too-little regard paid to the personal in us [which] has been badly cultivated [and] work for our fellow men, but only to the extent that we discover our own highest advantage in this work" (HAH, 51). Thus, he believes that the morality of pity insufficiently achieves the goal of all moralities—the preservation of mankind—because it fails to appreciate selfishness.

Finally, Nietzsche redeems selfishness by attempting to distance the notion of selfishness from the notion of hurting others. He asserts that "all 'evil' acts are motivated by the drive to preservation [and] 'procuring pain as such' *does not exist*" (HAH, 53). Consequently, he insists that the selfish behavior condemned by morality does not fundamentally concern itself with causing others to suffer. He reinforces this idea by stating that "pity has the pleasure of the other as its objective just as little as wickedness has the pain of the others as such"—that is to say, neither has the interests of others as its objective (HAH, 55). Thus, he argues that the morality of pity misleadingly associates selfishness with the harming of others.

Not only is selfishness not oriented toward the suffering of others but selfishness should seem understandable given the proximity of one's own concerns compared to the proximity of another's. Nietzsche claims that we ought to be forgiven for acting selfishly because "the idea of one's 'neighbor'…is very weak in us; and we feel almost as free of responsibility from him as we do for plants and stones" (HAH, 54). Similarly, he asks the rhetorical question: "But does one ever fully *know* how much pain an act causes

another?" (HAH, 56) These passages suggest that we should not only reject the idea of the unegoistic because of its irrationality but we should also appreciate how hard it would be for men to act selflessly even if they had an unegoistic drive.

I have so far discussed the ways in which Nietzsche criticizes the morality of pity. As stated before this discussion, he also attacks morality qua morality apart from its present incarnation as the morality of pity.[6] While his criticisms of the morality of pity are not shared by Schopenhauer and Rée, his criticisms of morality qua morality (for the remainder of this discussion referred to simply as "morality") are anticipated greatly by Schopenhauer and even more so by Rée. Both of these philosophers believe in strict determinism, from which it follows that they deny the freedom of the will. Their determinist stances were covered fully in the first chapter but it should be recalled that each of their stances had implications for guilt, remorse, and punishment. According to Schopenhauer, man has no freedom with regard to his actions because what he does follows directly from who he is. However, man does have freedom with regard to who he is because he possesses so-called intelligible freedom. Therefore, his guilt springs from his choice of character not his choice of actions. According to Rée, man does not have freedom with regard to his actions nor does he have freedom with regard to his character. Therefore, he should have no remorse and not be held guilty by others, nor should he be punished for any reason except deterrence.

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[6] In *Human, All Too Human*, the following criticisms appear directed toward morality qua morality. However, Nietzsche later identifies the notion of accountability with the morality of pity in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which suggests that the following criticisms ultimately apply to the morality of pity in particular. His application of these criticisms to morality qua morality in *Human, All Too Human* reflects his general tendency to distinguish inconsistently between these two concepts of morality.

Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer and Rée that the world is completely determined in a strict sense by causal factors and that there exists no freedom of the will. In an elegant aphorism entitled "By the waterfall," Nietzsche likens the progression of human events to the physics of a waterfall:

> At the sight of a waterfall we think we see in the countless curvings, twistings and breakings of the waves capriciousness and freedom of will; but everything here is necessary, every motion mathematically calculable. So it is too in the case of human actions; if one were all-knowing, one would be able to calculate every individual action, likewise every advance in knowledge, every error, every piece of wickedness. (HAH, 57)

While human actions often appear spontaneous and free from restraint, they are actually the necessary product of the current conditions and forces of the universe. Thus, Nietzsche describes the "illusion of free will" as a result of our inability to grasp the complex events that underlie human behavior (HAH, 57). If one grasps the total unaccountability of men with regard to their actions, one can no longer judge those actions by attributing them as morally good or bad, by praising or blaming them.

However, Nietzsche agrees with Rée in opposition to Schopenhauer that man does not possess freedom with regard to his character either. In an aphorism entitled "The fable of intelligible freedom," Nietzsche discusses the reasoning behind Schopenhauer's "fantastic concept of so-called intelligible freedom" (HAH, 35). To explain this reason, Nietzsche finds it necessary to explain how men came to consider themselves praiseworthy or blameworthy in the first place. He traces the development of moral designations across four steps in which society "successively makes men accountable for

the effects they produce, then for their actions, then for their motives, and finally for their nature" (HAH, 34). This progression takes place through a process of forgetting and "taking for cause that which is effect" that is highly reminiscent of Rée's envisioned evolution of moral designations (HAH, 34). Nietzsche looks at this progression and concludes that "the history of the moral sensations is a history of an error" in which society comes to consider men as good or evil even though "men can be held accountable for nothing" because their actions are completely predetermined (HAH, 34). According to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer could not bring himself to denounce moral designations as fallacious, presumably because he did not see morality as possessing a history at all. Instead, Schopenhauer attempted to justify the concept of moral accountability and the "consciousness of guilt" in particular while maintaining a deterministic view of the world (HAH, 35). To do so he drew the "erroneous conclusion" that man possessed freedom over his *esse* while not his *operari* (HAH, 35). Nietzsche counters this logic by asserting that "a feeling of displeasure after a deed is absolutely not obliged to be rational" (HAH, 35). Consequently, he not only denies Schopenhauer's notion of intelligible freedom but also contends that the feeling of accountability is "something one can disaccustom oneself to" given its irrational origin (HAH, 35).

Nietzsche actually portrays this concept that "no one is accountable for his deeds, no one for his nature…to judge is the same thing as to be unjust" as the most important idea of the chapter and therefore his entire discussion of morality in *Human, All Too Human* (HAH, 35). In the final aphorism, entitled "Unaccountability and innocence," he draws conclusions from the complete unaccountability of man that go far beyond those

drawn by either Schopenhauer or Rée. He claims that "the complete unaccountability of man for his actions and his nature is the bitterest draught the man of knowledge has yet to swallow" (HAH, 57). Yet, he foresees a future in which men gradually do swallow this draught and mankind attempts to "transform itself from a moral to a knowing mankind" (HAH, 58). This mankind is one in which man "may no longer praise, no longer censure" but must "stand before the actions of men and before his own…as he stands before the plants" (HAH, 57). He even suggests, despite firmly denying teleology elsewhere in his philosophy, that "*everything is…flooding forward*, and towards *one* goal"—"the wise, innocent (conscious of innocence) man" (HAH, 59). This flood, he suggests, is propelled by "the influence of increasing knowledge" and he speculates that a new, morality-less age will develop "in thousands of years' time perhaps" (HAH, 59). Thus, while he is critical of both morality qua morality and the morality of pity for different reasons, he believes that mankind will move beyond both as it realizes the errors underlying all moral judgments.

**Daybreak**

*Daybreak* can in many ways be seen as a sequel to the chapter "On the History of Moral Sensations" in *Human, All Too Human*. In *Daybreak*, which is composed of 575 aphorisms divided into five untitled "books," Nietzsche examines myriad aspects of morality. He treads much old ground covered in *Human, All Too Human*, but when he does so he usually presents familiar ideas in a more mature form. He also produces many new ideas, although these new ideas advance rather than contradict his theory of morality

as presented in *Human, All Too Human*. While it is far too daunting to analyze everything Nietzsche has to say about morality in *Daybreak*, I will attempt to explain those ideas most important to understanding the developments in Nietzsche's thought that occur in this work. As with my analysis of *Human, All Too Human*, I will address three main areas of his theory: his detailed definition of morality, the value he places on morality qua morality, and the value he places on the morality of pity. I will treat his valuation of the morality of pity more fully than his valuation of morality qua morality, because I believe the former is more central to this work than the latter.

The concept of what constitutes morality for Nietzsche is very much the same in *Daybreak* as it is in *Human, All Too Human*. He declares the following as the "*chief proposition*: morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be" (D, 10). Thus, we see that he still believes morality is strictly-speaking based on arbitrary tradition and not on any unegoistic-egoistic distinction. However, he develops the idea of custom, or tradition, and its power in *Daybreak*. He answers the question "What is tradition?" with: "A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is useful to us, but because it commands" (D, 11). This definition of tradition ought not to sound unusual given his assertion in *Human, All Too Human* that morals are not meant for the individual's well-being, but his emphasis on commandment is new. He suggests that the commands of custom manifest themselves in the individual as "fear in the presence of a higher intellect" (D, 11). This is a fear of "an incomprehensible, indefinite power, of something more than personal" (D, 11). Thus, one is compelled to act morally, not only out of habit and vanity, as suggested

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in *Human, All Too Human*, but fear of an ominous power. Nietzsche seems to suggest that this power does not actually exist, at least in the way imagined by the fearful. Accordingly, he asserts that "there is *superstition* in this fear" (D, 11).

This idea of superstition as a reinforcement of moral behavior builds on Nietzsche's more fundamental idea that morality depends on irrationality for its existence, as opposed to Rée's insistence that morality depends on rationality for the determination of what should be labeled "good." Nietzsche's emphasis on the irrationality of origins is reasserted in the first sentence of *Daybreak*, which states that "all things that live long are gradually so saturated with reason that their origin in unreason thereby becomes improbable" (D, 9). By calling such origins "improbable" he does not mean they were actually rational but rather the opposite, as our obsession with rational origins leads us to believe in them erroneously. Nietzsche suggests that morality is particularly prone to reinforcement through irrationality because its true nature is incomprehensible to almost everyone. He claims that customs increase in value as men, driven by "fear of the incomprehensible," resort to "speculation over [the] usages" of customs (D, 28). In other words, men make up impressive explanations for customs because they do not understand the true explanation for customs; this irrational process, in turn, leads to even greater reverence for them.

Furthermore, Nietzsche believes that morality confuses individuals into believing that misfortune must necessarily stem from moral deviance. He claims that when "an evil chance event strikes a community, the suspicion is aroused that custom has been offended in some way" (D, 24). Consequently, the community attempts to find a reason for the evil

event by partaking in "a direct avoidance of any investigation of the real natural causes of the phenomenon" (D, 24). The community's insistence that bad fortune must constitute punishment for moral transgressions persists because "it is not easy to *refute* the validity of [a moral] prescription [because] some circumstances will always appear which seems to confirm the prescription" (D, 20). Thus, once a people form a disposition toward morality, their disposition is reinforced by both the irrational meanings they give to customs and the irrational causal explanations they give to the vicissitudes of life.

Yet, Nietzsche believes that science can and has gradually counteracted the irrationality that sustains morality. He states that "as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality decreases" (D, 12). Understanding science to be the discipline in which true causal explanations are discovered by the use of reason, this statement suggests that science can debase morality by "destroy[ing] a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundation of customs" (D, 12). This process is apparently underway already as he compares the belief in moral designations to the belief in gender designations for all things. He claims that mankind's laying "of *ethical significance* on the world's back," like "the [erstwhile] belief in the masculinity and femininity of the sun," will one day be designated "an enormous error" (D, 9).

In *Human, All Too Human*, we saw how Nietzsche considered feelings untrustworthy because they do not readily provide rational reasons for believing or acting in particular ways. He takes this idea a step further in *Daybreak* by enlarging the potential for feelings to mislead. He claims that "moral feelings are transmitted in this way: children observe in adults inclinations for and aversions to certain actions and, as born

apes, *imitate* these inclinations and aversions" (D, 25). Thus, feelings are not only dangerous because they fail to provide rationales; they are also dangerous because we do not know exactly where they originated, and they probably originated a very long time ago under obscure conditions. For this reason, Nietzsche states: "To trust one's feelings means to give more obedience to one's grandfather and grandmother and their grandparents than to the gods which are in *us*: our reason and our experience" (D, 25). Without evidence suggesting that our ancestors knew how to establish value judgments better than we do, he finds it unacceptable to act according to our feelings, which we probably received from them and which reflect their judgments.

In addition to exploring the ways in which obedience to custom depends on irrationality, Nietzsche emphasizes the dominance customs originally had over society. He describes this dominance in two ways: first by explaining the comprehensiveness of early forms of morality, and second by explaining the higher level from which morality once commanded society. He claims that "originally all education and care of health, marriage, cure of sickness, agriculture, war, speech and silence, traffic with one another and with the gods belonged within the domain of morality" (D, 11). The comprehensiveness of a morality that covered all of these areas of life was meant to prevent the individual from "thinking of oneself as an individual" (D, 11). Accordingly, custom preserved mankind by demanding that an individual "sacrifice himself" through a process of "self-overcoming" that rendered him harmless to the security of the community somehow (D, 11).

This assimilation of the individual into the identity of the state is also represented by the sharing of guilt by the entire community. Nietzsche claims that originally "punishment for breaches of custom [fell] before all on the community" and the community felt "the individual's guilt above all as *its own* guilty and [bore] punishment as its *own* punishment" (D, 12). Thus, morality, although acting on the individual by destroying that very individuality, ultimately acted on the community as a whole by making everyone feel guilty for the actions of any individual member.

However, Nietzsche claims that we no longer clearly see morality as a phenomenon that denies the individual and produces a shared sense of moral responsibility because "we men live in a very immoral age: the power of custom is astonishingly enfeebled and the moral sense so rarefied and lofty it may be described as having more or less evaporated" (D, 10). While here he certainly exaggerates the extent to which morality has grown weak (his philosophy constitutes an attack on morality, after all), this idea that present-day morality is a much more diluted form of morality than those of the past helps him make bold, unfamiliar claims about the fundamental characteristics of morality. Accordingly, he asserts that our familiarity with a weak form of morality "is why the fundamental insights into the origin of morality are so difficult for us latecomers" (D, 10). Morality has become weak presumably for the same reasons as suggested previously, namely that science has uncovered the irrationality behind morality. The role of science in this regard is captured by his assertion that "in the same measure as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality

decreases," as science is responsible for "destroy[ing] a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundations of customs" (D, 12).

Despite Nietzsche's insistence that morality has already lost much of its force, he is greatly concerned with the damage morality qua morality does to the individual. He asserts that "under the dominion of the morality of custom, originality of every kind has acquired a bad conscience, the sky above the best men is for this reason to this very moment gloomier than it need be" (D, 12). Thus, Nietzsche is not only concerned about the irrationality of morality qua morality as he was in *Human, All Too Human*; he also abhors the necessary tendency of morality to promote the good of the community at the expense of the individual. This belief in the anti-individualistic nature of morality tells us two things in particular: first, Nietzsche believes that the individual and society have incompatible needs, and the long-term dominance of morality has meant the attempted fulfillment of communal needs at the expense of those of the individual. Secondly, the morality of pity no longer looks as unique in its method of preserving the community by weakening the individual, in its peculiar case by valuing selflessness. According to what Nietzsche says in *Daybreak*, morality qua morality has the inherent method of preserving mankind by denying individuality; therefore, the morality of pity is just one type of morality that operates in this way, although perhaps it does so particularly well.

Nietzsche highlights this tendency of morality to oppress the individual by contrasting the morality of custom with an alternative type of morality. So far we have only seen him refer to one type of morality: custom that operates on a social level and demands obedience from the individual. However, he suggests that there is an alternative

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to the morality of custom; this alternative is a morality of individualism and is much rarer than the morality of custom. Nietzsche describes the moralists of this alternative morality as those "who, following in the footsteps of Socrates, offer the *individual* a morality of self-control and temperance as a means to his own *advantage*, as his personal key to happiness" (D, 11). Therefore, the morality of individualism, which is apparently embodied by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, does the exact opposite of the morality of custom by actively promoting the well-being of the individual rather than the community. Consequently, those under the influence of the morality of custom find the morality of individualism offensive and dangerous. Nietzsche provides an example of this "highest disapprobation of all advocates of morality of custom" by claiming that "to a virtuous Roman of the old stamp every *Christian* who 'considered first of all his *own* salvation' appeared – evil" (D, 11). The issue of the extent to which Christianity should be considered a morality of individualism versus a morality of custom will be taken up later when I discuss the role Christianity plays in Nietzsche's moral philosophy more extensively.

Nietzsche not only believes that moralities of custom hurt the individual by forcing the individual to sacrifice himself for society's well-being through obedience to moral laws; he also believes they hurt the individual by confusing him with regard to where his self-interest actually lies and, even more significantly, with regard to whether or not he is acting selfishly or selflessly. In an aphorism entitled "Pseudo-egoism," he claims that:

> Whatever they may think and say about their "egoism", the great majority nonetheless do nothing for their ego their whole life long: what they do is done for the phantom of their ego which has formed itself in the heads of those around them and has been communicated to them. (D, 61)

While he does not explicitly say so, these "phantoms of their ego" are effected by morality through the instillation of customary valuations. This passage is peculiar given Nietzsche's prior insistence that all men act for the sake of their ego rather than for the sake of other men's egos. One might be tempted to misinterpret Nietzsche as suggesting that morality can actually bend men into acting selflessly. However, interpreting him in this way would grossly betray the real meaning behind this passage. He means to suggest that men are still thoroughly egoistic; they are just also thoroughly confused by the effects of morality as to how they ought to go about fulfilling their egoism. In a way, morality blinds men from seeing their actual self-interest by engulfing them within a "fog of habits and opinions" that misleads and obstructs them in their pursuit of pleasure (D, 61). Therefore, morality ends up injuring individuals by impeding their ability to act selfishly in an effective manner.

The ability of morality to confuse men with regard to whether they are acting selfishly or selflessly is explained by Nietzsche in the aphorism entitled "There are two kinds of deniers of morality." He claims that there are men like La Rochefoucauld who "deny morality" by "deny[ing] that the moral motives which men *claim* have inspired their actions really have done so" (D, 60). These men essentially suggest that "morality consists of words and is among the coarser or more subtle deceptions (especially self-deceptions) which men practice" (D, 60). Implicit in this idea of deception is the notion

that what really motivates men is something other than the desire to obey a custom for the sake of obedience. However, men either convince others that they are motivated by such a desire to obey, or they somehow convince themselves (in addition to others, perhaps) that they are motivated in this way. Under a morality of pity, this means that men appear to others or themselves to be motivated by selflessness, or pure compassion, when in reality they are motivated by selfishness. Thus, this type of denial of morality refuses the notion that men act morally in the sense that their motivations are truly "good" according to a particular morality. Nietzsche endorses this type of denial by claiming that he "should be the last to deny that *in very many cases* there is some ground for suspicion that [this] point of view [may] be justified and in any event of great general application" (D, 60).

However, there is a second type of denial of morality that Nietzsche considers even more central to his philosophy. This second denial means "to deny that moral judgments are based on truths. Here it is admitted that they really are motives of action, but that in this way it is *errors* which, as the basis of all moral judgment, impel men to their moral actions" (D, 60). This type of denial essentially posits a much more thorough form of deception than the first type, but here the actor himself does not deceive anyone; rather, the impersonal and gradual process in which a morality becomes thoroughly established in a community is to blame for the deception. Nowadays men are thoroughly convinced that their actions are motivated by the desire to obey custom for the sake of obedience, but they fail to see that their real motivation lies elsewhere. However, in the distant past when morality was first taking hold over their community, men did realize

what truly motivated them. The community somehow forgot over the span of numerous generations why its members obeyed particular customs. Consequently, its constituents ended up assuming that they obeyed customs for the sake of obedience. Under a morality of pity, men assume that they act selflessly because that is the underlying ideal of the prevailing customs; but in actuality they are unknowingly motivated by selfish reasons that were known only to their ancestors who first felt compelled (perhaps out of fear of punishment, for example) to act according to custom. Thus, this type of denial constitutes a denial of the very idea that men ever act morally at all (in the sense that their motivations are morally "good") whereas the first allowed for the idea that men *could* act morally but claimed that many men did not.

Nietzsche stresses elsewhere in *Daybreak* the idea that the true motives behind our seemingly moral actions are not what they appear to be. The aphorism that opens Book II, entitled "To become moral is not in itself moral," consists of the following sentence: "Subjection to morality can be slavish or vain or self-interested or resigned or gloomily enthusiastic or an act of despair, like subjection to a prince: in itself it is nothing moral" (D, 59). Here he points out the variety of ways in which a man can become seemingly moral out of selfish motives. Because selfishness is never endorsed by morality, or at least by the morality of pity, men are never truly moral even though they might suppose they are. Elsewhere, Nietzsche speaks more generally about the mysteriousness of motives when claiming that "actions are *never* what they appear to be!" (D, 72). He calls it a "primeval delusion…that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, *how human action is brought about*" (D, 72). Accordingly, he asserts that

"moral actions are in reality 'something other than that'—more we cannot say," by which he means that moral actions are not moral because they have immoral motives, and the precise type of immoral motive is unknown and largely unknowable (D, 72).

The notion that men can lose track of the real motives behind their moral actions can be better understood by looking at what Nietzsche says about the virtue of humility. In an aphorism entitled "Refined cruelty as virtues," he explains how men originally became humble out of a desire to feel the power derived from acting cruelly toward others. He claims that, generally speaking, "we want to make the sight of us *painful* to another and to awaken in him the feeling of envy and his own impotence and degradation" (D, 23). When customs regard humility as praiseworthy, men become humble so as to arouse such envy through their distinction as more humble than others. Accordingly, Nietzsche asserts that "the morality of distinction is in its ultimate foundation pleasure in refined cruelty" (D, 23). This idea concerning the competitive motives behind men's original moral behavior resonates with Rée's belief that men originally respond to moral designations by satisfying their vanity, a process which requires the relative diminution of others. Also, to refer back to the two ways to deny morality, these humble men would be seen by La Rochefoucauld to deceive others actively with regard to what actually motivates them.

While the actor is relatively aware of his motives in this early development of humility, Nietzsche describes a process that takes place in which the original motives behind acting humble become obscured for everybody. Locating the foundation of humility as cruelty in humility's "first generation," he claims that the habit of acting

humbly gets inherited by subsequent generations (D, 23). How exactly this inheritance takes place is not entirely clear, as he could be referring to a biological process of inheritance in addition to a socialization process. In any case, he claims that as "thoughts are not hereditary, only feelings," the men of subsequent generations act humbly in two ways that make them different from the men of the first generation: they no longer know that humility was originally effected out of the desire to act cruelly, and they are motivated by a new desire—the desire to feel "pleasure in the habit as such" (D, 23). As a replacement for the original rationale behind their actions, which has become lost, these men of subsequent generations create a false rationale for their actions that reflects the ideals of the prevailing morality. Nietzsche calls the pleasure of habit that develops "the first stage of the 'good'" because only when this pleasure arises as the motive for acting humbly do men begin to truly deceive themselves by regarding their humility as motivated by the desire to act in ways deemed "good" for the sake of acting in those ways (D, 23). Thus, we see how a virtue arises over a long period of time in which the selfish motivations behind it become hidden and the original rationale is lost and replaced by an untruth. Since this process can readily apply to virtues other than humility, this theory provides an explanation for our misunderstanding of what underlies all moral behavior.

With respect to the value of morality qua morality, I have mainly spoken of morality's harmfulness to the individual, a harmfulness that results in large part from morality's ability to confuse men with regard to their interests and motives. Nietzsche also challenges morality by questioning the effectiveness with which it achieves its goal.

He claims that "everywhere today the goal of morality is defined the following way: it is the preservation and advancement of mankind" (D, 61). He criticizes this goal by calling it merely "an expression of the desire for a formula," because it does not specify "preservation of what" and "advancement to what" (D, 61). He suggests that there are numerous contradictory answers to these questions, such as "the longest possible existence of mankind," "the greatest possible deanimalisation of mankind," "the highest degree of rationality," "the highest degree of happiness that individual men could gradually attain to," and "the highest average-happiness which could finally be attained to by all" (D, 62). Because morality fails to provide a more specific goal, it fails to achieve *any* goal. Furthermore, Nietzsche suggests that something other than morality would be better at achieving these goals even if morality were more specific. If the goal were the greatest average happiness, for example, morality could be seen to have "opened up such an abundance of misery…that with every refinement of morals mankind has become *more discontented* with himself, his neighbor and the lot of his existence" (D, 62). Thus, immorality might very well achieve this goal better than morality, because morality actually tends to diminish individuals' happiness.

While morality fails to preserve and advance mankind in any way because its goal is ill-defined, Nietzsche supports the idea of creating a well-defined goal for mankind that could be enforced by quasi-moral laws. He asserts that "only if mankind possessed a universally recognized *goal* would it be possible to propose 'thus and thus is the *right* course of action'" (D, 63). While "for the present time there exists no such goal" and consequently it is "irrational and trivial to impose the demands of morality upon

mankind," he claims that "to *recommend* a goal to mankind is something quite different" (D, 63). This recommended goal, however, is fundamentally different than any goal of morality. Whereas morality's goal is unquestioned and unquestionable, despite its ambiguousness, a recommended goal would be "something which *lies in our own discretion*" (D, 63). In the same spirit, mankind would "*impose* upon itself a moral law" (D, 63). Contrary to Nietzsche's reputation as an elitist, this statement could be construed to suggest that mankind as a whole, not a select, non-representative few, should determine the goal and laws of mankind. Regardless of whether this is the case or not, it is clear that this new project of establishing a goal for mankind differs from that of morality, because its laws do not "stand *above* our own likes and dislikes" but are rather imposed "'upon oneself' willingly" (D, 63, 64).

Nietzsche also recognizes the difficulties that morality itself presents to the establishment of new goals and laws. He claims that "morality is a hindrance to the creation of new and better customs: it makes [men] stupid," because morality considers extra-moral values evil (D, 18). Furthermore, he admits that "to suffer for the sake of morality and then to be told that this kind of suffering is founded on an *error*: this arouses indignation" (D, 24). Thus, men are reluctant to challenge morality for two reasons: such a challenge is blameworthy and thus discouraged by the community, and men find it more comfortable to deceive themselves with regard to morality's value because they have invested so much in it. Yet, Nietzsche finds that challenges are nevertheless made to morality on a frequent basis, albeit quietly. He claims "there is a continual moiling and toiling going on in morality—the effect of *successful crimes* (among which, for example

are included all innovations in moral thinking)" (D, 59). While this moiling might lead to only alterations in a morality, his hope that such crimes can counteract the actual power of custom is apparent in the aphorism "The need for little deviant acts." He implores those who are conscious of the failings of custom to defy custom daily, because he fears that their obedience to custom greatly strengthens that custom by providing the "sanction of rationality itself" (D, 97). Deviant acts, in contrast to obedient acts, would contribute to the loosening of morality's grip on men's minds by showing others that morality need not necessarily be obeyed.

Despite his hope that men will be able to rid the world of morality gradually, he recognizes that the coming era of immoralism will be experimental and dangerous. He tentatively claims that "those who do not regard themselves as being bound by existing laws and customs are making the first attempts to organize themselves and therewith to create for themselves a *right*," by which he means a "power" (D, 100). He suggests that this rising power will change things so "it shall not even be considered disgraceful to deviate from morality" (D, 101). However, once men free themselves from morality they will need to find a new way to organize society. Therefore, "novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society" (D, 101). Mankind will enter a "moral interregnum" in which men must "construct anew the laws of life and action" on top of "foundation-stones of new ideals" that will be determined by science (D, 191).

This period will also be a dangerous one, however, and could "put everyone under the necessity of carrying a gun" (D, 100). Speaking generally about the attainment of knowledge, which correlates with the rise of immoralism, he suggests that the "drive to

knowledge could drive mankind to the point of dying with the light of an anticipatory wisdom in its eyes" (D, 31). He recognizes the tragic nature of this possible outcome but believes that it is worth risking this outcome because for "knowledge of truth…no sacrifice is too great" (D, 31). Thus, Nietzsche recognizes that a future infused with science and immorality will be unpredictably perilous, but he simultaneously believes that we ought to experiment with new ways of life to make the transition into that future, which may very well be inevitable anyway, as successful as possible.

So far I have restricted myself to Nietzsche's thoughts regarding morality qua morality. However, he has much to say in *Daybreak* about the morality of pity as well. When we looked at the morality of pity in *Human, All Too Human*, we accepted it as the prevailing morality in Western civilization but without any explanation of its origins. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche locates the origin of the morality of pity in Christianity. As such, he describes the ways in which Christian morality, as an explicitly religious, preliminary form of the morality of pity, has made life worse for all of mankind. Christian morality can be understood to have done this in two complementary ways: by stressing the goodness of selflessness and by stressing the evilness of selfishness. The morality of pity, in contrast to Christian morality, certainly stresses the goodness of selflessness but fails to stress the evilness of selfishness to the extent that Christian morality does. In *Human, All Too Human*, we saw how much Nietzsche reviled the morality of pity. We will see here that he reviles Christian morality even more in *Daybreak* because, as the forerunner of the morality of pity, it denies men their passions even more strongly. Our discussion about Nietzsche's treatment of Christianity in *Daybreak* will provide us with the

foundation we will need to understand the emergence of the morality of pity out of Christianity as portrayed in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which I will cover in the next chapter.

Nietzsche locates the origin of the morality of pity in Christian teachings in an aphorism entitled "The echo of Christianity in morality." He begins with a Latin phrase that means the following: "People are good only out of pity. Therefore, there must be some pity in all our sentiments" (D, 82). He claims that "thus says morality today" and asserts the following: "That men today feel the sympathetic, disinterested, generally useful social actions to be the *moral* actions—this is perhaps the most general effect and conversion which Christianity has produced in Europe" (D, 82). Thus, it is clear that he believes the morality of pity originated in Christianity. He claims that this effect resulted from not its primary teaching, which was actually the "strictly egoistic fundamental belief in…the absolute importance of eternal *personal* salvation," but rather "the subsidiary belief in 'love', in 'love of one's neighbor', in concert with the tremendous practical effect of ecclesiastical charity" (D, 82). Nevertheless, the ideal of selflessness pervaded European civilization and benefited from the endorsement of intellectuals such as "all [the] French freethinkers from Voltaire up to Auguste Comte," Schopenhauer, and John Stuart Mill (D, 82). Nietzsche suggests that while there is disagreement among intellectuals about how selflessness should be directed, "there is also a wonderful and fair-sounding unanimity in the demand that the ego has to deny itself" (D, 83). He claims that this demand seeks "nothing less than a fundamental remoulding, indeed weakening and abolition of the *individual*" for the sake of managing "large bodies and their

members…more cheaply, more safely, more equitably, [and] more uniformly" (D, 83). Thus, the "moral undercurrent" of our age that seeks to preserve the community by sacrificing individuality can be traced back to Christian teachings centered on the idea of loving one's neighbor (D, 83). In Chapter 3, we will see how this development of the morality of pity out of Christianity occurred.

Nietzsche spends the rest of his discussion of Christianity in *Daybreak* criticizing its praise of pity and its denunciation of egoism. His criticisms of pity as the feeling associated with the "good" in Christian morality are more fully developed than his criticisms of pity in *Human, All Too Human*. He challenges the conventional belief that pity is an unegoistic process by asserting that when we pity "we are, to be sure, not consciously thinking of ourselves but are doing so *very strongly unconsciously*" (D, 83). He claims that "an accident which happens to another offends us" in any of three main ways: it can "make us aware of our impotence, and perhaps of our cowardice, if we did not go to assist him," or it can "bring with it in itself a diminution of honour in the eyes of others or in our own eyes," or it can "constitute a signpost to some danger to us" and therefore "have a painful effect upon us simply as a token of human vulnerability and fragility in general" (D, 84). Whatever the case, pity compels us to help another out of selfish intentions.

However, it necessitates that we suffer from the misfortune of another by attempting "to understand another person, that is, to imitate his feelings" (D, 89). Nietzsche makes a point to specify that this suffering we feel from pity "is our own" and not that of the pitied, despite the imitative nature of our own (D, 84). Consequently, it is

not the suffering of he who is pitied but "*only [the] suffering of our own* which we get rid of when we perform deeds of pity" (D, 84). While the suffering of another is certainly the main cause of pity, he who pities has only the selfish interest of stopping his own suffering when he helps the pitied.

Pity can be considered a seductive feeling because it draws men into suffering alongside another and creates for them a need that they must fulfill to feel better again. In an aphorism entitled "To what extent one has to guard against pity," Nietzsche describes pity as "a weakness" that "*increases* the amount of suffering in the world" (D, 85). Pity is customarily considered good because it induces men to help one another and, therefore, has a certain beneficial effect. However, Nietzsche claims that "if suffering is here and there indirectly reduced and removed as a consequence of pity, this occasional and on the whole insignificant consequence must not be employed to justify its essential nature, which is, as I have said, harmful" (D, 85). Not only does he not believe pity's benefits outweigh its harmfulness, he believes that pity can actually inhibit the ability of men to help others by making men "sick and melancholic" (D, 86). Thus, he suggests that he "whose desire it is to serve mankind as a physician *in any way whatsoever* will have to be very much on his guard against that sensation—it will paralyze him at every decisive moment and apply a ligature to his knowledge and his subtle helpful hand" (D, 86). Therefore, Nietzsche believes that pity actually produces more suffering than otherwise by replicating the suffering of the pitied in the pitier and by making it more difficult for men to help each other.

Nietzsche suggests that there is another major downside to the selfless ideal. Under the morality of pity, the hurting of others in any way whatsoever is considered bad. Against this notion, he imagines the possibility in which it might be socially beneficial "to *look beyond* [the] immediate consequences of others and under certain circumstances to pursue more distant goals *even at the cost of the suffering of others*" (D, 92). The notion here is that we ought to be willing to make sacrifices of others as we make sacrifices of ourselves. He extends this idea by asking rhetorically: "why may a few individuals of the present generation not be sacrificed to coming generations?" (D, 92) He is confident that men are capable of making their neighbor "feel himself to be a sacrifice" and thus of "strengthen[ing] and rais[ing] higher the general feeling of human power" (D, 92). Thus, Nietzsche believes that mankind would be better off if pity did not discourage men from taking the first step toward sacrificing each other under the pretence of mutual understanding.

For all the reasons discussed above, Nietzsche criticizes the morality of pity, which is in turn based in Christian morality, for praising selflessness. However, he reserves special criticism for Christian morality that can only apply to the morality of pity indirectly and with less force. This criticism is directed at Christianity's overwhelming tendency to treat selfishness as evil and blameworthy regardless of whether that selfishness hurts others. The result of making selfishness so thoroughly blameworthy is twofold: first, men, who are thoroughly egoistic creatures, are constantly plagued by guilt for satisfying their desires; and secondly, man, unable to ever live up to the ideals of Christianity, fear the likely prospect of eternal Hell after death. Thus, Nietzsche criticizes

Christian morality for making life torturous by denying men the satisfaction of their egoism and by punishing them so heavily for their moral transgressions.

Nietzsche discusses these two problems with Christianity in two particular aphorisms. In the first, entitled "To think a thing evil means to make it evil," he claims that "the passions become evil and malicious if they are regarded as evil and malicious" (D, 45). This, he believes, is precisely what has become of man's egoistic passions as a result of Christian teachings. He expresses his dismay of this result by considering sexual desires in particular. He proclaims: "Is it not dreadful to make necessary and regularly recurring sensations into a source of inner misery, and in this way to want to make inner misery a necessary and regularly recurring phenomenon *in every human being*!" (D, 45). This inner misery he speaks about is the feeling of remorse, or "bad conscience," associated with not being able to act morally (D, 45). Thus, sexual passions provide an excellent example in which a very necessary form of egoism is considered evil and as a consequence man is made to suffer inevitably. For making men feel perpetually guilty for satisfying their natural drives, Nietzsche suggests "it may be that posterity will judge the whole inheritance of Christian culture to be marked by something crackbrained and petty" (D, 46).

Men's suffering as the result of Christianity's attribution of selfishness as evil, however, does not stop there. In the second aphorism, entitled "On the torments of the soul," Nietzsche discusses the agony men experience when facing the prospect of eternal Hell. Because the New Testament is a "canon of *impossible virtue*" that guarantees men's moral efforts will remain "unsuccessful, miserable, melancholy *effort*," men are

particularly prone to fearing Hell as they realize the futility of their attempts to be virtuous enough to avoid Hell without a "breakthrough of grace" (D, 51). Referring to this fear and agony, Nietzsche proclaims: "What a dreadful place Christianity had already made of the earth when it everywhere erected the crucifix and thereby designated the earth as the place 'where the just man is *tortured* to death'!" (D, 46-47). Furthermore, he suggests that such widespread suffering turns the earth into a "vale of misery" (D, 47). Thus, Nietzsche considers the positing of Hell as punishment for immoral selfishness as a significant way in which Christianity makes life unavoidably miserable for the faithful.

Along with his belief that mankind is moving way from morality qua morality, he sees reason to believe that we are gradually ridding ourselves of Christianity and ultimately the morality of pity as well. He claims in an aphorism entitled "At the deathbed of Christianity" that "really active people are now inwardly without Christianity" and the religion has "crossed over into a gentle *moralism*" in which "it is not so much 'God, freedom and immorality' that have remained, as benevolence and decency in disposition" (D, 53, 54). With regard to the morality of pity, he discusses the possibility of taking back the higher value attributed to the unegoistic in an aphorism entitled "Distant prospect." He suggests that the result of valuing unegoistic actions lower would be to "restore to men their goodwill towards the actions decried egoistic and restore to these actions their *value*—we shall deprive them *of their bad conscience*!" (D, 93). He believes this will have a tremendous effect on men's outlook on life, because once the value of (ever-frequent) egoistic actions has been restored, we will have "remove[d] from the entire aspect of action and life its *evil appearance*" and man will

"no longer regard himself as evil" (D, 94). Thus, Nietzsche desires to rid the world of Christianity and the morality of pity because he wishes to give men back their dignity and correct their view of life as an inherently blameworthy experience.

# Chapter 3 – *On the Genealogy of Morals*

The third and final work of Nietzsche's that we will consider—*On the Genealogy of Morals*—further develops his theory of morality as presented initially in *Human, All Too Human* and articulated more fully in *Daybreak*. Nietzsche himself endorses this view of *On the Genealogy of Morals* by claiming in its preface that his "ideas on the *origin* of our moral prejudices—for this is the subject of this polemic—received their first, brief, and provisional expression in the collection of aphorisms that bears the title *Human, All-Too-Human. A Book for Free Spirits*" (GM, 15). *On the Genealogy of Morals* was written a full decade after *Human, All Too Human*, but he is confident in this preface that "the long interval has done [his ideas concerning morality] good" as those ideas "have become in the meantime more and more firmly attached to one another" so that they form a more complete and coherent theory (GM, 16). However, *On the Genealogy of Morals* is not meant to replace *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* as the authoritative account of his theory, as if those other two works were merely preliminary. Rather, he suggests that *On the Genealogy of Morals* "is clear enough, assuming, as I do assume, that one has first read my earlier writings and has not spared some trouble doing so" (GM, 22). Thus, *Human All Too Human* and *Daybreak* provide important groundwork that must be understood to comprehend the crystallized and mature moral philosophy of *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

While *On the Genealogy of Morals* inherits Nietzsche's theory of morality in its entirety, it is evident from the start that the main concern of this work is the morality of

pity in particular. He posits two central questions that his philosophy seeks to answer: "under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *And what value do they themselves possess?*" (GM, 17) With regard to the first question, the choice of "good and evil" rather than "good and bad" is crucial. So far I have made little distinction between the terms "bad" and "evil" because Nietzsche himself makes little distinction in his earlier works. In *Human, All Too Human*, we saw the term "bad" employed by the nobility and the term "evil" employed by the masses in an aphorism entitled "Twofold prehistory of good and evil." Even in that aphorism, however, he is not careful to describe the differences between the two terms. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, these differences take on central importance. Furthermore, the term "evil" is attributed exclusively to the morality of pity. Therefore, Nietzsche's question regarding the origin of good and evil signifies that *On the Genealogy of Morals* is meant to reveal the origin of the morality of pity rather than morality in general.

With regard to the second question, Nietzsche's italics signify that knowledge of the *value* of the morality of pity is more important than knowledge of the *origin* of that morality. Later on in the preface, while reflecting on *Human, All Too Human*, he admits that "even [while writing *Human, All Too Human*] my real concern was something much more important than hypotheses-mongering…on the origin of morality…What was at stake was the *value* of morality" (GM, 19). This ranking of value over origins should come as no surprise, as we have already seen the significance of Nietzsche's condemnation of morality in earlier works. However, the reliance of the determination of value on the determination of origins is particularly important in *On the Genealogy of*

*Morals*. While in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* his criticisms of morality could often be considered and understood apart from his explanations of origins, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* an understanding of the historical origins of morality is absolutely necessary to an understanding of his criticisms. This connection between origin and value has a heightened importance because Nietzsche goes about revealing the unhealthiness of the morality of pity by exposing its ignoble birth. This birth, furthermore, has several facets that he chooses to discuss separately. Thus, he divides *On the Genealogy of Morals* into three essays, each of which attempts to express the detrimental value of the morality of pity by revealing an important factor of its development. I will discuss only the first two of these essays because I believe the third chapter, as far as we are concerned, merely elaborates upon the concept of bad conscience that is developed in the second chapter by explaining how the ascetic ideal sublimates the bad conscience.

Before moving on to my analysis of these two essays, however, it seems appropriate to address the caustic remarks that Nietzsche makes about Rée in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In stark contrast to Nietzsche's glowing praise of Rée in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche says here of Rée's *The Origin of Moral Sensations*: "perhaps I have never read anything to which I would have said to myself No, proposition by proposition, conclusion by conclusion, to the extent that I did to this book" (GM, 18). This remark strikes me as at least partially disingenuous as it seems impossible that Nietzsche could have been oblivious to the extent to which their philosophies overlapped. Perhaps the similarities between their philosophies form the reason for his vehement rejection of Rée here, as he may be attempting to distance himself from Rée so

as to underscore their differences and to prevent confusion. Regardless, Nietzsche attempts to explain away his prior endorsement of Rée by claiming that he previously considered Rée a free spirit "because he had no doubt that the very nature of [Rée's] inquiries would compel him to adopt a better method for reaching answers" (GM, 21). Nietzsche calls Rée a "genuinely English type," thus grouping him, despite his German heritage, with the "English psychologists" who employ a particular method for determining the origin of morality—"gazing around haphazardly in the blue" (GM, 17, 21). I will explain what exactly he means by such gazing when I begin my discussion of the first essay.

However, it suffices to point out here that Nietzsche finds Reé's theory of morality both unconvincing and superficial. He mocks Rée's idea that evolution could provide an altruistic base for morality by pointing out that Rée "had read Darwin—so that in his hypothesis, and after a fashion that is at least entertaining, the Darwinian beast and the ultramodern moral milk sop who 'no longer bites' politely link hands" (GM, 21). Furthermore, he denounces Rée's book for treating "the problems of morality" as if they "were really not worth taking quite so seriously" (GM, 21). For Nietzsche, "there seems to be nothing *more* worth taking seriously"; therefore, he thinks that Rée fails to address both the origin and the value of morality successfully.

Finally, Nietzsche also directs brief—although important—criticism toward Schopenhauer. He claims that Schopenhauer's theory of morality "had gilded, deified, and projected [the "unegoistic", the instincts of pity, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice] into a beyond for so long that at last they became for him 'value-in-itself,' on the basis of

which he *said No* to life and to himself" (GM, 19). We have already seen the extent to which Nietzsche denounces the unegoism and pity that constitutes the heart of Schopenhauer's theory. However, we have not addressed the concept of life affirmation that is conspicuous in Nietzsche's later philosophy. This concept, while emerging explicitly in his later works, underlies the entirety of his philosophy and requires an analysis that goes beyond the scope of this essay. However, it is a concept that must be introduced now so that the ultimate point of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (and Nietzsche's entire moral philosophy) can become clear over the course of this chapter and the conclusion. Put far too simply, the overarching intention of Nietzsche's philosophy (moral and otherwise) is to promote life affirmation or "Yes-saying." To promote life affirmation, he details the threats that come from all of the different modes of life denial. One of those modes is Schopenhauer's conception of morality (the morality of pity), which says "No to life" by idealizing the unegoistic. This antithesis of life affirmation and life denial will constitute an undertone of my entire discussion of *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

**First Essay – "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad"**

The purpose of the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is to explain how the morality of pity (throughout this essay referred to as "slave morality") arose as a victorious challenger to another, more classical morality. However, Nietzsche begins the essay by presenting his theory as an alternative to that of so-called "English psychologists." The way Nietzsche talks about the English psychologists (of whom Rée,

we have already learned, is a member) conveys both a sense of respect and a sense of disappointment. Nietzsche finds them interesting and worthy of respect because they, like himself, are "investigators and microscopists of the soul" whom he prefers to consider "brave, proud, and magnanimous animals" (GM, 25). To a certain extent, he views them as kindred spirits because "they have trained themselves to sacrifice all desirability to truth, *every* truth" (GM, 25). Furthermore, they too have attempted to "arrive at a history of the origin of morality" (GM, 24).

However, Nietzsche locates a main fault in all of them: they are not historical enough despite their attempts at historical philosophy. As Nietzsche puts it, "the *historical spirit* itself is lacking in them" and "the thinking of all of them is *by nature* unhistorical" (GM, 25). While metaphysics is perhaps the most unhistorical type of philosophy, his comments are not meant to suggest that the English are metaphysicians á la Schopenhauer; after all, it was Schopenhauer's metaphysical basis for compassion that Rée rejected. Rather, his labeling of the English as "unhistorical" reflects a belief that they fail to address the evidence for historical developments in morality that is preserved by records of human events. While Nietzsche fails to provide concrete historical evidence for many aspects of his own theory, he does base his argument in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* on much textual and linguistic evidence, which he interprets to reveal a particular development in morality that occurred over the last two millennia. The English, according to Nietzsche, fail to interpret events within the era of recorded history and instead focus exclusively on highly speculative and generalized developments in human psychology, developments that took place during an undeterminable period in the

distant past. Therefore, they overlook the importance of recorded events in fairly recent history for the understanding of modern morality.

Nietzsche does not elaborate on the faults of any particular English psychologist's theory of morality. Rather, he speaks of the English generally and portrays the standard English theory of morality in the following way:

> "Originally"—so they decree—"one approved unegoistic actions and called them good from the point of view of those to whom they were done, that is to say, those to whom they were *useful*; later one *forgot* how this approval originated and, simply because unegoistic actions were always *habitually* praised as good, one also felt them to be good—as if they were something good in themselves." (GM, 25)

This summary of their theories might as well be a summary of Rée's in particular. Consequently, it is not readily apparent whether he has only Rée in mind, although his later mention of Herbert Spencer suggests that this probably is not the case. Regardless, Rée's theory, as a model of the English type, is the only one that needs to be understood. Nietzsche claims that such a theory is characterized by "all the typical traits of the idiosyncrasy of the English psychologists—we have 'utility,' forgetting,' 'habit,' and finally 'error'" (GM, 25). Interestingly, all of these traits appear in Nietzsche's theory of morality as presented in *Human, All Too Human*. In *Daybreak*, he downplays the role of habit but emphasizes that of error. While he shies away from using the term utility, his idea that morality is meant to preserve and advance the community suggests a utilitarianism of sorts as well. Furthermore, while he calls the process of forgetting the utility of unegoistic actions "a psychological absurdity," he stresses the active and

repressive strength of forgetfulness at the beginning of the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which suggests that he has not given up on the instrumentality of forgetfulness either.

All in all, it is unclear how immune Nietzsche himself is to criticisms that his theory also possesses several of these traits. If we are to assume that with *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche abandons everything about his theory (as developed in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*) that is characteristically English, then his entire pre-*Genealogy* theory is prone to crumble as it is rife with these traits. There is another way to interpret these remarks that does not assume rashly that Nietzsche is abandoning the early articulations of his theory. This way is to view Nietzsche's criticism of these traits as limited to their use in explaining the morality of pity, not morality in general. As we will see shortly, Nietzsche argues that the morality of pity arose in a particularly peculiar way. The origin of this type of morality, he suggests, demands a greater sense of history than English psychologists had given it precisely because it is so peculiar. Therefore, we ought to view Nietzsche's disagreement with the English psychologists' method as concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with the case of the morality of pity and not with morality qua morality.

After establishing his opposition to the English explanation of the origin of the morality of pity, Nietzsche proceeds to provide his own account of that morality's origin, one that is rooted in the caste divisions first suggested in "Twofold prehistory of good and evil" in *Human, All Too Human*. He recapitulates the suggestions made there and highlights a fundamental difference between his theory and that of the English

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psychologists by claiming that the "judgment 'good' did *not* originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown! Rather it was 'the good' themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good" (GM, 25-26). By this he means that within the hierarchy of a noble class and a plebeian class, the nobles initially attributed everything characteristic of themselves "good" and everything plebeian "bad." Thus, morality existed in this configuration as the product of the "pathos of distance" and not any overriding consideration of utility (GM, 26).[7] So far, Nietzsche has merely reused his ideas from *Human, All Too Human* to assert that "the word 'good' was definitely *not* linked from the first and by necessity to 'unegoistic' actions" (GM, 26). However, the key development of this essay comes when he contends that "it was only when aristocratic value judgments *declined* that the whole antithesis 'egoistic' 'unegoistic' obtruded itself more and more on the human conscience" (GM, 26). This contention that aristocratic value judgments declined appears to flatly contradict his assertion in *Human, All Too Human* that "our present morality has grown up in the soil of the *ruling* tribes and castes" (HAH, 37). Nevertheless, the remainder of the essay serves to describe how aristocratic morality declined and became supplanted by the morality of pity. Furthermore, Nietzsche stresses the fundamental differences between the two moralities' natures to reveal the undesirability of the morality of pity.

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[7] One is prone to wonder where morality's concern for the preservation and advancement of the community has gone. However, Nietzsche later suggests this purpose of morality is still relevant, as he asserts that "the salvation and future of the human race [depends on] the unconditional dominance of aristocratic values" (GM, 53).

One needs to read the first essay in its entirety to appreciate the richness of Nietzsche's story of how the morality of pity triumphed over the aristocratic mode of valuation. Given the relatively straightforward manner in which he presents the story, the first essay does not demand the same sort of piecing-together that is required by the previous two aphoristic works that we have considered. Nevertheless, a sketch of his history is required so that a discussion of the characteristics and values of the two moralities in question can be provided.

Nietzsche begins his account by describing how the nobility of Europe originally designated itself as "good" with the use of language. He examines the etymology of many words to suggest that they reveal a distant practice of attributing positive qualities to the noble and negative ones to the common. His (self-evidently) "most convincing example" of how the noble labeled the common "bad" is the "German word *schlecht* [bad] itself," which he suggests was derived from *schlicht* [plain, simple] and therefore demonstrates that "plain" (or "common") was once equated with "bad" (GM, 28). Conversely, he claims that the Latin word *bonus* [good] was derived from *duonus*, which signifies the "man of war" and, therefore, the nobility (GM, 31). As can be seen in these two examples, the nobility's designations of good and bad often involved "typical character traits" (GM, 29). In addition to traits such as the plainness of the plebeians and the warlike nature of the nobility, Nietzsche suggests that traits were racial when castes formed along such lines. Thus, he claims that the noble Aryans distinguished themselves from the "pre-Aryan occupant[s] of the soil of Italy" by stressing the black hair of the

pre-Aryans in contrast to the blond hair of the Aryans (GM, 30). As such, the term *melas* [black, dark] arose from the term *malus* [bad].

Having exhibited the etymological evidence of an aristocratic morality, Nietzsche proceeds to distinguish between two types of aristocracies: the knightly-aristocratic type and the priestly type. He characterizes the knightly-aristocratic type's value judgments as "presuppos[ing] a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity" (GM, 33). These judgments reflect the fundamental characteristic of the knightly-aristocratic type: physical strength. In contrast to this type, he portrays the priestly type as physically weak and characterized by "something *unhealthy*" that nevertheless single-handedly makes man "an interesting animal" (GM, 32, 33). He envisions a power struggle between these two types that results in the knightly-aristocratic type apparently achieving physical rule over the priestly type, which in turn develops a "hatred [that] grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions" (GM, 33). Out of its hatred, or *ressentiment*, of the physically victorious knightly-aristocratic type, the priestly type seeks spiritual revenge through "nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies' values" (GM, 33-34). This revaluation involves "invert[ing] the aristocratic value-equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God)" so that the following value judgments prevail: "the wretched alone are good [and] the powerful and noble are on the contrary evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable godless to all eternity" (GM, 34).

Nietzsche claims that this "slave revolt in morality…has a history of two thousand years behind it," which places its beginning at the time of the Roman Empire and the life of Christ (GM, 34). Consequently, he characterizes the struggle as "'Rome against Judea,' 'Judea against Rome'" (GM, 52). The Jews are cast as the priestly type and the Roman ruling class as the knightly-aristocratic type. Jesus is portrayed as a "seduction in its most uncanny and irresistible form," a "bait" presented by the Jews to tempt the world into accepting their inverted values (GM, 35). The result of the slave revolt is that "Rome has been defeated beyond all doubt," as Roman values have perished in the face of Christian morality (GM, 53). While the Renaissance signified "an uncanny and glittering reawakening of the classical ideal," the Reformation and the French Revolution ensured that "Judea once again triumphed over the classical ideal" (GM, 54). Thus, our present morality is that which was produced by Jewish and Christian priests to strip the physically powerful of their moral value. Furthermore, Nietzsche believes that this morality will remain prevalent until "the ancient fire…someday flare[s] up" again (GM, 54).

In Nietzsche's previous works, we saw how he criticizes the morality of pity without the use of much explicit comparison to other moralities. In this first essay, he criticizes the morality of pity by comparing it to the knightly-aristocratic morality that it superseded. Maudemarie Clark has suggested that "Nietzsche's 'good/bad' is not actually a moral distinction" and consequently "the essay compares not two moralities, but two different ways of determining who is good and who isn't."[8] However, her argument that

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[8] Maudemarie Clark, "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 23.

the knightly-aristocratic mode of valuation does not constitute a morality relies on the use of a definition of morality that differs significantly from Nietzsche's—namely, one that requires the relevant negative label, such as "bad" or "evil," to be inculpatory (i.e. to imply responsibility and accountability), which the knightly-aristocratic term "bad" admittedly is not. However, Nietzsche in no place specifies that moral terms need to be inculpatory. Furthermore, he himself calls the knightly-aristocratic mode of valuation a morality in several places.[9] Thus, we can treat the knightly-aristocratic mode of valuation as a morality with confidence. His comparison of these two moralities gives rise to the idea that certain moralities can be better than others, although, as we have seen, Nietzsche finds all moralities ultimately undesirable (at least for modern man). His demonstration of the great inferiority of the morality of pity to the knightly-aristocratic morality is meant to undermine our faith in the former.

Nietzsche specifically locates the inferiority of the morality of pity in its origin as the product of *ressentiment* and contrasts that origin and its implications with the origin of the knightly-aristocratic morality and *its* implications. He asserts that "while every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'" (GM, 36). Thus, he claims that the creation of the morality of pity out of *ressentiment* "is fundamentally reaction" whereas the knightly-aristocratic type "acts and grows spontaneously, it seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more gratefully and triumphantly" (GM, 37). This representation of the morality of pity as born out of a

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[9] See the first paragraph of *On the Genealogy of Morals* section 11 and the first paragraph of *Beyond Good and Evil* section 260 in which he refers to this mode of valuation as "master morality."

reflexive impulse, in addition to its representation as the product of "the profoundest and sublimest kind of hatred," is meant to implicitly portray the morality of pity as inferior to that which is born out of spontaneity or purely active impulses (GM, 36). His value judgment in this regard is made explicit later on in the second essay when he claims that "truly *active* affects…are of even greater biological value than…reactive affects" (GM, 74). However, this point does not even need to be made explicit as the overall tone of his discussion about the implications of active and reactive origins makes it clear that reactive tendencies breed detestable qualities.

Consider the benign qualities that Nietzsche attributes to the knightly-aristocratic type, qualities that appear to spring from an active mode of existence and valuation. He claims that the nobility cannot bring itself to look too harshly upon the rabble because there is "too much carelessness, too much taking lightly, too much looking away and impatience involved in [its] contempt" (GM, 37). The nobility is not only disinclined to censure the rabble but is actually magnanimous toward the lower class, as is shown by its practice of bestowing "benevolent nuances…on all the words it employs to distinguish the lower orders from itself," as is the case with its use of the word "unhappy" interchangeably with the word "bad" (GM, 37, 38). In addition to this kindly disposition toward members of the rabble, the nobleman has the capacity to "live in trust and openness with himself" and exists as the only type of man capable of exhibiting "genuine 'love of one's enemies'…supposing [such love] to be possible at all on earth" (GM, 39). Nietzsche describes all of these qualities as if they are possible because of the nobility's inborn physical strength. If one understands such strength as the necessary precondition

for an active mode of existence and valuation, as he seems to understand it, then it follows that all of these pleasant qualities are rooted in activity as opposed to reactivity.

Now consider the vicious qualities that Nietzsche attributes to the priestly type, qualities that appear to result from the reactivity of *ressentiment*. As revealed by his account of the Jews' grand act of spiritual revenge against the Roman ruling class, the priestly type and the common type (understanding these two groups to share the same disposition) view the nobility with great contempt and hatred, which are feelings that contrast sharply with the nobility's magnanimity. Instead of employing benevolent nuances to describe the opposing caste, the priestly type designates each nobleman with the spiteful term "the Evil One" (GM, 39). In addition to this mean disposition, the priest and commoner are each "neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself" (GM, 38). Nietzsche describes these qualities as if they spring from *ressentiment*, which is in turn the result of the priestly type and the common type's shared physical weakness. Since *ressentiment* is clearly a reactive feeling, all of these unpleasant qualities of the "man of *ressentiment*" are rooted in reactivity as opposed to activity (GM, 39).

This sample of favorable remarks about the noble and unfavorable remarks about the common helps to reveal the preference Nietzsche has for active tendencies over reactive ones and, in turn, so-called "master morality" (i.e. knightly-aristocratic morality) over so-called "slave morality" (i.e. priestly morality, or the morality of pity). A closer look at what the label sets "'good' and 'bad'" and "'good' and 'evil'" respectively mean

for the nobility and rabble reveals two specific reasons for why he considers slave morality inferior to master morality.

The first reason involves the emphasis that each morality places on its terms. Nietzsche suggests that the following applies to the noble mode of valuation—"its negative concept 'low,' 'common,' 'bad' is only a subsequently-invented pale, contrasting image in relation to its positive basic concept…'we noble ones, we good, beautiful, happy ones'" (GM, 37). Thus, the term of approval precedes and takes precedence over the term of disapproval in master morality. On the other hand, the following describes the priestly mode of valuation—the man of *ressentiment* conceives "'the evil enemy'…and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought, and pendant, a 'good one'—himself" (GM, 39). Thus, the term of *disapproval* precedes and takes precedence over the term of *approval* in slave morality. Nietzsche does not explicitly denounce slave morality for its unique emphasis on the negative term "evil"; however, I take it as evident from the general condemnation of the morality of pity in this essay that he provides this distinction as a criticism. Moreover, such a criticism of a particular morality for its preoccupation with negation resonates with Nietzsche's more pervasive concern with the negation of life.

The second reason Nietzsche considers slave morality as inferior to master morality involves the presupposition that the priestly type makes about the freedom of the will. He contends that slave morality, unlike master morality, maintains the notion that there is such thing as free will. The way in which slave morality does so can be seen in either a comparison of the terms "bad" and "evil" or a comparison between the

alternative uses of the term "good." Characterizing the noble as birds of prey and the common as lambs, he asserts that lambs exploit "the belief that *the strong man is free* to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb" and consequently "make the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey" (GM, 45). Thus, when a lamb calls a bird of prey "evil," there is the implication that the bird of prey is blameworthy for having opted for his badness. The noble type's use of the term "bad" carries no such connotation of blame; therefore, the terms "bad" and "evil" reflect a fundamental difference in how each morality treats accountability.

Similarly, the common type employs the term "good" with a connotation of accountability whereas the noble type does not. Those of the common type regard their "weakness…—that is to say, their *essence*, their effects, their sole ineluctable, irremovable reality—[as if it] were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed* a *meritorious* act" (GM, 46). As the common type considers its weakness "good," it views itself as praiseworthy for its character and behavior. In contrast, the noble type takes no such credit for its goodness. As we saw most clearly in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche vehemently refutes the notion of free will. Therefore, his attribution of the notion of free will to slave morality serves as a criticism of that morality.

These comparisons of the morality of pity to the knightly-aristocratic morality continue the tradition developed in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* of devaluing the morality of pity by criticizing its various aspects. Through his criticisms of the morality of pity as harmful to the individual and community, we have developed the sense that Nietzsche believes the morality of pity is generally an undesirable mode of

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valuation. However, it is not until *On the Genealogy of Morals* that he elaborates on just how bad that morality is for culture. Starting in section 9, he begins to interweave his explanation of the origin and nature of the morality of pity with an explicit discussion of the cultural value of that morality. He launches this discussion with the use of a hypothetical listener as a foil. This listener, whom Nietzsche calls a "free spirit," "an honest animal," and "a democrat, moreover," interrupts Nietzsche's explanation of the emergence of slave morality to doubt whether it was such a bad thing that modern man came to possess such a morality (GM, 36). He is ready to accept "the progress of [the mob] poison through the entire body of mankind" and appreciates the Church's role as something against which free spirits can rebel (GM, 36). While at the end of this section Nietzsche says he has "much to be silent about" regarding the listener's point, he provides a forceful response to this point that begins near the end of section 11 and continues into section 12 (GM, 36).

Although he does not provide an explicit definition of "culture" in this essay, Nietzsche argues that the morality of pity embodies substantial anti-cultural tendencies. He rejects the notion that "the *meaning of all culture* is the reduction of the beast of prey 'man' to a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic* animal" (GM, 42). Were this the meaning of culture, he suggests, the morality of pity would signal a rise in culture as the effect of that morality is to produce more harmless, unegoistic creatures. Rather, he contends that "these bearers of the oppressive instincts that thirst for reprisal…represent the *regression* of mankind" and are "an accusation and counter-argument against 'culture'

in general" (GM, 43). Thus, we see that Nietzsche believes the morality produced by *ressentiment* actually diminishes culture.

Nietzsche's conception of culture can actually be better understood through his claim that the morality of pity is antithetical to culture. In particular, his elaboration of this claim shows us his belief that culture involves the predominance of nobility. He effectively weighs the desirability of two potential cultures in the following passage:

> One may be quite justified in continuing to fear the blond beast at the core of all noble races and in being on one's guard against it: but who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than *not* fear but be permanently condemned to the repellent sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned? (GM, 43)

His reverence for the nobility and disgust at the rabble emanates from this passage, and his preference for the nobility leads him to define "culture" as the predominance of the "blond beast" (or nobleman) rather than that of "maggot man" (GM, 43).

Nietzsche takes his criticism of the morality of pity one step further by blaming it not only for the decline of culture but also for the disappearance of an ideal type of man —one that is, like culture, identified with nobility. He locates within modern man "an ill-constituted soul" that results from the prevailing morality (GM, 44). In contrast with this lowly type of man, he openly yearns for "a man who justifies *man*," one who is "perfect, wholly achieved, happy, mighty, triumphant, [and] still capable of arousing fear" (GM, 44). This description is one of a nobleman; therefore, it is evident that Nietzsche believes the knightly-aristocratic man is an ideal man. Protesting the disappearance of such an ideal man, he proclaims that "the diminution and leveling of European man constitutes

*our* greatest danger, for the sight of him makes us weary" (GM, 44). By "our" he presumably refers to people who, like himself, appreciate the same noble conceptions of culture and man. Thus, when he claims that "we are weary *of man*" and suggests that the current, despicable state of man inspires nihilist thoughts, he is addressing those who are capable of understanding the threat of the morality of pity and who share his profound concern about the state of mankind (GM, 44).

This final point about who he is referring to when speaking in the plural nominative reveals Nietzsche's appreciation of how oblivious most people are to the true nature of morality. In contrast to the "we" who he speaks about here, he refers to the common man whom he describes as "the hopelessly mediocre and insipid man [who] has already learned to feel himself as the goal and zenith, as the meaning of history, as 'higher man'" (GM, 43). This belief that the current morality, culture, and general state of man constitute something desirable reflects, according to Nietzsche's view, an ignorance of the actual origin and value of the morality of pity and its implications for culture and man. In his previous works, he attributed the prevalent lack of understanding of morality to forgetfulness and the acceptance of erroneous notions. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he does something similar by suggesting that "all *protracted* things are hard to see, to see whole" (GM, 34). Furthermore, he claims that man "no longer see[s the slave revolt in morality] because it—has been victorious" (GM, 34). Thus, the long history behind the development of the morality of pity and its successful culmination in a comprehensive and universally accepted mode of valuation are the reasons for the widespread ignorance concerning that morality. While the explanation for the morality of pity in *On the*

*Genealogy of Morals* is less abstract than the explanation of morality qua morality in his previous works, Nietzsche believes he needs to produce both explanations because obfuscation has prevented men from determining the human, all-too-human origins of moral phenomena on their own. In this sense, the purposes of *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *On the Genealogy of Morals* are all the same even if each attempts to shed light on different aspects of morality. The sum of the investigations in these works can therefore be seen to constitute a coherent, naturalistic theory of morality that seeks to inform modern man of the origin and value of morality.

I should note, however, that Nietzsche does not believe his investigations into the origin and value of morality form a *complete* theory of morality. As his theory is fundamentally an historical one, he appreciates the potential for others to develop and expand his theory as they make further historical insights. Accordingly, he implores scholars to "advance *historical* studies of *morality* through a series of academic prize-essays" in which professionals from a wide range of scientific disciplines would investigate "the history of the evolution of moral concepts" and determine the "order of rank among values" (GM, 55, 56). His solicitation of help in this regard distinguishes him from all three of the other moral philosophers we have previously considered—Kant, Schopenhauer, and Rée—who believe that their explanations of morality and their determinations of its value are virtually complete.

Before discussing the contributions that the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* makes to his theory of morality, I would like to point out the attitude Nietzsche takes toward the future in the first essay. In *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*, he

expresses a rather optimistic view that science is inexorably moving mankind away from both morality qua morality and the morality of pity. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he conveys a similarly optimistic message but not without first expressing a certain level of concern that mankind may never redeem itself from morality. This concern is expressed by statements such as the following: "We can see nothing today that wants to grow greater, we suspect that things will continue to go down, down, to become thinner, more good-natured, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian" (GM, 49). However, near the end of the essay he asks rhetorically, "Must the ancient fire [between Rome and Judea] not some day flare up much more terribly, after longer preparation?" (GM, 54) Thus, he does not consider the morality of pity a necessarily settled matter despite his awareness of many indications that suggest society has become complacent about it. This attitude, while marginally optimistic, differs greatly from his presumption in earlier works that the immorality of mankind is inevitable. As a consequence of this new attitude, he openly recognizes the central role of his philosophy in the counter-struggle against slave morality, and he suggests that the aim of his books is to help mankind move "Beyond Good and Evil"—an aim which formed the "dangerous slogan" of the work that preceded *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM, 55).

**Second Essay – "Guilt," "Bad Conscience," and the Like**

While the first essay explains the relatively straightforward process by which the priestly caste established the morality of pity through spiritual revenge, the second essay covers a wider range of historical processes in a patchwork manner. The ultimate point of the essay is to establish how the phenomenon of "bad conscience" developed as a symptom of mankind's socialization. However, to explain this development Nietzsche finds it necessary to cover the origin and nature of many related concepts such as memory, contracts, justice, punishment, cruelty, values, and deification. His portrayals of these concepts are so rich and original that a dissertation could be dedicated to each one of them alone. Since my intention is to explain how this second essay contributes to his larger theory of morality, I will focus on those parts of the essay that bear the most relevance to morality, and I will explain aspects of the other concepts only when it is necessary to do so.

There are two themes of this essay that are particularly pertinent to Nietzsche's theory of morality. The first involves the role the so-called "morality of mores" played in the molding of men into entities that could form stable communities. The second involves the divergent ways in which moralities can deal with the bad conscience and, in particular, the way in which the morality of pity has adopted and thrived upon the bad conscience. The explanations that Nietzsche makes regarding morality in the second essay bear no direct relation to the slave revolt in morality he describes in the first essay. Therefore, a reading of the first essay is not needed to understand the second essay, and vice-versa. Yet, both of the essays attempt to explain the morality of pity from different angles, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of that morality. Thus, it

will be important to consider how these essays complement each other as we examine their separate explanations for the same phenomena.

Nietzsche's ideas about the "morality of mores" are intertwined with his explanation of how man evolved along with his socialization. He starts the essay by stating: "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?" (GM, 57) This claim reflects a belief that men were originally not capable of performing an important cooperative task, namely making promises, and it implies that such men had to develop that capability so as to live and interact with one another effectively. Nietzsche accounts for men's original inability to make promises by describing forgetfulness as an overwhelming "faculty of repression" that prevented men from remembering what they promised (GM, 57). Accordingly, he claims that mankind's major step toward making promises was to breed "a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases" (GM, 58). Furthermore, he claims that "man himself must first of all have become *calculable, regular,* [and] *necessary*" so that the future would be more predictable and, consequently, the environment for making promises more hospitable (GM, 58).

Nietzsche cites the "morality of mores" as a central means by which both of these ends—the development of memory and the regularization of man—were achieved. While he provides a meaning for this morality in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he points to a few aphorisms in *Daybreak* for elaborations of it. The ninth aphorism of that book, as discussed in the previous chapter, defines morality simply as obedience to customs and portrays morality as a social device that compels men to standardize their behavior along

certain socially acceptable lines. As I take his identification of morality with obedience to customs as a universal definition for morality, his term "morality of mores" in *On the Genealogy of Morals* means morality qua morality (or morality, generally speaking) for all intents and purposes. If there is anything about his use of "morality of mores" that differs from "morality qua morality," it is just that the morality of mores is an especially strong form of morality that long ago commanded men to obey a great many precise customs. However, it is expressed in such a way mainly to emphasize that his definition of morality depends on the idea of mores, or customs, and to stress the difference between morality qua morality and any particular form of morality, such as the morality of pity.

From what we have learned about Nietzsche's definition of morality, his insistence that it makes men conform to social standards and therefore become more regular is readily understandable. His claim that it aids men in the formation of a memory is less so. The way in which morality does this is through a particular type of morality, one that governed men when they were just beginning to establish social units. Nietzsche claims that "pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics" and therefore the morality that aided the development of memory was one that condoned the infliction of pain and suffering (GM, 61). Within a discussion of the ancient creditor-debtor relationship in which men are naturally inclined to seek recompense in any form from others who have hurt them, he portrays a "morality of voluntary suffering" (to use a term borrowed from *Daybreak*) that facilitated the ability of ancient creditors to exact payments from their debtors. These creditors and debtors were not necessarily those of the financial sense to

which we are accustomed. He means debt very broadly as anything that may be owed to another (and speaking even more broadly, anything that provides justification for revenge). Repayments for primordial men, on the other hand, were consistently exacted in a particularly crude manner as "recompense in the form of a kind of pleasure—the pleasure of being allowed to vent one's power freely upon one who is powerless" (GM, 65). Morality aided in the formation of a memory by giving men an incentive to keep promises through the creation of a climate in which men were encouraged to exact repayments through cruel, painful means. As such, it was responsible for equipping man with the ability to make promises and live in a community successfully, although it did so by using means that shock the modern consciousness. Nietzsche's description of mankind's development of a memory and sensitivity to fulfilling one's obligations is necessary for his next moral theme, because these two things, as we will see shortly, were required for mankind to view their ancestors in a particular way.

The second moral theme of the second essay concerns the bad conscience itself. Nietzsche describes 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" (GM, 84). He claims that the socialization of mankind constituted such a violent break from man's condition in the wild that his "old instincts for freedom" remained while simultaneously becoming "disvalued and 'suspended'" by the demands of society (GM, 85, 84). Since these "old instincts had not suddenly ceased to make their usual demands" yet could not express themselves in their natural, hitherto normal ways,

they "had to seek new, and as it were, subterranean gratifications" (GM, 84). These gratifications constituted the "internalization of man" as instincts formerly discharged outwardly were forced to discharge internally (GM, 84). These instincts included "hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction" (GM, 85). Therefore, internal discharges involved the soul "mak[ing] itself suffer out of a joy in making suffer" (GM, 87). Thus arose in mankind the so-called "will to self-maltreatment," a perverse tendency of men to hurt themselves so as to satisfy certain drives at the expense of their overall well-being (GM, 88).

How this will to self-maltreatment manifested itself in the bad conscience, however, requires further explanation. Nietzsche claims that "within the original tribal community…the living generation always recognized a judicial duty towards earlier generations" (GM, 88). By this he means that the tribe held "the conviction…that it is only through the sacrifices and accomplishments of the ancestors that the tribe *exists*— and that one has to *pay them back* with sacrifices and accomplishments" (GM, 89). As such, Nietzsche establishes a creditor-debtor relationship between community members and their ancestors. He contends that this relationship became more important, or "the *fear* of the ancestor and his power" increased, "in exactly the same measure as the power of the tribe itself increas[ed]" (GM, 89). With this increase in fear came an increase in the ancestor's stature until he was finally "transfigured into a *god*" (GM, 89). This god was then further transfigured into a monotheistic and universal god as communities and their traditions mixed. In such a manner came the "advent of the Christian God…accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth" (GM, 90). Furthermore, a

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"moralization of these concepts," in which the actual reason for the tribe's feeling of debt is lost, solidifies "the conception of irredeemable penance" (GM, 91). Therefore, a community ends up with a powerful yet ambiguous feeling of debt that it experiences as guilt because it can never repay it.

Nietzsche suggests that this development of guilt could never have occurred without the internalization of instincts described above. He characterizes the entire development of the bad conscience as a process wherein man "seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor" (GM, 92). For that reason, the creditor-debtor relationship between members of a community and their ancestors was merely an opportunity for man to inflict suffering upon itself by finding itself "guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for" (GM, 93). Furthermore, Nietzsche uses the seizure of this opportunity to explain the emergence of Christianity, and consequently, the morality of pity, As such, he claims that "the *delight* of the selfless man, the self-denier, the self-sacrificer…is tied to cruelty" (GM, 88). Therefore, the morality of pity is portrayed as the culmination and greatest embodiment of the internalization of man and the feeling of guilt.

The uniqueness of the morality of pity in this regard is emphasized by Nietzsche's comparison of it to Greek morality. While the Christian god was invented to sublimate the feeling of guilt, the Greek gods were used "precisely so as to ward off the 'bad conscience'" (GM, 93). Instead of viewing themselves as in debt to their gods, the Greeks viewed their gods themselves as the ones guilty for the wickedness and evil on earth. They envisioned their gods as judging mankind's mistakes as "foolishness, *not* sin"

thereby resisting the notion that they should feel guilty about themselves and their actions (GM, 94). Thus, Greek morality somehow managed to resist the impulse to internalize their instincts and generate self-inflicted suffering.

Nietzsche condemns the morality of pity for not resisting the internalization of instincts but rather succumbing to the impulse toward bad conscience. While in other respects not adverse to cruelty and suffering, he clearly shows displeasure for the sort of self-inflicted suffering involved in the creation of the bad conscience. For example, he calls the bad conscience "the most terrible sickness that has ever raged in man" (GM, 93). He attributes this sickness to the guilt men develop toward their natural, presumably selfish and active inclinations. Consequently, he calls for an attempt "to wed the bad conscience to all *unnatural* inclinations" (GM, 95). His concern here can be related to the advocacy of selfishness, and the campaign against selflessness, in his previous works. Viewing man as a being who naturally expresses selfish inclinations by exerting power over others, he criticizes anything that inhibits such an expression. Thus, he blames the morality of pity for producing an "'evil eye' for [men's] natural inclinations" (GM, 95).

Considered along each other, the first and second essays attempt to explain the existence of the morality of pity in two separate ways. The first essay attributes the existence of that morality to a *ressentiment*-driven slave revolt that entailed an inversion of values through a process of spiritual revenge. The second essay explains the morality of pity as a product and embodiment of the impulse toward bad conscience. It seems odd that both explanations simultaneously apply to the same phenomenon. Given his description of the bad conscience as a sickness that grew in the earliest days of

civilization, it is striking to think that it may have culminated in its greatest form two thousand years ago at precisely the same time the Jews felt the need to invent Christianity to exact revenge in a power struggle. However, the application of both of these explanations appears logically consistent as the impulse toward a morality of pity could have been driven by both a spirit of *ressentiment* and a looming desire for self-inflicted suffering. If we are to accept the simultaneous validity of these two explanations, we can view their compound effect as solidifying the morality of pity so thoroughly as to make it exceedingly difficult for modern man to imagine any other type of morality.

**Reactions to *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Nietzsche's Immoralism**

I chose to provide the preceding analysis of *On the Genealogy of Morals* only after discussing *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*, because I wanted to show how these three works collectively provide a comprehensive and mainly consistent theory of morality. Furthermore, I preceded my interpretation of his theory with a discussion of Schopenhauer and Rée's moral philosophies, because I believe that Nietzsche's theory is best understood in contrast to their ideas. My decision to provide a broad overview of Nietzsche's moral philosophy was made not only for the sake of completeness but, perhaps more importantly, for the sake of accuracy. I was concerned that an isolated analysis of any particular work of Nietzsche's would leave gaps in our understanding that would inadvertently and erroneously be filled with our own presumptions about morality. We all possess our own familiar, albeit partial, ideas about what constitutes morality, and Nietzsche did not write any one book to dispel such prejudices in a clean sweep. While

Nietzsche's entire body of work does not provide a completely stand-alone theory of morality—one that would need absolutely no gap filling with our own notions of morality —it does provide many, if not most, of the principles that would underlie such a self-contained theory. Consequently, Nietzsche's moral philosophy, despite its presentation in aphoristic form, ought not to be treated as providing detached insights into the nature of morality. Rather, it is best viewed as a coherent system of thought that responded in earnest to prior moral philosophies and was developed over the span of his entire philosophic career. If one refuses to approach his moral philosophy in this way, one will at best fail to attain an adequate understanding of Nietzsche's theory of morality and at worst harbor gross misunderstandings about that theory.

Scholars who have written about Nietzsche and his moral philosophy have focused primarily and almost exclusively on the last book we have considered, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Their analyses have been helpful in their introduction of new ways to look at the three essays that comprise that book. They also have usefully taken up the issue of genealogy itself to explore the innovations and problems presented by that method of philosophizing. However, their disregard of Nietzsche's pre-*Genealogy* moral philosophy and its context has resulted in the problems mentioned above. In particular, these scholars have expressed an interest in the significance of Nietzsche's immoralism, but their focus on his ideas concerning the slave revolt, bad conscience, and asceticism in *On the Genealogy of Morals* has led them astray in their determination of that significance. While these scholars tend to approach Nietzsche's immoralism from widely different angles, and it is therefore impossible to pinpoint one particular fault pertaining

to all, I will show how a few scholars' arguments could be improved or refuted by the considerations I have made in my more comprehensive interpretation of Nietzsche's moral philosophy.

When scholars consider Nietzsche's immoralism, they naturally wonder about the effects a lack of morality in society would have on people's behavior. An obvious concern is that immorality could very well entail the proliferation of "evil," egoistic behavior, as follows from a belief that such behavior must be constantly kept in check by a morality that stresses compassion and selflessness. My preliminary response to this concern is that men, unfettered by a morality of pity, would probably experience a surge in so-called evil acts but that surge would not amount to a war of all against all. However, just how prevalent "evil" acts would become depends on the values that society chose to adopt in a post-moral world.[10] Nietzsche suggests that evil acts should be welcomed and encouraged if they bring value, whether to an individual or a community, but he does not encourage them if they possess no such value. At points he also suggests that a morality of pity is not needed for (and, indeed, can even frustrate) beneficent acts. His discussions of pre-Christian societies demonstrate a belief that the morality of pity is not necessary for men to live amongst each other and tend to one another's well-being. The Greeks, for example, expressed a "*more manly* brother of pity" that involved "indignation at another's unhappiness" and presumably compelled them to act on behalf of each another

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[10] Keep in mind that a morality is not the only way for a society to possess values. As Nietzsche puts it in *Daybreak*: "to *recommend* a goal to mankind is something quite different [than] to impose the demands of morality on mankind" (D, 63). Furthermore, he calls for a "revaluation" of values, not an abandonment of values.

(D, 48). Therefore, a value system designed by Nietzsche would probably not entail an undue amount of senseless harmfulness done toward others.

However, my response and these considerations are ultimately beside the point as Nietzsche's philosophy only makes sense as an argument for immorality if we accept his contention that selflessness ought not to be valued in the first place. He clearly establishes himself in diametric opposition to a morality that values selflessness. As such, he values selfishness, personal fulfillment, and the like. This position entails a lack of concern over whether people are treated beneficently by their neighbors and it maintains that such a concern is not necessary and can even be harmful on the whole. Those scholars who are understandably concerned about whether immoralism would herald a decline in selflessness and a rise in selfishness have good enough reason for their concern; however, they ought not to look toward Nietzsche to either sympathize with them or demonstrate how immoralism actually preserves selflessness. Rather, his philosophy is meant to encourage them to abandon their faith in selflessness altogether and to begin worrying about the devaluation of selfishness that has taken place over the past two thousand years.

Much of Nietzsche's philosophy, as we have seen, is intended to persuade readers to revalue their valuation of selflessness and selfishness. When scholars fail to be persuaded, they typically take one of two stances with regard to his immoralism: either they protest its allowance of evil acts, or they argue that somehow it does not actually condone evil. Philippa Foot attempts to do the former by asserting that his immoralism does provide great concern for those who abhor evil, egoistic behavior. In an essay

entitled "Nietzsche's Immoralism," Foot claims that "there was a side of Nietzsche's deeply pathological psyche that seems to have gloried in the fact that his immoralism allowed, if done by certain people, even terrible deeds."[11] She correctly notes that Nietzsche was not "preaching in favor of a new morality rather than against morality as such" and contends that in light of his pure immoralism, "it should [not] be argued that the virtue of justice can be accommodated within Nietzsche's picture of splendid individuals finding each his own values and 'his own way.'" [12] While I would argue that Nietzsche's immorality does not necessarily imply that society cannot maintain any sort of value system for its members (i.e. it must let everyone do whatever they want), she is right to suspect that his immorality would be permissive to evil acts that violate the principles of a particular conception of justice.[13] Foot's conception of justice "require[s] a certain recognition of equality between human beings" and, therefore, resonates with Nietzsche's conception of justice as described in *Human, All Too Human* as something that "originates between parties of approximately *equal power*."[14] While Nietzsche would sooner deny justice between men of different rank than try to demonstrate the equality of those men, Foot would rather do the opposite and finds Nietzsche's "endless talk about inferiors and superiors" objectionable.[15]

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[11] Philippa Foot, "Nietzsche's Immoralism," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 8.

[12] Ibid., 8, 9.

[13] To emphasize once again: value systems do not need to be moral, as "what is essential and invaluable about every morality is that it is a long *compulsion*" (BGE, 77; emphasis added).

[14] Ibid.; HAH, 49.

[15] Foot., 10.

Foot, then, clearly exhibits distaste for Nietzsche's immorality because it permits "evil" behavior that violates the very principles of justice that she holds dear. In addition to speculating with Thomas Mann that perhaps "Nietzsche had not faced the reality of evil" and, therefore, did not really know the full implications of his immorality, she finds an avenue for refuting Nietzsche in the following sentence: "To our objections on behalf of justice Nietzsche would, no doubt, reply that what should be in question is not whether we want to hold on to a moral mode of valuation, but whether we can do so with honesty."[16] With this speculation Foot sets up a straw man to attack, as Nietzsche certainly would not have been satisfied to leave the question of the value of a moral mode of valuation off the table. We have seen the extent to which he refutes the attractiveness of the morality of pity, whether by dissecting the phenomenon of pity itself or exposing the will to self-cruelty that underlies it. However, Foot is thoroughly convinced that the prevailing morality is desirable and, consequently, must direct her attention to what she sees as fallacies in Nietzsche's argument that "morality is tainted by certain pious falsehoods that are necessary to it."[17]

While criticizing the logic behind Nietzsche's theory of morality is a perfectly acceptable way to rebut his immoralism, Foot fails to provide a persuasive set of criticisms. The first of her three criticisms involving "the 'errors' that Nietzsche saw as endemic to morality" is directed toward his argument that morality erroneously presupposes free will by insisting that men be held responsible for their actions.[18] She

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

quotes a passage from *Human, All Too Human* we have discussed wherein Nietzsche proclaims that "man's complete lack of responsibility for his behavior and for his nature, is the bitterest drop which the man of knowledge must swallow" (HAH, 57). While she admits that "the theory of the will that he attacks would find few defenders today" and asserts that "moral, as opposed to aesthetic, evaluation does require *some* distinction between actions for which we are responsible and those for which we are not responsible," she puzzlingly concludes that Nietzsche "is surely wrong in thinking that we might have to give up thinking in a *special* way about the goodness of men."[19] Her explanation that follows is murky and altogether too brief, but it seems to suggest that the very notion of responsibility presented by morality (the morality of pity, to be precise) somehow evinces the existence of that responsibility. In other words, some form of moral responsibility must exist because morality holds us responsible. Nietzsche would surely dismiss this logic as circular and blind to the very error he means to uncover. Regardless of whether this is an accurate representation of her argument, she fails to demonstrate how Nietzsche's strict determinism does not ultimately make men unaccountable for their actions. Consequently, she fails to refute an error that Nietzsche claims to have found within morality.

Her second criticism consists of two parts and fares no better than the first, as each part betrays a lack of understanding of Nietzsche's argument against morality. She asserts that "second among the 'errors' Nietzsche claims to have found in morality there

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[19] Ibid., 11.

is the classification of types of actions under the descriptions 'good' and 'bad.'"[20] The classification of types as good or bad is, of course, an elementary thing for morality to do, so she might as well be restating the unhelpful fact that he thinks morality is erroneous. What she means by this statement seems two-fold: first, Nietzsche dislikes such a classification of types because it fails to consider the individuality of each actor. Foot claims that Nietzsche stresses the notion that "each individual action takes its character from the character of the one who does it" rather than from any character intrinsic to the action itself.[21] In support of this view, she cites a passage from *Twilight of the Idols* with which Nietzsche suggests that "the value of egoism depends on the physiological value of him who possesses it: it can be very valuable, it can be worthless and contemptible."[22] While I have not undertaken an analysis of that work, she appears to be taking this passage out of context and using it to support her own theory of virtue ethics. Even if she has identified a viable idea in one of Nietzsche's later works, this error does not constitute an important part of his exposure of morality, as we have seen him emphasize a great deal of other errors in his earlier works.

The second meaning of her statement, however, is more central to her charge that Nietzsche has not actually uncovered an error behind morality. She discusses Nietzsche's "genius for finding hidden motivations" and, specifically, his "discovery of the possibility of dubious motivation behind…acts of 'kindness.'"[23] Once again emphasizing individual

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 11.

[22] Ibid., 6.

[23] Ibid., 12.

actions performed by individual characters, she claims that Nietzsche's argument only uncovers the deceptiveness of certain (if admittedly prevalent) actions while ignoring those actions actually backed by pure motives. Consequently, she suggests that "if Nietzsche extends the range of experience in which the standard of honesty about motives applies, moralists should not take this amiss."[24] However, there are two things noticeably wrong with her argument here that Nietzsche's uncovering of selfish motives has limited applicability to reality. First, Nietzsche would contend that actions are very frequently performed with consciously selfish intent even though they appear to be selfless to spectators. Second, and more importantly, his charge that men intentionally deceive others with regard to the true motives of their behavior is of secondary importance, as he makes clear in the aphorism "There are two kinds of deniers of morality" in *Daybreak*. His more important denial of morality, as we have seen, involves the insight that men are oblivious to the true, selfish motives behind their moral behavior. Thus, Nietzsche is not "mistaken about the import of his psychological observations," because his observations actually uncover the pervasive, and in most circumstances unconscious, untruthfulness involved in *all* moral activity.[25]

The third and final criticism Foot levels at Nietzsche's immorality concerns his insistence of "'the reciprocal dependence of the "good" and "wicked" drives' and the derivation of good impulses from wicked ones."[26] She locates Nietzsche "far out in a very doubtful field of psychological speculation" and claims that his ultimate "theory that

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[24] Ibid., 12.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

all 'drives' are contained in the Will to Power" reveals himself as "partly a mere speculating philosopher far exceeding any plausible basis for his speculations."[27] The problem with this accusation is that Foot makes no effort to explain why Nietzsche is so wrong for suggesting that "good" and "wicked" drives grow from the same root. She may very well be right that Nietzsche's ideas here are unfounded, but her dismissal of his ideas as mere speculation comes off as capricious. For these reasons, one could just as easily characterize her assertion that good and evil drives do *not* grow from the same root as equally unfounded.

In addition to providing weak criticisms of Nietzsche's immorality, Foot fails to address many of the problems that he has with morality qua morality and the morality of pity. In fact, she does not even make a distinction between these two concepts, which suggests that she does not fully understand his agenda. Concerning morality qua morality alone, she could have discussed, for example, morality's harmfulness to originality and freedom, or its lack of well-defined goals. Both of these are criticisms of morality that extend beyond the narrow "errors" that he locates behind all moral modes of valuation. Furthermore, and as suggested earlier, she completely evades the issue of assessing a morality's actual value. The discovery of the morality of pity as an intrinsically decadent and disabling way to view the world is central to Nietzsche's immorality, and yet Foot sidesteps this central theme of his philosophy completely. Thus, she fails to effectively reject his immorality both because she misunderstands the fundamental concepts of his

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[27] Ibid., 13.

theory of morality and because she refuses to defend the morality that she values—the morality of pity—from the attacks he directs toward its worth.

Frithjof Bergmann takes the opposite approach toward Nietzsche's immoralism in his essay "Nietzsche and Analytic Ethics." He claims that it has been impossible "to arrange the encounter in which conversation between Nietzsche and analytic ethics might finally begin," because analytic philosophers assume "that we are basically egoistic" whereas Nietzsche "in no way subscribes to the dichotomy that places egoism on one side and morality on the other."[28] He describes the typical reaction of a student who feels liberated by *On the Genealogy of Morals*: the student feels indignation at being duped by the slave revolt in morality, begins acting hyper-egoistically to make up for lost opportunities, and after a short period of time returns to his or her considerate ways after experiencing a social backlash to his or her temporary selfishness.

Bergmann claims that this reaction reveals an important assumption that modern man has about mankind: that it is thoroughly egoistic and needs morality to keep its egoism in check. Against this assumption, Bergmann argues that both Nietzsche and Hegel believed in the inherent selflessness of mankind and in the notion that "we are in fact very weak and frail and undeveloped, with very little sense of *ourselves*."[29] Thus, he claims that "if one reads Nietzsche…taking for granted the assumption of egoism and the image of human nature that such egoism generates, Nietzsche simply *does not make*

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[28] Frithjof Bergmann, "Nietzsche and Analytic Ethics," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 77, 76.

[29] Ibid., 89.

*sense!*"[30] More to the point, he asserts that "the sanctity of moral values is not most urgently needed to hold [men] back [because] the worry is not that pandemonium and chaos are ready to erupt."[31]

This is admittedly a very clever way to salvage Nietzsche's immoralism from accusations of sponsoring rampant selfishness. However, Bergmann is far from the truth when arguing that Nietzsche believes mankind is inherently selfless. As we saw in our discussion of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche believes that mankind is not even capable of truly unegoistic behavior. Rather, he stresses the notion that morality has erroneously ascribed selflessness to our behavior by concealing our true motives. The aphorism entitled "Pseudo-egoism" in *Daybreak* could be construed by Bergmann to support his case that "we are like marionettes, moved by the string of *other* people's expectations, of *other* people's threats and hopes and offers of reward."[32] However, this aphorism is intended to demonstrate how morality prevents men from acting effectively in their own self-interest. Nietzsche certainly believes that mankind has become tame, harmless, and unable to fulfill its needs, but this outcome is a result of the moralization of mankind and not a reflection of mankind's nature. Thus, immorality could very well lead to a rising tide of egoism as men regain their ability to serve themselves and value their preservation and advancement once again.

Like Bergmann, Maudemarie Clark provides an interpretation of Nietzsche's immoralism that alleviates fears that it will lead to unchecked, harmful selfishness. In her

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30 Ibid., 92.

31 Ibid., 94.

32 Ibid., 89.

essay "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality," she makes the laudable observation that "we can[not] seriously confront [Nietzsche's] thinking about morality unless we try first to understand his immoralism in terms of what he himself has to say about the concept of morality."[33] However, her interpretation of his concept of morality is tainted by the presumption that morality must involve guilt and responsibility. She suggests that "it is the idea of blaming people for what they are that transforms the noble mode of valuation into a moral mode," but provides no evidence that Nietzsche actually believed in this distinction.[34] As I mentioned earlier in my discussion of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche himself refers to the noble mode of valuation as a master morality and, while he does emphasize the bad conscience associated with slave morality, he nowhere claims that this bad conscience makes slave morality any more of a morality than master morality. Furthermore, our discussion of *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* revealed his actual definition of morality, which asserts that morality simply consists of obedience to custom. The morality of pity obviously builds upon this central definition of morality, but it cannot claim to represent morality qua morality with its innovations of guilt and responsibility.

This emphasis on what actually constitutes a morality is important because Clark essentially tries to use her definition to contend that Nietzsche simply wanted to rid morality of its guilt. Her intention of preserving the values of the morality of pity while shedding its guilt-ridden skin is betrayed by her insistence that "it is difficult to find in

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[33] Clark, 20.

[34] Ibid., 26.

Nietzsche's discussion…any suggestion that he objects to…judgments of fairness."[35] Her belief that Nietzsche did not really mean to sacrifice the concept of fairness with his immoralism leads her to conclude that "he denies that regarding obedience to the rules as a matter of fairness is equivalent to granting them the status of moral rules."[36] With this loophole, she locates in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* "the possibility…of a nonmoral version of a social contract, involving what we can recognize to be nonmoral ideas of fairness, justice, obligation, indebtedness, and conscience."[37] In other words, she believes that Nietzsche allows for "the possibility of gaining much of what morality gives us, indeed what we cannot do without, in alternative ways, and specifically without the tie to the ascetic ideal."[38] Thus, Clark fails to realize (or subconsciously denies) that Nietzsche's immoralism defies the values that modern men feel they "cannot do without" with its crusade against the unegoistic.

Arthur Danto also manages to avoid the unpleasantries of Nietzsche's immoralism by portraying it in a watered-down version. He explores a range of non-moral concepts pertaining to *On the Genealogy of Morals* in his essay "Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*," but writes explicitly about morality in the beginning and end of that essay. Taking his cue from the aphorism prefixed to the third essay ("Unconcerned, mocking, violent—thus wisdom wants *us*: She is a woman, and always loves only a warrior"),

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[35] Ibid., 28.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 29.

[38] Ibid., 31.

Danto claims that disinterestedness is one of Nietzsche's central values.[39] This leads him to assert that Nietzsche's "recommended morality" is one void of "goals and purposes"; it is a "morality of principle" meant to replace a "morality of means."[40] His portrayal of Nietzsche as an "anticonsequentialist" is problematic for two primary reasons.[41] First, Nietzsche does not simply want to replace one morality with another, as we have seen. Therefore, Danto is not appreciating the exhaustiveness of Nietzsche's immoralism. Secondly, Nietzsche expresses in *Daybreak* the desire for goals as long as they lie "in our own discretion" (D, 108). Thus, Danto's insistence that Nietzsche wishes to restore to mankind "the posture of unconcern" with regard to goals appears premature and unwarranted.[42] Unlike the other scholars I have discussed, Danto is not grappling overtly with Nietzsche's immoralism, but his interpretation of Nietzsche's intentions for morality avoids the difficulties presented by his moral philosophy.

While the aforementioned scholars have shied away from facing the implications of Nietzsche's immoralism head on, I believe that is important to assess his moral philosophy by attempting to evaluate how well Nietzsche answers the two questions that prompt his theory of morality: "Under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *And what value do they themselves possess*?" (GM, 17) With regard to Nietzsche's explanation of how we came to possess our value judgments "good and evil," and his broader articulation of morality qua morality, I find his theory more

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[39] Arthur Danto, "Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 35.

[40] Ibid., 35, 48.

[41] Ibid., 35.

[42] Ibid., 48.

comprehensive and persuasive than any other that I have studied. The accuracy of his description of morality's emergence, however, is hard to question unless one possesses greater insight into the actual forces behind morality. For example, a refutation of Nietzsche's contention that *ressentiment* was the central impulse behind the rise of Christianity and its accompanying moral mode of valuation is infeasible unless one possesses evidence that some force other than *ressentiment* actually induced the spread of Christianity. Furthermore, his logical consistency makes it difficult to point out any crucial flaws that would undermine the credibility of his moral philosophy. For these reasons, I must recognize his historical definition of morality as potentially valid until I encounter persuasive evidence to the contrary.

Nietzsche's assessment of the *value* of morality, and the morality of pity in particular, presents a different breed of challenges to anyone who attempts to assess the significance of his theory. His central argument against the morality of pity rests on his valuation of selfishness over selflessness, as he abhors the morality of pity for demanding unegoistic behavior of all men. To disagree with Nietzsche in regard to his devaluation of the morality of pity is to maintain that selflessness actually should be valued higher than selfishness. He provides many persuasive arguments for why selfishness is underappreciated and society's obsession with selfless behavior is harmful. However, he ultimately fails to convince me that society should stress the goodness of selfishness over that of selflessness. Part of me feels as though he has made a good case for a revaluation of all values, but another part of me feels as though he may have failed to appreciate the manifold benefits that result from the hallowing of selflessness. Therefore, while I am

open to the possibility that his definition of morality is correct, I am wary of his insistence that the modern value system should be inverted. Consequently, I am also unable to accept his general attack on morality qua morality, because I do not endorse the rejection of even the particular type of morality belonging to modern society.

# Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have attempted to provide a better understanding of Nietzsche's call for a "revaluation of all values" by piecing together both his definition of morality and his valuation of morality. In my discussions about his valuation of morality, I have limited myself to an analysis of Nietzsche's criticisms of morality, criticisms that have relied on his definition of morality qua morality and the morality of pity in particular. These criticisms, if viewed alone, might lead one to believe that he condemned morality exclusively and failed to see any advantages to the development of moralities. Such a view, however, would inadequately capture the historical role that Nietzsche envisions for morality in its service to humanity. Despite his relentless criticisms of morality, he actually provides some crucial acknowledgements of its worth in the progression of mankind toward a more advanced state. These acknowledgements are double-sided—they recognize the aspects of morality for which we should be grateful while simultaneously discouraging us from condoning morality by consigning morality to the dustbin of history. Along with his consignation of morality to a particular, bygone era of mankind, he highlights the direction away from morality in which mankind will move, a direction that will entail significant changes to both the individual and society. Therefore, it is important to look at these acknowledgements if we are to better understand the implications of Nietzsche's moral philosophy for the future of mankind and politics.

Most of Nietzsche's acknowledgements of the historical worth of morality come from *On the Genealogy of Morals*. These acknowledgments can be divided, like his criticisms, between those directed toward morality qua morality and those directed toward the morality of pity. His appreciation of morality qua morality, or morality of custom, separately involves both the individual and society at large. We have already seen in our discussion of the second essay how he believes that morality was originally intended to make men more calculable, and we saw in *Daybreak* how this process of making men calculable had and continues to have detrimental effects on individuality. However, Nietzsche recognizes the historical worth of the morality of custom for the individual by interpreting it as a means to an end. After a discussion of the effects of morality on the individual, he asserts the following:

> If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral… (GM, 59)

The qualities of the "sovereign individual," which Nietzsche describes at length, make this individual appear like a higher type of man who has not quite arrived on the scene of human history. He possesses "a sensation of mankind come to completion," he is a "master of *free* will," and the "power over oneself and over fate…has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct" (GM, 59, 60). These qualities could be construed to apply to modern man and, consequently, modern man could be identified with the sovereign individual. However, Nietzsche's specification of the

sovereign individual as "supramoral" suggests that such a man exists in the future, as the whole of his moral philosophy is premised on the notion that mankind is not yet free from morality. Regardless, his insistence that such a man constitutes the central "fruit" of the morality of custom evinces his belief that morality can be thanked for the production of the highest type of man.

Nietzsche describes a similar progression for the community at large several sections later. He describes the community as an entity that "stands to its members in that same vital basic relation, that of the creditor to his debtors" (GM, 71). The prehistoric community is weak and must treat the "lawbreaker [as] a debtor who has not merely failed to make good the advantages and advance payments bestowed upon him but has actually attacked his creditor" (GM, 71). As a result of this attitude, the prehistoric community vents "every kind of hostility" upon criminals who threaten the peace secured by society (GM, 17). However, Nietzsche claims that "as its power increases, a community ceases to take the individual's transgressions so seriously" (GM, 72). Instead of imposing strict punishments, society "attain[s] such a *consciousness of power* that it [allows] itself the noblest luxury possible to it—letting those who harm it go *unpunished*" (GM, 72). This ultimate attitude, while not explicitly supramoral, parallels the previous notion of supramorality, because the idea of "mercy" in Nietzsche's philosophy is associated with immorality, as we saw in our discussion of *Human, All Too Human* (GM, 73). His characterization of this progress as society "overcoming itself"—along with his remark that "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"—suggests that a community that punished sternly was necessary for the development of a community that disavows punishment completely (GM, 73, 72). This merciful community has also not yet arrived, as society obviously continues to punish its lawbreakers. Thus, here we see a higher type of community that will culminate in the future and derive from a type of community burdened by the characteristics of morality.

Nietzsche also acknowledges the historical value of *the morality of pity* in numerous places. After describing the "intestinal morbidity" of priests in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he admits that "it was on the soil of this *essentially dangerous* form of human existence, the priestly form, that man first became *an interesting animal*" who possessed a soul with "depth" (GM, 32, 33). Furthermore, he claims that "human history would be altogether too stupid a thing without the spirit that the impotent have introduced into it" (GM, 33). Both of these statements reflect a belief that the impulses that created the morality of pity were also responsible for producing the richness and peculiarity of humanity. A similar sentiment is shared in the second essay when he describes the internalization of instincts as "the result of a forcible sundering [of man] from his animal past" (GM, 85).

Yet, Nietzsche's remarks are also forward-looking and suggest that the morality of pity is preparatory. He asserts that the internalization of instincts made mankind "pregnant with a future" and the bad conscience is an illness "as pregnancy is an illness" (GM, 85, 88). The forces behind the morality of pity create valuable potential yet leave it to other developments to fulfill that potential. Had Nietzsche described the morality of pity as a phenomenon that remolded and completed mankind, such potential would not

still exist for modern man. However, he portrays the emergence of the morality of pity as coupled with the characterization of man as "not a goal but only a way, an episode, a bridge, a great promise" (GM, 85). Thus, the morality of pity (in addition to morality, generally speaking) constitutes a means by which modern men can achieve a higher type.

Ultimately, all of these acknowledgements of the value of morality suggest that mankind would not have been better off if morality had never arisen. They simultaneously suggest that, despite its historical value, morality should not be considered permanently desirable, because much of its value resides in the potential it has given mankind. As we can gather from Nietzsche's relentless insistence that mankind abandon morality, this potential can be fulfilled only if mankind sheds the very morality that gave it potential in the first place. This shedding of morality, however, does not entail the shedding of all its positive effects. Nietzsche certainly does not wish for mankind to reacquire a shallow soul, nor does he want men to lose their conscience. Rather, he wants them to liberate themselves from the harmful effects of morality while simultaneously preserving its valuable effects. The power to identify exhaustively which effects are desirable and which are undesirable, however, is not claimed by Nietzsche. While he has provided mankind with guidance by suggesting a revaluation of values that will restore the value attributed to selfishness, he explicitly denies the right to "tender prescriptions as to the path to happiness" (D, 63). He certainly does not provide a roadmap for the future and, as I have argued, he provides no guarantees that selfishness will not lead to behavior that would disgust any adherent to the prevailing morality of pity. Thus, the path toward immoralism requires much self-examination on the part of humanity, self-examination

that Nietzsche welcomes in light of the millennia throughout which mankind has accepted the values of morality without inquiring into the value of those values.

This need for self-examination is reflected by the political considerations of Nietzsche's immoralism. To a certain extent, he indicates the type of political changes that would accompany a revaluation of all values. In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he contends that "the healthy should be *segregated* from the sick," meaning those suffering the least from the morality of pity should be isolated from those suffering the most (GM, 124). He believes that physical separation is needed to prevent weak and selfless individuals from emasculating those who have strong, selfish inclinations, as he does not expect everyone to regain their strength overnight. This, in addition to his clear identification of democracy with the disempowered masses, suggests that an aristocratic form of government that recognized the inequalities between individuals would be most appropriate for his immoralism.[43]

However, the scarcity of his overtly political suggestions can be interpreted as deferential, as he seems to desire that mankind find its own ways to reorganize itself in the absence of morality. This interpretation is supported by multiple passages from *Daybreak*, such as when he declares that "novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society" and when he encourages mankind to construct anew the laws of life and action…and found little *experimental states*" (D, 101, 190, 191). This prescription of experimentalism rather than any particular form of government suggests

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[43] His identification of democracy with the masses can be seen in passages such as the following: "who can say whether modern democracy…does not signify in the main a tremendous *counterattack* [to the master race]" (GM, 31).

that his immoralism will herald an age of political adaptation in which communities will attempt to find forms of government that promote their values most effectively. Freed from the influence of morality, however, these communities will choose political arrangements that satisfy values the value of which they constantly reassess. Therefore, we can also expect mankind to undergo an extended, and perhaps unending, period of political experimentation, rather than to settle down with a final form of government that supports an everlasting value system.

The political implications of immoralism obviously extend far beyond these considerations. My main concern has been only to provide a foundational understanding of Nietzsche's theory of morality and its practical insistence that mankind invert its cherished values. As such, I have attempted to provide the groundwork for further discussions about the social implications of his philosophy. Nietzsche is often considered a thinker who was not terribly concerned with politics; yet, his insistence on tackling issues that affect the whole of mankind necessarily makes him a political philosopher. The implicitness of his philosophy's political significance ensures that investigations into the seemingly non-political aspects of his philosophy will always be necessary to obtain a firm grasp of the political ramifications of his ideas.

# List of Abbreviations

**Schopenhauer**

BM          *On the Basis of Morality* (1841)

**Rée**

BW          *Basic Works*; includes *Psychological Observations* (1875) and *The Origin of the Moral Sensations* (1877)

**Nietzsche**

BGE        *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)
D           *Daybreak* (1881)
EH         *Ecce Homo* (1888)
GM        *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)
HAH       *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80)


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