

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

A POLEMIC

TRANSLATED BY

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PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES

(*FRAGMENT*)

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

IN 1887, with the view of amplifying and completing certain new doctrines which he had merely sketched in *Beyond Good and Evil* (see especially aphorism 260), Nietzsche published *The Genealogy of Morals*. This work is perhaps the least aphoristic, in form, of all Nietzsche's productions. For analytical power, more especially in those parts where Nietzsche examines the ascetic ideal, *The Genealogy of Morals* is unequalled by any other of his works; and, in the light which it throws upon the attitude of the ecclesiast to the man of resentment and misfortune, it is one of the most valuable contributions to sacerdotal psychology

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PREFACE.

I.

WE are unknown, we knowers, ourselves to ourselves: this has its own good reason. We have never searched for ourselves—how should it then come to pass, that we should ever *find* ourselves? Rightly has it been said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” *Our* treasure is there, where stand the hives of our knowledge. It is to those hives that we are always striving; as born creatures of flight, and as the honey-gatherers of the spirit, we care really in our hearts only for one thing—to bring something “home to the hive!”

As far as the rest of life with its so-called “experiences” is concerned, which of us has even sufficient serious interest? or sufficient time? In our dealings with such points of life, we are, I fear, never properly to the point; to be precise, our heart is not there, and certainly not our ear. Rather like one who, delighting in a divine distraction, or sunken in the seas of his own soul, in whose ear the clock has just thundered with all its force its twelve strokes of noon, suddenly wakes up, and asks himself, “What has in point of fact just struck?” so do we at times rub afterwards, as it were, our

puzzled ears, and ask in complete astonishment and complete embarrassment, "Through what have we in point of fact just lived?" further, "Who are we in point of fact?" and count, *after they have struck*, as I have explained, all the twelve throbbing beats of the clock of our experience, of our life, of our being—ah!—and count wrong in the endeavour. Of necessity we remain strangers to ourselves, we understand ourselves not, in ourselves we are bound to be mistaken, for of us holds good to all eternity the motto, "Each one is the farthest away from himself"—as far as ourselves are concerned we are not "knowers."

2.

My thoughts concerning the *genealogy* of our moral prejudices—for they constitute the issue in this polemic—have their first, bald, and provisional expression in that collection of aphorisms entitled *Human, all-too-Human, a Book for Free Minds*, the writing of which was begun in Sorrento, during a winter which allowed me to gaze over the broad and dangerous territory through which my mind had up to that time wandered. This took place in the winter of 1876-77; the thoughts themselves are older.

They were in their substance already the same thoughts which I take up again in the following treatises:—we hope that they have derived benefit from the long interval, that they have grown riper, clearer, stronger, more complete. The fact, however, that I still cling to them even

now, that in the meanwhile they have always held faster by each other, have, in fact, grown out of their original shape and into each other, all this strengthens in my mind the joyous confidence that they must have been originally neither separate disconnected capricious nor sporadic phenomena, but have sprung from a common root, from a fundamental "*fiat*" of knowledge, whose empire reached to the soul's depth, and that ever grew more definite in its voice, and more definite in its demands. That is the only state of affairs that is proper in the case of a philosopher.

We have no right to be "*disconnected*"; we must neither err "*disconnectedly*" nor strike the truth "*disconnectedly*." Rather with the necessity with which a tree bears its fruit, so do our thoughts, our values, our Yes's and No's and If's and Whether's, grow connected and interrelated, mutual witnesses of *one* will, *one* health, *one* kingdom, *one* sun—as to whether they are to *your* taste, these fruits of ours?—But what matters that to the trees? What matters that to us, us the philosophers?

3.

Owing to a scrupulosity peculiar to myself, which I confess reluctantly,—it concerns indeed *morality*,—a scrupulosity, which manifests itself in my life at such an early period, with so much spontaneity, with so chronic a persistence and so keen an opposition to environment, epoch,

precedent, and ancestry that I should have been almost entitled to style it my "*à priori*"—my curiosity and my suspicion felt themselves betimes bound to halt at the question, of what in point of actual fact was the *origin* of our "Good" and of our "Evil." Indeed, at the boyish age of thirteen the problem of the origin of Evil already haunted me: at an age "when games and God divide one's heart," I devoted to that problem my first childish attempt at the literary game, my first philosophic essay—and as regards my infantile solution of the problem, well, I gave quite properly the honour to God, and made him the *father* of evil. Did my own "*à priori*" demand that precise solution from me? that new, immoral, or at least "amoral" "*à priori*" and that "categorical imperative" which was its voice (but oh! how hostile to the Kantian article, and how pregnant with problems!), to which since then I have given more and more attention, and indeed what is more than attention. Fortunately I soon learned to separate theological from moral prejudices, and I gave up looking for a *supernatural* origin of evil. A certain amount of historical and philological education, to say nothing of an innate faculty of psychological discrimination *par excellence* succeeded in transforming almost immediately my original problem into the following one:—Under what conditions did Man invent for himself those judgments of values, "Good" and "Evil"? *And what intrinsic value do they possess in themselves?* Have they up to the present hindered or advanced

human well-being? Are they a symptom of the distress, impoverishment, and degeneration of Human Life? Or, conversely, is it in them that is manifested the fulness, the strength, and the will of Life, its courage, its self-confidence, its future? On this point I found and hazarded in my mind the most diverse answers, I established distinctions in periods, peoples, and castes, I became a specialist in my problem, and from my answers grew new questions, new investigations, new conjectures, new probabilities; until at last I had a land of my own and a soil of my own, a whole secret world growing and flowering, like hidden gardens of whose existence no one could have an inkling—oh, how happy are we, we finders of knowledge, provided that we know how to keep silent sufficiently long.

4.

My first impulse to publish some of my hypotheses concerning the origin of morality I owe to a clear, well-written, and even precocious little book, in which a perverse and vicious kind of moral philosophy (your real *English* kind) was definitely presented to me for the first time; and this attracted me—with that magnetic attraction, inherent in that which is diametrically opposed and antithetical to one's own ideas. The title of the book was *The Origin of the Moral Emotions*; its author, Dr. Paul Rée; the year of its appearance, 1877. I may almost say that I have never read

anything in which every single dogma and conclusion has called forth from me so emphatic a negation as did that book; albeit a negation untainted by either pique or intolerance. I referred accordingly both in season and out of season in the previous works, at which I was then working, to the arguments of that book, not to refute them—for what have I got to do with mere refutations—but substituting, as is natural to a positive mind, for an improbable theory one which is more probable, and occasionally no doubt for one philosophic error another. In that early period I gave, as I have said, the first public expression to those theories of origin to which these essays are devoted, but with a clumsiness which I was the last to conceal from myself, for I was as yet cramped, being still without a special language for these special subjects; still frequently liable to relapse and to vacillation. To go into details, compare what I say in *Human, all-too-Human*, part i., about the parallel early history of Good and Evil, Aph. 45 (namely, their origin from the castes of the aristocrats and the slaves); similarly, Aph. 136 et seq., concerning the birth and value of ascetic morality; similarly, Aphs. 96, 99, vol. ii., Aph. 89, concerning the Morality of Custom, that far older and more original kind of morality which is *toto cælo* different from the altruistic ethics (in which Dr. Rée, like all the English moral philosophers, sees the ethical “Thing-in-itself”); finally, Aph. 92. Similarly, Aph. 26 in *Human, all-too-Human*, part ii., and Aph. 112, the *Dawn of Day*, concerning the origin of Justice as a balance

between persons of approximately equal power (equilibrium as the hypothesis of all contract, consequently of all law); similarly, concerning the origin of Punishment, *Human, all-too-Human*, part ii., Aphs. 22, 23, in regard to which the deterrent object is neither essential nor original (as Dr. Rée thinks:—rather is it that this object is only imported, under certain definite conditions, and always as something extra and additional).

5.

In reality I had set my heart at that time on something much more important than the nature of the theories of myself or others concerning the origin of morality (or, more precisely, the real function from my view of these theories was to point an end to which they were one among many means). The issue for me was the value of morality, and on that subject I had to place myself in a state of abstraction, in which I was almost alone with my great teacher Schopenhauer, to whom that book, with all its passion and inherent contradiction (for that book also was a polemic), turned for present help as though he were still alive. The issue was, strangely enough, the value of the "unegoistic" instincts, the instincts of pity, self-denial, and self-sacrifice which Schopenhauer had so persistently painted in golden colours, deified and etherealised, that eventually they appeared to him, as it were, high and dry, as "intrinsic values in themselves," on the strength of which

he uttered both to Life and to himself his own negation. But against *these very* instincts there voiced itself in my soul a more and more fundamental mistrust, a scepticism that dug ever deeper and deeper: and in this very instinct I saw the *great* danger of mankind, its most sublime temptation and seduction—seduction to what? to nothingness?—in these very instincts I saw the beginning of the end, stability, the exhaustion that gazes backwards, the will turning *against* Life, the last illness announcing itself with its own mincing melancholy: I realised that the morality of pity which spread wider and wider, and whose grip infected even philosophers with its disease, was the most sinister symptom of our modern European civilisation; I realised that it was the route along which that civilisation slid on its way to—a new Buddhism?—a European Buddhism?—*Nihilism*? This exaggerated estimation in which modern philosophers have held pity, is quite a new phenomenon: up to that time philosophers were absolutely unanimous as to the *worthlessness* of pity. I need only mention Plato, Spinoza, La Rochefoucauld, and Kant—four minds as mutually different as is possible, but united on one point; their contempt of pity.

6.

This problem of the value of pity and of the pity-morality (I am an opponent of the modern infamous emasculation of our emotions) seems at the first blush a mere isolated problem, a note of

interrogation for itself; he, however, who once halts at this problem, and learns how to put questions, will experience what I experienced:—a new and immense vista unfolds itself before him, a sense of potentiality seizes him like a vertigo, every species of doubt, mistrust, and fear springs up, the belief in morality, nay, in all morality, totters,—finally a new demand voices itself. Let us speak out this *new demand*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values* is for the first time to be called into question—and for this purpose a knowledge is necessary of the conditions and circumstances out of which these values grew, and under which they experienced their evolution and their distortion (morality as a result, as a symptom, as a mask, as Tartuffism, as disease, as a misunderstanding; but also morality as a cause, as a remedy, as a stimulant, as a fetter, as a drug), especially as such a knowledge has neither existed up to the present time nor is even now generally desired. The value of these “values” was taken for granted as an indisputable fact, which was beyond all question. No one has, up to the present, exhibited the faintest doubt or hesitation in judging the “good man” to be of a higher value than the “evil man,” of a higher value with regard specifically to human progress, utility, and prosperity generally, not forgetting the future. What? Suppose the converse were the truth! What? Suppose there lurked in the “good man” a symptom of retrogression, such as a danger, a temptation, a poison, a *narcotic*, by means of which the present *battered on the future*! More com-

fortable and less risky perhaps than its opposite, but also pettier, meaner! So that morality would really be saddled with the guilt, if the *maximum potentiality of the power and splendour* of the human species were never to be attained? So that really morality would be the danger of dangers?

7.

Enough, that after this vista had disclosed itself to me, I myself had reason to search for learned, bold, and industrious colleagues (I am doing it even to this very day). It means traversing with new clamorous questions, and at the same time with new eyes, the immense, distant, and completely unexplored land of morality—of a morality which has actually existed and been actually lived! and is this not practically equivalent to first *discovering* that land? If, in this context, I thought, amongst others, of the aforesaid Dr. Rée, I did so because I had no doubt that from the very nature of his questions he would be compelled to have recourse to a truer method, in order to obtain his answers. Have I deceived myself on that score? I wished at all events to give a better direction of vision to an eye of such keenness, and such impartiality. I wished to direct him to the real *history of morality*, and to warn him, while there was yet time, against a world of English theories that culminated *in the blue vacuum of heaven*. Other colours, of course, rise immediately to one's mind

as being a hundred times more potent than blue for a genealogy of morals:—for instance, *grey*, by which I mean authentic facts capable of definite proof and having actually existed, or, to put it shortly, the whole of that long hieroglyphic script (which is so hard to decipher) about the past history of human morals. This script was unknown to Dr. Rée; but he had read Darwin:—and so in his philosophy the Darwinian beast and that pink of modernity, the demure weakling and dilettante, who “bites no longer,” shake hands politely in a fashion that is at least instructive, the latter exhibiting a certain facial expression of refined and good-humoured indolence, tinged with a touch of pessimism and exhaustion; as if it really did not pay to take all these things—I mean moral problems—so seriously. I, on the other hand, think that there are no subjects which *pay* better for being taken seriously; part of this payment is, that perhaps eventually they admit of being taken *gaily*. This gaiety indeed, or, to use my own language, this *joyful wisdom*, is a payment; a payment for a protracted, brave, laborious, and burrowing seriousness, which, it goes without saying, is the attribute of but a few. But on that day on which we say from the fullness of our hearts, “Forward! our old morality too is fit material *for Comedy*,” we shall have discovered a new plot, and a new possibility for the Dionysian drama entitled *The Soul's Fate*—and he will speedily utilise it, one can wager safely, he, the great ancient eternal dramatist of the comedy of our existence.

8.

If this writing be obscure to any individual, and jar on his ears, I do not think that it is necessarily I who am to blame. It is clear enough, on the hypothesis which I presuppose, namely, that the reader has first read my previous writings and has not grudged them a certain amount of trouble: it is not, indeed, a simple matter to get really at their essence. Take, for instance, my *Zarathustra*; I allow no one to pass muster as knowing that book, unless every single word therein has at some time wrought in him a profound wound, and at some time exercised on him a profound enchantment: then and not till then can he enjoy the privilege of participating reverently in the halcyon element, from which that work is born, in its sunny brilliance, its distance, its spaciousness, its certainty. In other cases the aphoristic form produces difficulty, but this is only because this form is treated *too casually*. An aphorism properly coined and cast into its final mould is far from being "deciphered" as soon as it has been read; on the contrary, it is then that it first requires *to be expounded*—of course for that purpose an art of exposition is necessary. The third essay in this book provides an example of what is offered, of what in such cases I call exposition: an aphorism is prefixed to that essay, the essay itself is its commentary. Certainly one *quality* which nowadays has been best forgotten — and that is why it will take some time yet for my writings

to become readable—is essential in order to practise reading as an art—a quality for the exercise of which it is necessary to be a cow, and under *no circumstances* a modern man!—*rumination*.

SILS-MARIA, UPPER ENGADINE,
July 1887.