

On The

Genealogy Of Morals


Translated by Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale

Ecce Homo

Translated by Walter Kaufmann

Edited, with Commentary, by

Walter
Kaufmann




F R I E D R I C H
N I E T Z S C H E

ON THE GENEALOGY
OF MORALS

Translated by
WALTER KAUFMANN and R. J. HOLLINGDALE

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by
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by
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE



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A Note on This Edition

The translation of the *Genealogy of Morals* was done jointly with R. J. Hollingdale, author of *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (University of Louisiana Press, 1965), but I alone bear the responsibility for the final version. The other translations in this volume, as well as the commentaries, involved no collaboration.

The commentaries, both on the *Genealogy* and on *Ecce Homo*, fall into three parts: an introduction, hundreds of footnotes, and an appendix. For the long appendix to the *Genealogy* I have translated most of the numerous aphorisms from his earlier works that Nietzsche refers to in the text. Nothing of this sort has been done before, but it should have been. For good measure, I have also included many aphorisms he did not cite. In the case of *Ecce Homo*, the appendix contains previously untranslated variants from Nietzsche's drafts.

All footnotes are mine, none are Nietzsche's.

In the original, almost every numbered section constitutes a single paragraph. Nietzsche used dashes and three dots to indicate breaks. I have largely dispensed with these devices and begun new paragraphs wherever that seemed helpful.

Of the two books offered here in a single volume, the *Genealogy* has long been considered one of Nietzsche's most important works. *Ecce Homo* has been appreciated very much less. May this edition lead to a better understanding of both works!

WALTER KAUFMANN

November 1, 1966

Acknowledgments

Ecce Homo is the tenth volume by Nietzsche that I have translated: the first four appeared in 1954; *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1966; and four more of his books as well as *The Will to Power* (a collection of his notes) in 1967. *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's last original work (*Nietzsche contra Wagner* consists of passages that Nietzsche selected from his earlier books) I left for the end; and because the book was intended to help the reader understand Nietzsche's thought, I have given it a more comprehensive and detailed commentary than any of the other works.

Jason Epstein's interest in this project was a necessary, although unfortunately not a sufficient, condition of its realization. I was sometimes unsure whether I ought to have undertaken this second series of six translations, but now I am glad that they are done.

It is a pleasure to give thanks once more to Berenice Hoffman for her unfailingly expert and gracious editorial queries and suggestions.

Stephen Watson helped me once again with the indices, and Sonia Volochova made scores of valuable additions to them.

George Brakas read the page proofs and called to my attention many points that were not as clear as, I hope, they are now. My wife, Hazel, kept up my spirits.

WALTER KAUFMANN

CONTENTS



ON THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	3
NIETZSCHE'S PREFACE	15
I. "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad"	24
II. "Guilt," "Bad Conscience," and the Like	57
III. What Is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?	97
APPENDIX: <i>Seventy-five Aphorisms from Five Volumes</i>	167



ECCE HOMO

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	201
A NOTE ON THE PUBLICATION OF <i>Ecce Homo</i>	210
NIETZSCHE'S PREFACE	217
Why I Am So Wise	222
Why I Am So Clever	236
Why I Write Such Good Books	259
<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>	270
<i>The Untimely Ones</i>	276
<i>Human, All-Too-Human</i>	283
<i>Dawn</i>	290
<i>The Gay Science</i>	293
<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>	295

<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>	310
<i>Genealogy of Morals</i>	312
<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>	314
<i>The Case of Wagner</i>	317
Why I Am a Destiny	326
APPENDIX: <i>Variants from Nietzsche's Drafts</i>	339
INDEX TO <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>	345
INDEX TO <i>Seventy-five Aphorisms</i>	353
INDEX TO <i>Ecce Homo</i>	357

ON THE
GENEALOGY OF MORALS



Editor's Introduction

1

Of all of Nietzsche's books, the *Genealogy of Morals* comes closest, at least in form, to Anglo-American philosophy: it consists of three inquiries, each self-contained and yet related to the other two. Even those who suppose, erroneously, that *Beyond Good and Evil* is a book for browsing, a collection of aphorisms that may be read in any order whatever, generally recognize that the *Genealogy* comprises three essays. Moreover, all three essays deal with morality, a subject close to the heart of British and American philosophy; and Nietzsche's manner is much more sober and single-minded than usual.

Yet it should be noted that the title page is followed by these words: "A Sequel to My Last Book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Which It Is Meant to Supplement and Clarify."¹ In other words, Nietzsche did not suppose that the *Genealogy* could be readily understood by itself, and in the final section of the preface he explained emphatically at some length that he presupposed not only a passing acquaintance with his earlier books but actually a rather close study of them.

Moreover, Nietzsche refers the reader, especially (but not only) in the preface, to a large number of specific passages in his earlier works. It is easy to resent all this as tedious and self-important—and to misunderstand the book and Nietzsche's philosophy generally. It is fashionable to read hastily, as if, for example, one knew all about Nietzsche's contrast of master and slave morality before one had even begun to read him. But if one reads snippets here and there, projecting ill-founded preconceptions into the gaps, one is apt to misconstrue Nietzsche's moral philosophy completely—as Loeb and Leopold did when, as youngsters, they supposed that a brutal and senseless murder would prove them masters. Similar misunderstandings mar many academic interpretations;

¹ Dem letztveröffentlichten "Jenseits von Gut und Böse" zur Ergänzung und Verdeutlichung beigegeben.

but professors naturally react differently: they feel outraged by Nietzsche and do violence, on a different level, to *him*.

To understand Nietzsche's conceptions of master and slave morality, one should read *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 260, and *Human, All-Too-Human*, section 45—and keep in mind the title of our book, which deals with the *origins* of morality. Nietzsche distinguishes moralities that originated in ruling classes from moralities that originated among the oppressed.

Unfortunately, some of the aphoristic material in his earlier works to which Nietzsche refers us is not easy to come by, and the larger part of it has never been translated adequately. Most of these aphorisms have therefore been included in the present volume, in new translations. And some commentary, in the form of footnotes, may not be supererogatory.

The extent of such a commentary poses insoluble problems: if there is too little of it, students may feel that they get no help where they need it; if there is too much, it becomes an affront to the reader's knowledge and intelligence and a monument of pedantry. No mean can possibly be right for all.

At the end of his Preface Nietzsche says that it won't do simply to read an aphorism, one must also decipher it; and he claims that his whole third inquiry is a paradigm case of a commentary on a single aphorism. Taking my cue from this suggestion, I have selected one exceptionally interesting section in the third essay and given it a much more detailed commentary than the rest of the book: section 24, which deals with the intellectual conscience and with truth. But this is not to suggest that this section is self-contained; on the contrary, the argument is continued in the following section—and so is the commentary.

2

The title of our book is ambiguous, but it is clear which meaning Nietzsche intended. *Zur Genealogie der Moral* could mean "Toward a (literally, "Toward the") Genealogy of Morals" (or Morality); it could also mean—and does mean—"On the Genealogy of Morals." How can one tell?

There is one, and only one, sure way. In many of Nietzsche's

books, the aphorisms or sections have brief titles; and several of these (about two dozen) begin with the word *Zur*. So do a great many of his notes, including more than two dozen of those included in the posthumous collection, *The Will to Power*. In the case of the notes, to be sure, the titles were sometimes added by Peter Gast, Nietzsche's worshipful friend and editor; but even titles contributed by Gast have some evidential value, as he had presumably acquired some feeling for Nietzsche's usage.

The upshot: In no title does Nietzsche's *Zur* or *Zum* clearly mean "Toward," and he used *Zur* again and again in contexts in which "Toward" makes no sense at all, and "On" is the only possible meaning; for example, the heading of section 381, in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*—published in 1887 as was the *Genealogy of Morals*—reads: *Zur Frage der Verständlichkeit*, "On the Question of Being Understandable." To be sure, if that same phrase were found in Heidegger, one would not hesitate to translate it, "toward the question of understandability": Heidegger is always on the way toward the point from which it may be possible some day to ask a question. But not Nietzsche. It is not enough to know the language; one must also acquire some feeling for an author. Toward the latter end, an excellent prescription would be to read Nietzsche "On the Question of Being Understandable"; and this aphorism is included in the present volume.

3

Speaking of intelligibility: why does Nietzsche use the French word *ressentiment*? First of all, the German language lacks any close equivalent to the French term. That alone would be sufficient excuse for Nietzsche, though perhaps not for a translator, who could use "resentment."

Secondly, Nietzsche's emergence from the influence of Wagner, who extolled everything Germanic and excoriated the French, was marked by an attitude more Francophile than that of any other major German writer—at least since Leibniz (1646–1716), who preferred to write in French. Nietzsche saw himself as the heir of the French *moralistes* and as a "good European."

In 1805 Hegel wrote to Johann Heinrich Voss, who had trans-

lated Homer into German dactylic hexameters: "I should like to say of my aspirations that I shall try to teach philosophy to speak German."² Avoiding Greek, Latin, and French terms, Hegel created an involved German terminology, devising elaborate locutions that make his prose utterly forbidding. And a little over a century later, Heidegger tried to do much the same thing. Yet Hegel was assuredly wrong when he went on to say, in the next sentence of his letter: "Once that is accomplished, it will be infinitely more difficult to give shallowness the appearance of profound speech." On the contrary. Nothing serves as well as obscurity to make shallowness look profound.

Modern readers who do not know foreign languages may wonder whether Nietzsche's abundant use of French phrases, and occasionally also of Latin, Greek, and Italian (sometimes he uses English words, too) does not make for obscurity. If it does, this is obscurity of an altogether different kind and easily removed—by a brief footnote, for example. Nietzsche likes brevity as much as he likes being a good European; and he hates nationalism as much as he hates saying approximately, at great length, what can be said precisely, in one word.

One is tempted to add that the kind of obscurantism he abominated involves irremediable ambiguities which lead to endless discussion, while his terms, whether German or foreign, are unequivocal. That is true up to a point—but not quite. Nietzsche had an almost pathological weakness for one particular kind of ambiguity, which, to be sure, is not irremediable: he loved words and phrases that mean one thing out of context and almost the opposite in the context he gives them. He loved language as poets do and relished these "revaluations." All of them involve a double meaning, one exoteric and one esoteric, one—to put it crudely—wrong, and the other right. The former is bound to lead astray hasty readers, browsers, and that rapidly growing curse of our time—the non-readers who do not realize that galloping consumption is a disease.

The body of knowledge keeps increasing at incredible speed,

² The letter is lost, but three drafts have survived. The quotation is from the final draft, May 1805. See Kaufmann's *Hegel* (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1966), Chapter VII, p. 316.

but the literature of nonknowledge grows even faster. Books multiply like mushrooms, or rather like toadstools—mildew would be still more precise—and even those who read books come perforce to depend more and more on knowledge *about* books, writers, and, if at all possible—for this is the intellectual, or rather the nonintellectual, equivalent of a bargain—*movements*. As long as one knows about existentialism, one can talk about a large number of authors without having actually read their books.

Nietzsche diagnosed this disease in its early stages, long before it had reached its present proportions—yet wrote in a manner that insured his being misunderstood by the kind of reader and nonreader he despised. Why? He gave reasons more than once; for example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, sections 30, 40, 230, 270, 278, 289, and 290, and in the aforementioned section 381 of *The Gay Science*. And I have attempted a different sort of explanation in an essay on “Philosophy versus Poetry.”³

The *Genealogy* contains several examples of misleading slogans, but *ressentiment* is actually not one of them. That term is univocal, but—to ask this once more—why couldn't we substitute “resentment” for it in an English translation? Apart from the fact that something of the flavor of Nietzsche's style and thought would be lost, this is a point at which Nietzsche succeeded in teaching psychology to speak—Nietzschean. His conception of *ressentiment* constitutes one of his major contributions to psychology—and helps to illuminate the widespread misunderstanding of Nietzsche.

To begin with the first point: At the beginning of his own lengthy essay on “[The role of] *Ressentiment* in the Construction of Moralities,”⁴ Max Scheler says: “Among the exceedingly few discoveries made in recent times concerning the origin of moral value judgments, Friedrich Nietzsche's discovery of *ressentiment* as the source of such value judgments is the most profound, even if his more specific claim that Christian morality and in particular Chris-

³ Chapter 14 of *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (Boston, Mass., Beacon Press, 1959; rev. ed., Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Anchor Books, 1960).

⁴ “Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen” in *Vom Umsturz der Werte* (collapse of values), Leipzig, Der Neue Geist Verlag, 1915; 2nd ed., 1919, vol. I, pp. 43–236.

tian love are the finest 'flower of ressentiment' should turn out to be false."⁵

Scheler, one of the outstanding German philosophers of the first quarter of the twentieth century, converted to Roman Catholicism and persuaded some of his disciples to follow his example—but later abandoned Christianity as well as all theism. In the essay on *ressentiment* he argued: "We believe that Christian values are particularly prone to being reinterpreted into values of *ressentiment* and have also been understood that way particularly often, but that the *core of Christian ethics did not grow on the soil of ressentiment*. Yet we also believe that the *core of bourgeois morality*, which since the thirteenth century has begun more and more to supersede Christian morality until it attained its supreme achievement in the French Revolution, does have its roots in *ressentiment*." Even where he disagreed with Nietzsche, Scheler emphasized that he considered Nietzsche's account singularly profound and worthy of the most serious consideration.⁶

Readers ready to jump to the conclusion that Nietzsche confounded true Christianity with its bourgeois misinterpretation while Scheler obviously understood Christianity far better should ponder Scheler's footnote: "The possible unity of style of warlike and Christian morality is demonstrated in detail in my book *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg* (The genius of war and the German war), 1915."⁷ To be sure, most Christians in England, France, and the United States felt the same way in 1915, but the question remains whether Scheler's reading of Christianity was not designed to be heard gladly in the twentieth century, around 1915, when the essay on *ressentiment*, too, appeared. In any case, this essay does not compare in originality and importance with Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, but it deserves mention as an attempt to develop Nietzsche's ideas, and it shows how the term *ressentiment* has become established.

Nietzsche's conception of *ressentiment* also throws light on

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Both here and on p. 106 Scheler claims erroneously that Nietzsche used the phrase in single quotes in *Genealogy*, essay I, section 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 106f.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

the reception of his ideas. By way of contrast, consider Max Weber, perhaps the greatest sociologist of the century, and certainly *one* of the greatest. Weber's sociology of religion owes a great deal to Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. But why is it generally recognized that Weber was by no means an anti-Semite, although he found the clue to the Jewish religion in the alleged fact that the Jews were a pariah people, while Nietzsche's comments on slave morality and the slave rebellion in morals have so often been considered highly offensive and tinged by anti-Semitism? (Nietzsche's many references to anti-Semitism are invariably scathing: see the indices in this volume.) Could it be that a scholar is given the benefit of every doubt so long as he does not have the presumption to write well?

To write about Nietzsche "scholars" with the lack of inhibition with which *they* have written about Nietzsche, mixing moralistic denunciations with attempts at psychiatric explanations, would be utterly unthinkable. Why? The answer is clearly not that Nietzsche really was an inferior scholar and did eventually become insane. Most Nietzsche "scholars" cannot hold a candle to his learning or originality, and the closer they are to meriting psychological explanations, the worse it would be to offer any.

Could the reason for the disparity in treatment be that Nietzsche is dead? We are in no danger of hurting his feelings or his career; and he cannot hit back. He is no longer a member of the family; he has left us and is fair game. But Max Weber is dead, too; yet he is still treated as a member of the guild. Clearly, there must be another reason. Nietzsche wrote too well and was too superior. That removed him from the immunity of our community, quite as much as the commission of a crime. But where the transgression has been spiritual or intellectual, and those offended are the intellectual community, the revenge, too, is intellectual. The pent-up resentment against fellow members of the community—sloppy scholars and writers as well as those who excite envy—all this rancor that cannot be vented against living colleagues, at least not in print, may be poured out against a few great scapegoats.

There are many reasons for Nietzsche's being one of the great scapegoats of all time. During World War I British intellectuals

found it convenient to contribute to the war effort by denouncing a German intellectual of stature whom one could discuss in print without losing a lot of time reading him—and Nietzsche had said many nasty things about the British.⁸ Henceforth Nietzsche was a marked man, and World War II contributed its share to this type of disgraceful literature. But there are even more such studies in German—which is scarcely surprising. After all, Nietzsche said far more wicked things—incomparably more and worse—about the Germans than he ever did about the British. And as the literature shows us beyond a doubt: Christian scholars also needed outlets for their rancor. For all that, it would be wrong to think in terms of any strict tit-for-tat, as if each group the dead man had offended then felt justified in hitting back once he was dead. Once it was established that this writer was a scapegoat, *anybody* was allowed to play and vent his own *ressentiment* on him, no matter what its source.

Apart from these considerations, Nietzsche's reception cannot be understood. To be sure, reactions of *that* sort do not exhaust this story. There is also Nietzsche's influence on Rilke and German poetry, on Thomas Mann and the German novel, on Karl Jaspers and German philosophy, on Gide and Malraux, Sartre and Camus, Freud and Buber, Shaw and Yeats. But to understand that, one only has to read them—and him.

4

One final word about the contents and spirit of the *Genealogy*. All three inquiries deal with the origins of moral phenomena, as the title of the book indicates. The first essay, which contrasts "Good and Evil" with "Good and Bad," juxtaposes master and slave morality; the second essay considers "guilt," the "bad conscience," and related matters; and the third, ascetic ideals. The most common misunderstanding of the book is surely to suppose that Nietzsche considers slave morality, the bad conscience, and ascetic ideals evil; that he suggests that mankind would be better off if only

⁸ To give at least one example, consider Ernest Barker's Oxford pamphlet on *Nietzsche and Treitschke* (London, Oxford University Press, 1914).

these things had never appeared; and that in effect he glorifies unconscionable brutes.

Any such view is wrong in detail and can be refuted both by considering in context the truncated quotations that have been adduced to buttress it and by citing a large number of other passages. I have tried to do this in my book on *Nietzsche*,⁹ and this is not the place to repeat the demonstration. But this sort of misinterpretation involves not only hundreds of particular misreadings, it also involves a misreading of the *Genealogy* and, even more generally, of Nietzsche's attitude toward history and the world. In conclusion, something needs to be said about that.

The *Genealogy* is intended as a supplement and clarification of *Beyond Good and Evil*. And while that title suggests an attempt to rise above the slave morality that contrasts good and evil, it also signifies a very broad attack on "the faith in opposite values."¹⁰ Decidedly, it is not Nietzsche's concern in the *Genealogy* to tell us that master morality is good, while slave morality is evil; or to persuade us that the bad conscience and ascetic ideals are bad, while a brutish state antedating both phenomena is good. Of course, it is his plan to open new perspectives and to make us see what he discusses in unwonted, different ways. If you are bent on using terms like good and bad, you might say that he tries to show us, among other things, how moral valuations, phenomena, and ideals that are usually not questioned have their bad or dark side. Ordinarily, we see the foreground only; Nietzsche seeks to show us the background.

In a nutshell: when Nietzsche has shown us the dark side of the bad conscience, he says, "The bad conscience is an illness, there is no doubt about that, but an illness as pregnancy is an illness" (II, section 19). His love of fate, his *amor fati*, should not be forgotten. The second chapter of *Ecce Homo* ends: "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants

⁹ Princeton University Press, 1950; rev. ed., Meridian Books, 1956; 3rd rev. ed., Princeton University Press and Vintage Books, 1968.

¹⁰ Section 2. For a list of other sections that illuminate the title of the book, see section 4 of the Preface to my translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*, with commentary (New York, Vintage Books, 1966), p. xv.

nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but *love it.*”

In the imagery of the first chapter of *Zarathustra*, it is not Nietzsche's intention to malign or to glorify either the camel or the lion—either the ascetic “spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel” or the blond beast. Indeed, Zarathustra is eloquent in his praise of the camel, and it is plain that much of his description fits Nietzsche himself, who was certainly no stranger to ascetic ideals. But the point is that both camel and lion represent mere stages in the development of the spirit; and insofar as Nietzsche feels dissatisfied with both, it is because he would not have us settle for either: he wants us to climb higher—which, however, cannot be done without passing through these stages. And what lies beyond? What is the goal? Here we return to the image of pregnancy: the third stage is represented by the child. “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’ For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred ‘Yes’ is needed.”

Without acquiring a bad conscience, without learning to be profoundly dissatisfied with ourselves, we cannot envisage higher norms, a new state of being, self-perfection. Without ascetic ideals, without self-control and cruel self-discipline, we cannot attain that self-mastery which Nietzsche ever praises and admires. But to settle down with a nagging bad conscience, to remain an ascetic and mortify oneself, is to fall short of Nietzsche's “Dionysian” vision. What he celebrates is neither the camel nor the lion but the creator.

“Goethe . . . fought the mutual extraneousness of reason, senses, feeling, and will . . . he disciplined himself into wholeness, he *created* himself. . . . Such a spirit who has *become free* stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* . . . that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—he *does not negate any more*. Such a faith, however, is the highest of all possible faiths: I have baptized it with the name of *Dionysus.*”¹¹

¹¹ *Twilight of the Idols*, section 49 (*The Portable Nietzsche*, translated, with an introduction, prefaces, and notes, by Walter Kaufmann, New York, The Viking Press, 1954; paperback edition, 1958, pp. 553f.).

ON THE
GENEALOGY OF MORALS



*A Polemic*¹

¹ *Eine Streitschrift.*

Preface

1

We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? It has rightly been said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”;¹ *our* treasure is where the beehives of our knowledge are. We are constantly making for them, being by nature winged creatures and honey-gatherers of the spirit; there is one thing alone we really care about from the heart—“bringing something home.” Whatever else there is in life, so-called “experiences”—which of us has sufficient earnestness for them? Or sufficient time? Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us “absent-minded”: we cannot give our hearts to it—not even our ears! Rather, as one divinely preoccupied and immersed in himself into whose ear the bell has just boomed with all its strength the twelve beats of noon suddenly starts up and asks himself: “what really was that which just struck?” so we sometimes rub our ears *afterward* and ask, utterly surprised and disconcerted, “what really was that which we have just experienced?” and moreover: “who *are* we really?” and, afterward as aforesaid, count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our *being*—and alas! miscount them.—So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we *have* to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law “Each is furthest from himself” applies to all eternity—we are not “men of knowledge” with respect to ourselves.

2

My ideas on the *origin* of our moral prejudices—for this is the subject of this polemic—received their first, brief, and provisional

¹ Matthew 6:21.

expression in the collection of aphorisms that bears the title *Human, All-Too-Human. A Book for Free Spirits*. This book was begun in Sorrento during a winter when it was given to me to pause as a wanderer pauses and look back across the broad and dangerous country my spirit had traversed up to that time. This was in the winter of 1876–77; the ideas themselves are older. They were already in essentials the same ideas that I take up again in the present treatises—let us hope the long interval has done them good, that they have become riper, clearer, stronger, more perfect! *That* I still cleave to them today, however, that they have become in the meantime more and more firmly attached to one another, indeed entwined and interlaced with one another, strengthens my joyful assurance that they might have arisen in me from the first not as isolated, capricious, or sporadic things but from a common root, from a *fundamental will* of knowledge, pointing imperiously into the depths, speaking more and more precisely, demanding greater and greater precision. For this alone is fitting for a philosopher. We have no right to *isolated* acts of any kind: we may not make isolated errors or hit upon isolated truths. Rather do our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit—related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of *one will, one health, one soil, one sun*.—Whether you like them, these fruits of ours?—But what is that to the trees! What is that to us, to us philosophers!

3

Because of a scruple peculiar to me that I am loth to admit to—for it is concerned with *morality*, with all that has hitherto been celebrated on earth as morality—a scruple that entered my life so early, so uninvited, so irresistibly, so much in conflict with my environment, age, precedents, and descent that I might almost have the right to call it my "*a priori*"—my curiosity as well as my suspicions were bound to halt quite soon at the question of where our good and evil really *originated*. In fact, the problem of the origin of evil pursued me even as a boy of thirteen: at an age in which you have "half childish trifles, half God in your heart,"² I

² Goethe's *Faust*, lines 3781f.

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