Some important themes:

- **Genealogical** method of investigating our values and beliefs
  - Empirical scientific investigation of the origins of our moral beliefs as a basis for *critiquing* these beliefs and investigating their *value* — i.e., whether to accept them.
  - *Methodological naturalism*: Philosophical inquiry — here, philosophical investigation of our moral beliefs — should be continuous with empirical scientific inquiry. Our philosophical conclusions should be supported by, or at least consistent with, the findings in our best sciences.
- **Skepticism**: We must question even our deepest, most central values. Perhaps we’ll come to endorse them upon further reflection; but we must be prepared to reject them if they prove to be based on a false or unhealthy conception of the world.
- **Evaluative critiques** of certain values: critiquing values based on how they promote or inhibit human flourishing
- **Conceptual ethics**: Not all ways of conceptualizing the same states of affairs, or of framing inquiry, are on a par. What concepts should we use in posing questions about how to live, making ethical judgments, and expressing our evaluations of actions, attitudes, individuals, states of affairs?

**Section 1**

- **Self-knowledge**
  
  “We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason… [W]e are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not understand ourselves, we *must* mistake ourselves… [W]e are not ‘men of knowledge’ with respect to ourselves.”

  - Q: Who is the “we” here? Who are the “men of knowledge”?
  - Q: Why do the “men of knowledge” lack knowledge of themselves? In what sense are “we knowers today” alienated from ourselves?
  - Q: What is the purpose of this introductory section? Why does he include it before the overview of the book’s contents in §2?

**Section 2**

- begins to outline the book’s central topics and themes
  - “the subject of this polemic”: “*My ideas on the origin of our moral prejudices*”
    - Q: In what sense is the book a “polemic”?
    - Q: Why the shift from talk of “we men of knowledge” to talk of “*my* ideas”?
  - biographical history of the development of his ideas on the subject
    - Q: Why does Nietzsche include autobiographical details about the origins of the ideas that form the basis of the *Genealogy*?
    - a *unified* treatise, expressing his own *personal* values and intellectual development
“That I still cleave to them today, however… 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.”

- Q: What is his basis for treating his ideas as expressing a unified psyche, will, or set of values?
- Q: In what sense do “our ideas, our values… grow out of us” of “necessity”?
- Q: Should the fact that our ideas express a unified evaluative perspective give us more reason to believe them? What relevance do facts about the psychology of a philosopher have for our evaluation of her philosophy?

**Section 3**

- more autobiographical details
  - lifelong tendency toward skepticism – especially about morality
  - this characteristic is again described as, in some sense, psychologically necessary:
    “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’.”
  - Note the reversal of (and distancing from) Kant: Nietzsche's imperative enjoins skepticism about morality.
- CENTRAL TOPIC AND METHODOLOGY
  - **Topic:** “the question of where our good and evil really originated”; “the problem of the origin of evil”; “under what conditions did man invent those value judgements good and evil? and what value do they themselves have? Have they hitherto hindered or furthered human prosperity? Are they a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or is there revealed in them, on the contrary, the plenitude, force, and will of life, its courage, certainty, future?”
  - **Methodology:** “Genealogy”: Investigate the naturally occurring social/psychological/cultural mechanisms responsible for our moral beliefs, as a means of critiquing and assessing the value of these beliefs.
    - What function does morality have? Given that function, is it good for us?
    - NB: The function and value of morality may have changed over time. However, by uncovering the origins of morality, we can learn something about its characteristic causal effects, and thus on the extent to which it promotes things that we care about — most importantly, human flourishing.
    - Q: What does Nietzsche mean by ‘origin’ here? Is he interested in the nature of the properties of good and evil? Or in analyzing our concepts of good and evil? Or in the social/psychological/cultural origins of our beliefs about what is good and evil?
    - Q: Why is Nietzsche interested in investigating the “origins” of our “moral prejudices”? Is it just a scientific/empirical project? Or does he have broader goals?
• Q: What values will Nietzsche use to assess the usefulness of our moral practices, judgments, and concepts? What will be the basis for Nietzsche’s critique of morality? Is Nietzsche critiquing all values, or specifically moral values?

• Q: What are the relevantly stable/permanent features that identify something as a “morality”? What constitutes Nietzsche’s object of inquiry?

• Q: How might factual information about the origins of our moral values and practices bear on the normative question of whether they are justified? In the *Gay Science* §345 Nietzsche explicitly denies committing the “genetic fallacy” — the fallacy of taking the origin of something to demonstrate something about its value: “Even if a morality has grown out of an error, the realization of this fact would not so much as touch the problem of its value.” If Nietzsche isn’t committing the genetic fallacy, then what is he doing? What is the basis of his critique? How might the origin of morality have any bearing on a critique of morality?

  • “Genetic fallacy”: (1) Causal premise: S’s belief that \( p \) was caused by such-and-such cause/origin \( C \). (2) Epistemic/Evaluative premise: \( C \) is problematic in such-and-such way. (C) So, \( p \) is false.

  • “Debunking” style of argument: (1) Causal premise: S’s belief that \( p \) was caused by such-and-such cause/origin \( C \). (2) Epistemic/Evaluative premise: \( C \) is problematic in such-and-such way. (C) So, S’s belief in \( p \) is unjustified (unwarranted, etc.).

  • Q: extend to concepts and other types of doxastic and evaluative attitudes?

  • Q: examples?

  • Q: What makes a particular “debunking” argument better/worse? How might inquiring into the causal (psychological, biological, social, cultural) origins of a belief/concept/attitude give us reason to call it into question?

• Important distinction: descriptive vs. normative uses of ‘value’/‘morality’

  • Not all uses of (e.g.) ‘value’/‘morality’ express the speaker’s endorsement of those values.

  • Saying that something is a “morality” in the descriptive sense is saying that it is a body of moral norms, rules, values, practices, attitudes accepted by some group. E.g., there was ancient Greek morality, there is contemporary Protestant morality, there is Nazi morality, there is contemporary liberal morality, etc. Descriptive uses of ‘value’/‘morality’ merely describe a body of norms. A morality, in the descriptive sense, may or may not be something we ought to accept.

  • Saying that something is a “morality” in the normative sense is saying that it is a body of moral norms, etc. that we ought to accept. “Normative” uses of ‘value’/‘morality’ express one’s endorsement of the values/norms in question.

  • Nietzsche’s question is whether the dominant Western morality in the descriptive sense is a morality in the normative sense — i.e., whether to endorse the moral values associated with traditional Western morality. Nietzsche’s question is whether certain commonly accepted values (values in the descriptive sense) — e.g., compassion, pity, and selflessness — are genuinely valuable (i.e., values in the normative sense).

  • Evaluative basis for Nietzsche’s critique: health, strength, life, psychological empowerment.
So, Nietzsche's questioning of morality (in the descriptive sense) comes from the viewpoint of an alternative ethical/evaluative orientation.

Note Nietzsche's remarks about his turn from assuming a theological or metaphysical basis for our moral beliefs to investigating the naturalistic basis for these beliefs.

Section 5

“my real concern was something much more important than hypothesis-mongering, whether my own or other people's, on the origin of morality…

What was at stake was the value of morality”

Nietzsche's project is not simply a scientific one. The goal isn't just to uncover the naturalistic origins of our moral practices. This empirical inquiry is only a means, a means to “something much more important”: investigating the value of our moral practices. The method of genealogy thus has two components: empirical/scientific and evaluative. Nietzsche's aim is to uncover the origins of our moral practices as a means of critiquing them and assessing whether and to what extent they might be good for us.

NB: Genealogy isn't essential to a critique of morality. It is just “one means among many.”

Objections to Schopenhauer's conception of morality, i.e. to pity:

“What was especially at stake was the value of the 'unegoistic,' the instincts of pity, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice... on the basis of which he said No to life and to himself... It was precisely here that I saw the great danger to mankind... the will turning against life... I understood the ever spreading morality of pity... as the most sinister symptom of a European culture that had itself become sinister, perhaps as its by-pass to... —nihilism?”

This is a crucial theme in Nietzsche: Our current morality is one of selflessness, altruism, and pity. We must question the value of a morality of selflessness and pity, a morality centered around selflessness, guilt, blame, and responsibility. Do such values express and promote strength and an affirmation of life? Or do they express and encourage nihilism, or a negation of life?

Section 6

“Let us articulate this new demand: we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called in question — and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed... One has taken the value of these ‘values’ as given, as factual, as beyond all question; one has hitherto never doubted or hesitated in the slightest degree in supposing ‘the good man’ to be of greater value than ‘the evil man,’ of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general (the future of man included). But what if the reverse were true?”
• Recall: descriptive vs. normative uses of ‘value’: We need to question whether dominant moral values (in the descriptive sense) are genuinely valuable — i.e., whether we actually ought to accept and promote them.
• Nietzsche's skepticism: We can't take the value of modern morality for granted. We must question it.
• Key question: Do dominant moral values promote flourishing, strength, human excellence, and an affirmation of life? Are they good for those individuals capable of excellence? Or is a morality of selflessness and pity ultimately dangerous to humanity? Does it inhibit human flourishing and the development of human excellence? Could it be that certain traits often deemed “evil” are in fact worth promoting? Could it be that certain allegedly “evil” motives/acts/etc are in fact genuinely good/valuable?

Section 7
• Naturalism and Genealogy:
  • Note Nietzsche's interest in practicing “real history,” and investigating “the morality which has really existed, really been lived.” He wants to uncover the actual scientific origins of our moral beliefs. It is only by doing so that we’ll be in a position to assess their value.
  • Q: How seriously should we take Nietzsche's claims here, especially given that the Genealogy is subtitled “A Polemic,” and that his ultimate aim is an evaluative one?

Section 8
• Difficulties for reading Nietzsche (cf. Daybreak, Preface, §5; Gay Science §381):
  • (a) To understand the Genealogy we must have read carefully and internalized Nietzsche's previous work. (no small task!)
  • (b) We must read his work with emotional involvement.
    • We must attend not just to what Nietzsche says, but to how he says it — to what emotions and attitudes he is attempting to elicit in the reader, and to what such emotional reactions may reveal about ourselves and our values.
  • (c) We must read carefully and slowly, with great personal effort.
On the Genealogy of Morality, First Essay, “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’: Ressentiment
Nietzsche
Alex Silk

“The truth of the first inquiry is the birth of Christianity: the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of ressentiment, not, as people may believe, out of the ‘spirit’ — a countermovement by its very nature, the great rebellion against the dominion of noble values.” — Ecce Homo, “Genealogy of Morals”

I. Quick comment on the method of genealogy

Last time we started to talk a bit about Nietzsche's method of genealogy: his method of investigating the naturalistic origins of a certain phenomena as a means of assessing its value. One issue that came up was to what extent the Genealogy is intended to offer a scientifically accurate account of the origins of morality. Some additional remarks:

- Remember that Nietzsche's primary goal is a normative one: it's to show that morality — specifically, the morality associated with Christianity — isn't good for certain higher types of human beings, and so isn't good simpliciter. Given how psychologically and culturally engrained this morality is, convincing these individuals of this will be no easy task. Writing in the manner of a typical scholarly treatise likely wouldn't be effective. Nietzsche's more rhetorical tone and style can thus be seen as instrumental in the “task of assimilating knowledge and making it instinctive” (Gay Science §11) — especially given how “mankind prefers to see gestures rather than to hear reasons” (Antichrist §54). Though we must “learn to think differently,” what may be more important, and more difficult, is learning “to feel differently” (Daybreak §103).
- So, the Genealogy does intend to make true claims about the origins of morality (and Nietzsche did rely extensively on scholarly literature available at the time). However, it attempts to do so with the broader normative aim of critiquing existing morality. This aim calls for a “Polemic” (Ecce Homo, GM).

II. Outline of the Three Essays

We noted last time that, given Nietzsche's naturalistic method of genealogy, he'll attempt to explain the origin of morality in terms of certain naturally occurring psychological mechanisms (rather than, e.g., something supernatural). The Genealogy is unified insofar as each essay uses the method of genealogy to help explain naturalistically the origin of morality and how human beings came to take it so seriously. Each essay of the Genealogy can be understood as targeting a different feature of morality and a different psychological mechanism that explains it:

- Essay I:
  - Phenomenon: the rise of Judeo-Christian morality (“‘good’/‘evil’ morality, “slave morality”) in the Roman Empire
  - Psychological mechanism: ressentiment
- Essay II:
  - Phenomenon: the moralization of bad conscience
• Psychological mechanism: internalized cruelty
• Essay III:
  • Phenomenon: the rise of the “ascetic ideal”
    • NB: It’s this ideal, Nietzsche claims, that explains why slave morality was successful (Essay I), and why bad conscience became moralized in the form of guilt (Essay II).
  • Psychological mechanism: the will to power

III. Essay I: The rise of Christian morality, and the mechanism of reSENTIMENT

Summary. Naturalistic account of the rise of Christian morality:
• The morality associated with Christianity didn't triumph because of its putative divine inspiration. It was created by a particular type of people (the oppressed, the slaves of the Roman Empire), and is the product of a distinctive kind of psychological state: reSENTIMENT. Christian morality was created by the oppressed for self-interested and prudential reasons, motivated by reSENTIMENT toward their oppressors. Since the slaves were unable to express their hostility toward the nobles physically, they expressed it by “revaluation” (inverting) the values of the nobles — i.e., by creating a system of values that devalued the nobles.
• NB: on Nietzsche's talk of Christianity, and Christian morality:
  • Nietzsche is interested here in the morality distinctive of Christianity — and Judaism — not in Christian (or Jewish) religion.
  • Accordingly, in this context, Nietzsche uses ‘Judea,’ ‘Jew,’ ‘Judaism,’ etc. interchangeably with talk about Christianity, Catholicism, Protestantism, etc. (cf GM I:9: “Jewish, Christian, or plebeian (never mind the words!”)).

Question: How do evaluative schemes based around concepts of “good and evil” contrast with evaluative schemes based around concepts of “good and bad”? What is distinctive about moralities which negatively evaluate things generally in terms of a concept of “evil,” as opposed to a concept of “bad”?

• “Revaluation” (inversion) of values: the replacement of the “good/bad” system of values (that of the Roman nobility; “master morality”) with the “good/evil” system of values (that of the slaves, the oppressed, the suffering; “slave morality”):
  • “Good, Bad” evaluative scheme (associated with the nobles, the masters)
    • Centered around the concepts of “good” and “bad”
      • The concept of “good” is conceptually primary.
        • It arises as an expression of “the exalted proud states of the soul” (Beyond Good and Evil §260)
      • The concept of “bad” is derivative.
        • It arises “as an afterthought,” to refer to the others, those who aren’t “good.”
    • Motivated by self-affirmation
      • Since one’s evaluative judgments are initially driven by self-affirmation, the positive concept (“good”) is determined first.
  • Main value: noble character traits of individuals
  • Metaphysical assumptions?: no assumption of free will
  • Philological/etymological background:
• words for ‘good’ initially associated with words for ‘noble’, ‘aristocratic’, ‘with a privileged soul’, etc
• words for ‘bad’ associated with words for ‘common’, ‘plebeian’, ‘low’

• “Good, Evil” evaluative scheme (associated with Christian morality, the oppressed)
  • Centered around the concepts of “good” and “evil”
    • The concept of “evil” is primary.
      • It arises first to refer to “precisely the ‘good man’ of the other morality” (I: 11).
    • The concept of “good” is derivative, defined negatively as what isn’t evil.
      • It arises “as an afterthought,” to refer to themselves, those who aren’t “evil”.
  • Motivated reactively by resentment and revenge (see below)
  • Since one’s evaluative judgments are initially driven by a reaction to an external negative state of affairs, the negative concept (“evil”) is determined first.
  • Main value: acts that help the oppressed (the slaves, the suffering)
  • Metaphysical assumptions?: assumption of free will
    • Since the slaves want to hold the masters morally responsible, they need to assume the masters are acting freely. (cf I:13)

• NB:
• Nietzsche’s project in this essay isn’t in the first instance to give a normative ethical account of what is good (what to value) or what is bad/evil (what to devalue). It’s to give an account of the concepts of “good”, of “bad”, and of “evil” — in particular, accounts of what is distinctive about negatively evaluating things in terms of a concept of “evil”; of the psychological/social/cultural origins of evaluative schemes centered primarily around concepts of “good”/“bad” vs. concepts of “good”/“evil”; and of what led to the rise of the latter sort of “good”/“evil” evaluative scheme at a particular period of history.

• LESSON: What Nietzsche’s inquiry highlights is that not all ways of conceptualizing a situation are psychologically or evaluatively on a par. What concepts we use in ethics and normative inquiry can be as important as the valence of our evaluations. (“conceptual ethics”)

• Question: How might Nietzsche’s inquiry into the concepts of “good”/“bad” and “good”/“evil” play a role in his ultimate normative project of assessing what values to accept and what values to reject?
• Appreciating the distinction between “good/bad moralities” and “good/evil moralities” — moral systems centered around concepts of “good” and “bad” vs concepts of “good” and “evil” — helps clarify the scope of Nietzsche’s critique.
• “Beyond Good and Evil.” — At least this does not mean ‘Beyond Good and Bad’’ (I:17):
  • Like we talked about last time, Nietzsche is not rejecting all values. His critique is targeted against certain values (e.g., pity), and against certain kinds of evaluative schemes (e.g., those centered around a concept of “evil”).
  • Though Nietzsche endorses structuring an evaluative system centered around a concept of “bad” as opposed to “evil,” this does not imply that he simply endorses “master morality,” i.e. the original instance of a good/bad morality, the morality of the ruling nobles (see below).
• Although the terms ‘master’ and ‘slave’ refer at first to individuals in different socio-economic classes, they come to apply more broadly to distinctive kinds of psychologies (I:6). These psychological types are what’s of primary interest for Nietzsche.
  • So, e.g., someone who’s socially in the aristocracy could have a “slavish” morality.
This helps explain Nietzsche's comments about how contemporary moralities are generally mixes or hybrids of these two types of moralities.

**Question:** What is the psychological mechanism of ressentiment, and how does it help explain the slaves' inversion of the noble evaluative scheme?

- “The slave revolt in morality begins when ressentiment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the ressentiment of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. 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,’ and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye — this need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself — is of the essence of ressentiment” (GM I:10).

**Ressentiment** is a reactive state that arises in response to some unpleasant situation which the person is powerless to change with ordinary action. Since this attitude can't express itself physically, it expresses itself in the person's values — specifically, in the person's coming to devalue the relevant unpleasant situation or what causes it.

- associated with emotions of hatred and revenge (e.g., GM I:10-15). (see especially the discussion of Aquinas and Tertullian in I:15)

The psychological origin of the “slave revolt in morality”: Faced with oppression and suffering which they can't change via ordinary physical action against their masters, the slaves project their reactive emotions onto their masters. This shapes a distinctive evaluative outlook, one which devalues the masters and inverts the masters' own system of values.

- NB: this “creation” of values needn't be conscious or intentional. What's important is simply that the attitude of ressentiment shapes the slaves' evaluative perceptions, and is responsible for their evaluative judgments.

- NB: Though the noble person can also experience ressentiment, it doesn't fester like with the slaves; it gets expressed straightway in action (I:10).

Nietzsche's picture of ressentiment isn't black-and-white. E.g.:

- Ressentiment is the “instrument of culture; which is not to say that the bearers of these instincts themselves represent culture” (I:11). It helped “the human soul [to become] deep,” “interesting,” “superior to other animals” (I:6) “clever” (I:10). Because of their physical powerlessness, the slaves were forced to think, reflect, and develop an inner life.

- By contrast, the original masters “are not much better than uncaged beasts of prey... It was the noble races which left the concept of ‘barbarian’ in their traces” (I:11). Indeed, note the conflicting features of Nietzsche's characterization of the nobles: though sometimes described as “splendid,” they are also described as “stupid,” as “hideous” and “appalling” “monsters” (I:7, 11).

**Question:** Why this mixed response? Why the conflicting affects in response to the deeds and tendencies of the nobles?

- Hints: “[W]ho would not a hundred times sooner prefer to fear..., rather than not fear but be permanently condemned to the repellent sight of the failed, stunted, atrophied, and poisoned? And is that not our fate?” …At least the one who is able to “feel distanced from the superabundance of failed, sickly, tired, and exhausted people” may “at least still capable of living, at least affirming life” (I:11).
• Might there be a way of exploiting certain of the instincts of the “noble” mode of evaluation (affirmation, strength, overcoming) in a more thoughtful (“deep,” reflective) way, in the service of more constructive ends (“culture”)? (cf. the end of Essay II)

• (Ressentiment will figure centrally in Nietzsche's account of the origin of the ascetic ideal in Essay III.)

• The success of the “slave revolt” wasn’t absolute (I:16).

**Question:** If this “revaluation” of values, or “slave revolt” in morality, was so historically momentous, why have we lost sight of it?

- (a) “because it was victorious” (I:7)
- (b) because of bad histories of morality advanced by “these English psychologists” (I:1)
  - Their problem is that they infer something about the origin of an act/practice (its original function or value) from something about its current purpose or function — e.g., that the current usefulness of altruism helps explain its origin, and why people came to morally value it. (I:2)
- (c) because of ignorance (contrast I:4)

**Question:** How was the slaves’ revaluation of the noble evaluative scheme successful? Given that the oppressed were just that — the oppressed — how did their system of values triumph over the system of values characteristic of the rulers?

- We see hints that the answer has something to do with the asceticism of the “priestly caste” (e.g., in I:6,7), but a full answer must wait until the Third Essay…
§13 characterizes the moral outlook of ‘good’/’evil’ morality as “the prudence of the lowest order”:

- “When the oppressed, downtrodden, outraged exhort one another with the vengeful cunning of impotence: ‘let us be different from the evil, namely good! And he is good who does not outrage, who harms nobody, who does not attack, who does not requite, who leaves revenge to God, who keeps himself hidden as we do, who avoids evil and desires little from life, like us, the patient, humble, and just’—this, listened to calmly and without previous bias, really amounts to no more than: ‘we weak ones are, after all, weak; it would be good if we did nothing for which we are not strong enough’ (I:13).

- “Suppose the violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, who are uncertain of themselves and weary, moralize: what will their moral valuations have in common? … The slave’s eye is not favorable to the virtues of the powerful… Conversely, those qualities are brought out and flooded with light which serve to ease existence for those who suffer: here pity, the complaisant and obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, humility, and friendliness are honored—for here these are the most useful qualities and almost the only means for enduring the pressure of existence. Slave morality is essentially a morality of utility.” (BGE §260)

In some manner to be explained, Christian moral values, on this view, were originally endorsed by the oppressed and slavish psychological types because doing so was *good for them*. Since the oppressed were unable to take action against their oppressors, they legitimized the sorts of responses they *could* have by deeming them morally praise-worthy and good.

A number of examples are provided in the highly rhetorical climax of the Essay, §14:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit value</th>
<th>Underlying attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“goodness of heart”</td>
<td>impotence, inability to take action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“humility”</td>
<td>anxious lowliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“obedience”</td>
<td>subjection to those one hates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“patience”</td>
<td>inoffensiveness, cowardice, “lingering at the door”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“forgiveness,” “loving one’s enemies”</td>
<td>inability for revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“being chosen by God”</td>
<td>misery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire for “justice,” righteous indignation</td>
<td>desire for retaliation/revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatred of “injustice”</td>
<td>hatred of the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“faith” and “hope” in the coming “Kingdom of God”</td>
<td>desire to be the strong, desire for indemnification (compensation for suffering)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The theme is that “weakness is being lied into something meritorious.” The attitudes, actions, and states in the righthand column are **reconceptualized** in the terms from the righthand column.

- For instance, rather than viewing oneself as powerless to change one’s circumstances, one **reconceptualizes** one’s being forced to “linger at the door” of the masters as a **voluntary exercise of a virtue**: patience.

**Questions:**
- In what sense(s) was adopting these values, and reconceptualizing their circumstances and actions in these ways, good for the oppressed and slavish psychological types?
- To what extent, if at all, need these sorts of adaptive psychological responses have been intentional?
- What relation, if any, is there among Nietzsche’s claim that certain Christian moral values were endorsed by the slavish types because doing so was good for them (psychologically, socially, materially), and his ideas that these values expressed resentment?
- How is the slavish types’ response of endorsing the values in question relevantly analogous/disanalogous to an insect’s response of “playing dead”?
- Is “playing dead” adaptive for all types of insects in all circumstances? What other types of responses would be more adaptive for other types of insects, or insects in other circumstances? By comparison, is it the case that accepting (e.g.) Judeo-Christian moral values contributes to the overall well-being of all types of individuals in all circumstances? If not, is there another kind of evaluative outlook that would be better for certain individuals? Would the fact (if it is a fact) that accepting such-and-such alternative values is better for such individuals imply that (e.g.) Judeo-Christian moral values don’t apply to them?
- Why does Nietzsche offer these reinterpretations of Christian moral values in such a highly stylized, rhetorical manner? Why is Mr Rash and Curious’s response so affectively and emotionally charged? In what sense is Mr Rash and Curious’s reaction “rash”? In what sense does it manifest “curiosity”? How does Nietzsche’s rhetorical style contribute to his philosophical aims?
- Why does Nietzsche bother to include the extended quotations from Aquinas and Tertullian in §15? What kind of psychology would be disposed to find their views compelling? Or disposed to express their views in the ways they did? Do we think that such psychologies are likely to be reliable on matters of how to live? In what ways, if at all, is information about their psychologies relevant to issues of what values to accept and why?
- §17 concludes by reiterating how Nietzsche’s genealogical inquiries fit into his broader philosophical aims:
  - “Beyond Good and Evil.—At least this does not mean ‘Beyond Good and Bad’.” The genealogical inquiry into the (psychological, social, cultural) origins of “good”/“evil” evaluative outlooks and “good”/“bad” evaluative outlooks isn’t mere “hypothesis mongering” (Preface); it’s “preparation” for the “future task of the philosophers: this task understood as the solution of the problem of value”—the solution to the substantive normative question of how to live, and what values and evaluative outlook to accept. How, then, might
the inquiry in the First Essay be in the service of addressing this “question 'what is the value of this or that table of values and 'morals’” (Note)?

• That is, suppose that Nietzsche is right about the psychological facts (e.g., about the psychological origins of evaluative concepts of “good,” “bad,” “evil”; about the conditions under which certain types of individuals in certain circumstances might come to endorse values of “patience,” “humility,” etc.). What would be the normative upshot, if any? How might Nietzsche's psychological investigations bear on the question of what we ought to value? (Would it show we shouldn't value (e.g.) patience, humility, justice, etc.? Would it have implications regarding what values to promote, actions to perform, attitudes to have? Would it bear on what evaluative concepts we should use, or how we should conceptualize our situations, actions, attitudes?)
On the Genealogy of Morality, Second Essay,
“Guilt,’ Bad Conscience,’ and the Like”:
Internalized Cruelty
Nietzsche
Alex Silk

“The second inquiry offers the psychology of the conscience — which is not, as people may believe, ‘the voice of God in man: it is the instinct of cruelty that turns back after it can no longer discharge itself externally. Cruelty is here exposed for the first time as one of the most ancient and basic substrata of culture that simply cannot be imagined away.” — Ecce Homo, “Genealogy of Morals”

In the First Essay we saw Nietzsche’s naturalistic genealogical method at work in explaining the origins of the “good/’evil” moral outlook, which Nietzsche takes to be associated with (e.g.) Christianity: Rather than explaining the rise of this kind of morality fundamentally in terms of some divine source, Nietzsche begins his explanatory project by positing a naturalistic psychological mechanism: ressentiment. In the Second Essay we’ll see this method applied to explaining the moralization of bad conscience: Rather than starting by explaining (bad) conscience as being “the voice of God in man,” Nietzsche posits a naturalistic mechanism to explain it: internalized cruelty.

**Question:** How did human beings come to have a capacity for self-assessment? How did this capacity become moralized in the form of a guilty conscience?

- “How… did… the consciousness of guilt… come into the world?” (II:4)
- **Nietzsche’s answer (roughly):** Human beings have natural aggressive and cruel impulses. These impulses conflict with our needs and impulses for cooperative, communal life. So we must often repress our natural impulses for cruelty. These impulses must be discharged somehow; but since they can’t be expressed outwardly, we internalize them and express them toward ourselves. Specifically, we express them via self-loathing prompted by an awareness of our debts and shortcomings. With the aid of already existing metaphysical and religious concepts, this feeling of debt can become moralized into a feeling of guilt. Bad conscience is an expression of cruelty toward oneself.

- **NB:** on the genealogical method: “The matter is not to be understood in the way our naïve moral and legal genealogists assumed up till now.” Rather, “the major point of historical method just developed” is “that the procedure itself” is “something older, pre-dating” its current use or manifestation; the objects of our inquiry can be conceptualized and “thought of in different ways.” So, in order to understand what roles phenomena such as punishment, bad conscience, guilt play in our individual/social psychologies — what fundamental needs they serve, what instincts they express, etc. — we cannot look simply at their current “meanings”/“purposes”. (II:13)

**Part 1: The origins of conscience**

- **Question:** How did “the animal man” acquire a conscience, or a capacity to remember our promises and debts?

- **Answer:** Conscience arises from the “social straitjacket” of the “morality of custom” and mnemonics of pain.
  - Subquestion: How did we acquire an ability to make a promise?
• Two conditions: (a) regularity of behavior; (b) memory

• Promoting these conditions:
  (a) The “morality of custom.” Custom can make “the animal man” regular in its behavior. This regularity of behavior can then entitle making a promise.
  (b) Mnemonics of pain. Our capacity for memory is something that needs to be explained, since an ability to forget can often lead to “happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, immediacy” (II:1). So the “animal man” needed “the technique of mnemonics” to develop a habit of remembering. Specifically, these habits depended on “blood, torments, and sacrifices,” since “the oldest… psychology on earth” assumed that “‘If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory’” (II:3).
  “With the aid of such [mnemonics of pain], man was eventually able to remember five or six ‘I will not’s,’ in regard to which one had given one’s promise so as to participate in the advantages of society (II:3)

Part 2: The origins of bad conscience

• Question: How did our capacity to remember our promises—conscience—become transformed into a bad conscience, or a capacity to feel critical toward oneself for having these debts?

• Answer: Internalization of cruelty
  1. PSYCHOLOGICAL HYPOTHESIS: The impulse for cruelty is a fundamental human impulse. (see the EH quote above)
     • Cf Mark Twain: “Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it.”
     • Evidence for this psychological hypothesis: It helps explain the pre-moralized practice of punishing debtors. Inflicting cruelty is seen as compensation because it brings pleasure.
     • “Let’s be quite clear about the logic of this whole matter of compensation: it is strange enough. The equivalence is provided by the fact that instead of an advantage directly making up for the wrong (so, instead of compensation in money, land or possessions of any kind), a kind of pleasure is given to the creditor as repayment and compensation, — the pleasure of having the right to exercise power over the powerless without a thought… Compensation is made up of a warrant for and entitlement to cruelty.” (II:5)
       • The “warrant for and entitlement to cruelty” constitutes repayment because it’s “a kind of pleasure” (II:5) to the creditor: “To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more: this is a hard saying but an ancient, mighty, human, all-too-human principle” (II:6).
     • No assumption “about freedom or lack of freedom of the will” (cf. II:14)
     • Punishment was enacted not because the individual was responsible, but rather “out of anger… this anger was held in check and modified by the idea that every injury has its equivalent and can actually be paid back, even if only through the pain of the culprit” (II:4).
     • Contrast guilt (more on which below): debt is moralized, as in the form of guilt, only when the person indebted is seen as free and responsible.
   • Connection to Nietzsche’s evaluative critique? If cruelty is a basic human instinct, and if morality is explicitly opposed to cruelty, could morality still be fundamentally affirming of life and human nature? Could it promote human
psychological stability, unity, and health? Or would it foster a kind of pessimism, an “icy No of disgust with life,” a “shame of all [one’s] instincts,” a “shame at being human” (II:7)? (more on this below)

- NB: Connection to Third Essay: Inflicting cruelty leads to suffering, the topic of the Third Essay: “What really arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering as such but the senselessness of suffering” (II:7).

- More subtle manifestations: “Perhaps I can even be allowed to admit the possibility that pleasure in cruelty does not really need to have died out: perhaps… it needed… some kind of sublimation and subtilization, it had to be transformed into the imaginative and spiritual, and adorned with such inoffensive names that they do not arouse the suspicion of even the most delicate hypocritical conscience (’tragic pity’ is one such name, another is ’les nostalgies de la croix’)” (II:6, 7). Which brings us to…

2. How the instinct for cruelty, and the pre-moralized punishments of debtors, led to bad conscience:

- “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward—this is what I call the internalization of man… Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself… brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward against man himself. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: that is the origin of the ‘bad conscience’” (II:16).
- NB: the “state” is the “blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race” (II:17).

- PSYCHOLOGICAL HYPOTHESIS: repression. Instincts must be expressed somehow or other. When instincts are denied outward expression, they turn inward.

- So, since we aren’t always able or willing to express our instinct for cruelty outwardly, we express it on ourselves. This instinct for cruelty finds a natural outlet as a result of one’s awareness of one’s debts.

- Connection to Nietzsche’s evaluative critique?

- “Punishment tames man… but does not make him ‘better’,—we would be more justified in asserting the opposite” (II:15). Internalized, “thus began the gravest and uncanniest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered, man’s suffering of man, of himself—the result of a forcible surrendering from his animal past…, a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his strength, joy, and terribleness had rested hitherto” (II:16); “existence in general… is left standing as inherently worthless” (II:21).

- But the results of bad conscience aren’t necessarily bad. They’re the basis for culture, for our “inner world,” for regulative ideals against which we compare and potentially better ourselves (II:18). Bad conscience and internalized cruelty have the potential to be exploited for positive ends and expressed/channeled in constructive, healthy ways. (See Part 4 below.)

- As it turns out, however, the ideals resulting initially from bad conscience have been “selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice” (II:18). Bad conscience is thus a “precondition for the value of the unegoistic” (II:18). Ideals of self-denial and self-sacrifice are explained in part by the pleasure taken in self-cruelty. (Correspondingly, we derive particular pleasure in self-cruelty because of a particular attraction to such ideals of self-denial and self-
sacrifice — something that calls for an independent explanation (more on which in the Third Essay).

Part 3: The origins of a guilty conscience

- **Question:** Why did bad conscience become moralized into a feeling of guilt? What explains the moralization of a feeling of debt?
- **Answer:** A specific way of internalizing cruelty: By moralizing our feeling of debt, by conceptualizing our norm-violations as things we're ultimately responsible for, we can inflict more pain on ourselves.
  - Elevating the feeling of debt via religion: Our bad conscience, and disposition for internalizing cruelty takes our (already existing) feeling of debt toward God, and exploits it to inflict greater cruelty on ourselves.
  - “This man of the bad conscience has seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor. Guilt before God: this thought becomes an instrument of torture to him... He apprehends in 'God' the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts; he reinterprets these animal instincts themselves as a form of guilt before God... In this psychical cruelty there resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the will of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for; his will to think himself punished without any possibility of the punishment becoming equal to the guilt...; his will to erect an ideal—that of the 'holy God'—and in the face of it to feel the palpable certainty of his own absolute unworthiness” (II: 20, 22).
  - Religion—or at least ascetic religion—transforms our feeling of debt into a feeling of debt that can’t be repaid. Our religious conceptual schemes can provide a persistent basis for rationalizing punishing/afflicting ourselves (e.g., original sin; redemption of sin through sacrifice, epitomized in the sacrifice of God incarnate in Jesus).

Part 4: Keeping bad conscience “at bay”

- **Question:** How can we keep bad conscience from transforming into guilt, or from leading to attitudes of self-loathing and practices of self-punishment? How might we express an (internalized) instinct for cruelty in a healthier, more psychologically/socially constructive way?
  - If internalized cruelty is a basic human instinct, why doesn't it moralize the feeling of debt and transform it into guilt in all cultures (individuals, classes, psychological types)?
- **Answer:** We may not be able to escape our cruel instincts, and perhaps we can't keep from internalizing them. But we can keep them from expressing themselves destructively in the form of self-loathing and guilt. We can use our instincts for internalized cruelty in the service of positive, life-affirming ends.
  - The Greeks had “bad conscience,” but used their gods to help them avoid expressing it in terms of guilt. (II:23)
  - How did they do this? By setting up an ideal of “noble and autocratic men, in whom the animal in man felt deified” — i.e., by affirming their natural instincts, rather than demonizing them via an ascetic ideal.
• Contrast with “modern man,” who has “an ‘evil eye’ for his natural inclinations, so that they have finally become inseparable from his ‘bad conscience.’” Our ideals “are one and all hostile to life and… slander the world” (II:24).

• Toward a positive evaluative proposal:
  • “As the power and self-confidence of a community grows, its penal law becomes more lenient..., more humane...; finally, the amount of his wealth determines how much injury he can sustain without suffering from it.” The “noblest luxury” is to be able to “[l]et its malefactors go unpunished. ‘What do I care about my parasites’, it could say, ‘let them live and flourish: I am strong enough for all that!’... Justice, which began by saying ‘Everything can be paid off, everything must be paid off’, ends..., like every good thing on earth, by sublimating itself. The self-sublimation of justice: we know what a nice name it gives itself — mercy; it remains, of course, the prerogative of the most powerful man, better still, his way of being beyond the law.” (II:10)

  • Exploiting internalized cruelty in the service of theoretical and practical inquiry? The search for truth “requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service.—So what does it mean to be honest in intellectual matters? That you are strict with your heart..., that you make your conscience from every yes and no!” “The strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the ‘truth’ one could still barely endure” and affirm, “conceiving reality as it is, being strong enough to do so.” (Ecce Homo IV:5, Beyond Good and Evil §39, The Antichrist §50)

  • “An attempt at the reverse [i.e., affirming our natural inclinations] would in itself be possible—but who is strong enough for it?—that is, to wed the bad conscience to all the unnatural inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which runs counter to sense, instinct, nature, animal, in short all ideals hitherto, which are one and all hostile to life and ideals that slander the world... The attainment of this goal would require a different kind of spirit from that likely to appear in this present age: spirits strengthened by war and victory, for whom conquest, adventure, danger, and even pain have become needs... it would require even a kind of sublime wickedness, an ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge that goes with great health; it would require, in brief and alas, precisely this great health!... [T]his Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness—he must come one day...” (II:24)

• NB: It's theism that's seen as nihilistic!??

• Connection to Part 1:
  • Just as (i) humans may co-opt existing material resources in the service of expressing an instinct for cruelty outwardly, and sometimes develop those resources in ever more creative/destructive ways of punishing others (§II:3), so (ii) in some cases humans co-opted existing conceptual resources (e.g. religious concepts, a concept of God) in the service of expressing an instinct for cruelty inwardly, and sometimes further developed those resources in ever more creative/destructive ways of punishing ourselves (e.g. “original sin”).

  • Likewise, positively, just as (i) we can ask how we might instead use/develop material resources in the service of outwardly expressing an instinct for cruelty in a more constructive way, to improve peoples’ circumstances, so (ii) we can ask how we might instead use/develop religious concepts and concepts of ideals in the service of internalizing an instinct for cruelty in a more constructive way, to better and improve ourselves.
On the Genealogy of Morality, Third Essay,
“What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?”:
Meaningless Suffering and Will to Power
Nietzsche
Alex Silk

“The third inquiry offers the answer to the question whence the ascetic ideal, the priests’ ideal, derives its tremendous power although it is the harmful ideal par excellence, a will to the end, an ideal of decadence. Answer: not, as people may believe, because God is at work behind the priests but faute de mieux—because it was the only ideal so far, because it had no rival. ‘For man would rather will even nothingness than not will.’—Above all, a counterideal was lacking—until Zarathustra.” — Ecce Homo, “Genealogy of Morals”

Lingering questions from the first two essays:
- **First Essay**: Why did the “good/’evil’” morality of the oppressed ultimately triumph? Why did the “masters” become taken with the slaves’ evaluative outlook?
- **Second Essay**: Why has the moralization of bad conscience in the form of guilt become so dominant? Why didn’t the Greeks’ way of keeping bad conscience “at bay” have more influence?

Nietzsche will address these questions in addressing the phenomenon that is the primary subject of the Third Essay:
- **Phenomenon**: the rise of the “ascetic ideal”
  - It’s this ideal, Nietzsche claims, that will also help explain the prominence of “good/’evil’” moral outlooks (Essay I), and the prominence of moralizing bad conscience in the form of guilt (Essay II).
- **Recall Nietzsche’s methodological naturalism**:
  - The rise of the ascetic ideal isn’t to be explained, in the first instance, in religious/non-naturalistic terms (e.g., as the “work of God behind the priests”).
  - But it also isn’t to be dismissed as inexplicable or a psychological abnormality — cf. “it is completely inappropriate to count the mere intention to starve out physicality and desire as symptoms of insanity” (III:17).
  - Nietzsche’s question: What basic human needs, drives, etc. does the ascetic ideal speak to that might help explain its attraction to people in general?
- **Psychological mechanism**: the will to power
  - “Every animal... instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend all its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power; every animal abhors, just as instinctively and with a subtlety of discernment that is ‘higher than all reason’, every kind of intrusion or hindrance that obstructs or could obstruct this path to the optimum (I am not speaking of its path to happiness, but its path to power, to action, to the most powerful activity, and in most cases actually its path to unhappiness).” (III:7)
  - IBE-style argument (like previous essays): Positing a basic drive for power (roughly: overcoming resistance) helps explain the prevalence of responding to the “problem of meaningless suffering” by adopting some form of the ascetic ideal.
Will to power is presented as a distinctive psychological mechanism that figures in human motivation. Nietzsche’s thesis is presented as an alternative to claims that people are motivated by a desire for pleasure (psychological hedonism), or a desire for self-preservation.

What makes ascetic ideals so attractive?

Four cases:
- artists (III:2–5)
- philosophers (III:5–10)
- priests (III:10–13, 15)
- “majority of mortals” (III:13–22)

Notice how Nietzsche transitions in the course of the Third Essay from talking about the meaning of “ascetic ideals” (plural) to talking about the meaning of the ascetic ideal (singular). A critical question will be what Nietzsche thinks characterizes this distinctive type of ideal.

- The “ascetic ideal”, in Nietzsche’s sense, isn’t simply an ideal of asceticism, or an ideal of suppressing certain of one’s desires (instincts, impulses). What distinguishes the ascetic ideal is a certain stance toward these desires. The ascetic ideal is characterized by a sort of demonization (skepticism, mistrust, condemnation) of one’s natural instincts, and correspondingly of oneself for having them and occasionally “giving in” to them. One’s natural instincts are regarded as fundamentally problematic, as things one simply ought not have.
- “The idea at issue here is the valuation the ascetic priest places on our life: he juxtaposes it (along with what pertains to it: ‘nature,’ ‘world,’…) with a quite different mode of existence which it opposes and excludes, unless it turn against itself, deny itself… The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds — that we ought to put right” (III:11).

Nietzsche’s ultimate question will be why the ascetic ideal has become so influential for people in general. Why would people be so compelled by an ideal that seems to promote not satisfying one’s desires and enjoins inflicting additional pain and suffering on oneself? What role does it play — what is its function/value/purpose (psychologically, socially, etc.), what basic human needs or problem does it address — that would help explain its “tremendous power” and influence for people across time, place, social status, background, culture?

Artists (III:2–5):
- Artists are “the valets of a morality of philosophy or religion” (III:5). So, to understand their attraction to the ascetic ideal, we must investigate the morality, philosophy, or religion they accept.

Philosophers (III:5–10)
- How would asceticism help promote a philosopher’s way of life?
  - Satisfying one’s desires distracts one from a philosophical or spiritual way of life. Accepting an ascetic ideal can help “put a check on… their unrestrained and irritable pride,” “wanton sensuality,” and “love of luxury and refinement” (III:8).
  - “They are hardly un bribed witnesses and judges of the value of ascetic ideals, these philosophers! …They are thinking of what, to them, is absolutely indispensable: freedom from compulsion, disturbance, noise, business, duties,
worries; clear heads; the dance, bounce and flight of ideas”; “poverty, humility, chastity” serve as “the most proper and natural prerequisites for their best existence and finest productivity” (III:8).

- Case study: Schopenhauer. We can escape desire through calm, disinterested enjoyment of art.
- Their cruelty toward themselves instilled fear in others. This fear led others to be more tolerant of their philosophical way of life. Accepting an ascetic ideal gave them the chance to pursue philosophy.
  - "The ascetic ideal for a long time served the philosopher as a form in which to appear, as a precondition of existence… The peculiar, withdrawn attitude of the philosopher, world-denying, hostile to life, suspicious of the senses, freed from sensuality, which has been maintained down to the most modern times and has become virtually the philosopher's pose par excellence—it is above all a result of the emergency conditions under which philosophy arose and survived at all; for the longest time philosophy would not have been possible at all on earth without ascetic wraps and cloak, without an ascetic self-misunderstanding.” (III:10)
  - "What, then, is the meaning of the ascetic ideal in the case of a philosopher? My answer is—you will have guessed it long ago: the philosopher sees in it an optimum condition for the highest and boldest spirituality and smiles—he does not deny ‘existence,’ he rather affirms his existence and only his existence” (III:7; cf the beginning of §8).
- Nietzsche's main point is independent of his ostensible caricature of the so-called philosophical way of life:
  - Even if Nietzsche is right about the function of the ascetic ideal for certain philosophers, most people aren't philosophers. If most people aren't compelled to pursue the philosopher's way of life, why are they nevertheless so compelled by the ascetic ideal?
  - Upshot (preliminary): If we're to explain the “tremendous power” of the ascetic ideal for people in general, it won't do to explain the ideal's function for any particular subtype of person or way of life.

Priests (III:10–13, 15)

- "priests": Though Nietzsche may focus on the Jewish and early Christian priests as a case study, he's clear that the "priest" is a more general type of person: “he belongs to no one race; …he emerges from every class of society” (III:11).
- As in the case of the philosophers, ascetic ideals made a priestly way of life possible in a society that valued “war, adventure, hunting, dancing, jousting, and everything else that contains strong, free, happy action” (I:7).

- The cases of the philosopher and the priest shows how the will to power—roughly, a drive to overcome resistance—can present itself in diverse, sometimes counterintuitive, ways, depending on the individual's circumstances. It doesn't just seek overt physical domination. It can also express itself in various forms of self-control, even in overt denials of power:
  - The ascetic seeks to “triumph over” himself in an “extremity of power” (Daybreak 113). The priests are accustomed to a feeling of power because they “can control themselves” (Daybreak 65).
  - The “sense of duty, conscience, … self-condemnation” are “disguised forms” of the will to power (Will to Power 774).
• “If we draw up a list of the particular drives and virtues of the philosopher—his drive to doubt, his drive to deny, his drive to prevaricate (his ‘ephlectic’ drive), his drive to analyse, his drive to research, investigate, dare, his drive to compare and counter-balance, his will to neutrality and objectivity…: surely we realize that all these ran counter to the primary demands of morality and conscience for the longest period of time? …As I said, the case is no different with all the other good things we are so proud of nowadays” (III:9). “As knowers, let us not be ungrateful towards such resolute reversals of familiar perspectives and valuations…: to see differently, and to want to see differently to that degree, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future ‘objectivity’—the latter understood not as ‘contemplation without interest’…, but as having in our power the ability to engage and disengage our ‘pros’ and ‘cons’: we can use the difference in perspectives and affective interpretations for knowledge… The more affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the more eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘concept’ of the thing, our ‘objectivity’” (III:12).

• The search for truth “requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service.” “The strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the ‘truth’ one could still barely endure” and affirm, “conceiving reality as it is, being strong enough to do so.” (Ecce Homo IV:5, Beyond Good and Evil §39, The Antichrist §50)

• Even “benefitting… others [is a way] of exercising one’s power upon others” (Gay Science 13): it “[restores] balance in respect of benefits received, a giving in return, a demonstration of our power”; one “claims the right of being able to… dispense honors (Will to Power 775).

• (Recall the ideas from the Second Essay about the possibility of channeling an instinct for cruelty to better ourselves and others; cf. “Let us be careful not to pull gloomy faces as soon as we hear the word ‘torture’” (III:7.).)

• (Q: What is the relation between the will to power, and the instinct for cruelty posited in Essay II? Is one more fundamental than the other? Might positing a basic drive for overcoming resistance help explain the (putatively basic) instinct for cruelty?)

• (Literature shoutout: “This was during the Depression, but there was plenty to eat on Mary Ida’s table for the principal meal of the day, which was served at noon and to which her sweating husband and his helpers were summoned by clanging a big bell. I loved to ring the bell; it made me feel powerful and beneficent” (“Hospitality,” Truman Capote).)

**Question:**

• Explaining the “meaning” (value, function, purpose, role) of the ascetic ideal for the priest gets us closer to explaining its meaning for people generally. After all, many people do look to priests for guidance about how to live and what basic values to accept; and in some cases the priests have literally become the people in a position of social/political power. But this raises the question of why:

• Since the priest gets power by promoting the ascetic ideal to the masses, as their “head” or “shepherd,” in order to explain the power and prosperity of the priest we need to **explain the attraction of the ascetic ideal to people generally** (III:13–22). Why are people generally so compelled by the ideal of the priestly “self-contradictory type” that appears to set itself up “against life” (III:11,13)?
MAIN CLAIM: Adopting the ascetic ideal provides a solution to a general human problem — the problem of “meaningless suffering”.

- “A self-contradiction such as that which seems to occur in the ascetic, 'life against life', … can only be apparent… Allow me to present the real state of affairs in contrast to this: the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life, which uses every means to maintain itself and struggles for its existence; it indicates a partial physiological inhibition and exhaustion against which the deepest instincts of life, which have remained intact, continually struggle with new methods and inventions. The ascetic ideal is one such method: the situation is therefore the precise opposite of what the worshippers of this ideal imagine,—in it and through it, life struggles with death and against death, the ascetic ideal is a trick for the preservation of life. The fact that, as history tells us, this ideal could rule man and become powerful to the extent that it did, especially everywhere where the civilization and taming of man took place, reveals a major fact, the sickness of the type of man who has lived up till now, at least of the tamed man… [T]his ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this negating one,—he actually belongs to the really great conserving and yes-creating forces of life” (III:13). “The meaninglessness of suffering … was the curse that has so far blanketed mankind,—and the ascetic ideal offered man a meaning!” (III:28)

- The general human problem to which the ascetic ideal provides a solution is the “problem of meaningless suffering.” If the severity of this problem is sufficiently threatening, and if it potentially threatens people in general, then explaining how the ascetic ideal provides such an effective solution to this problem can help explain “whence [it]… derives its tremendous power” despite being “the harmful ideal par excellence.”

- In short: Suffering is an inevitable feature of human life. “Meaningless suffering” (in some sense to be explained) would be unbearable. By adopting the ascetic ideal, people can give “meaning” (in some sense to be explained) to their suffering. This can help them cope with their circumstances and make their suffering bearable (perhaps the “maximum feeling of power” they are capable of?).

- Questions to keep in mind: What are the relevant senses of ‘meaning’ here? What would it be for suffering to be “meaningless,” in the relevant sense? Is the problem of meaningless suffering simply a sort of existential problem? Or does it also have more general physiological and psychological underpinnings?

- The argument:
  - Ubiquity of suffering:
    - from others’ cruelty (Essays I and II); from internalized cruelty and bad conscience (Essay II); from “physiological” causes (III:1); from external causes; from needing an answer to “the problem of what he [means],” or of justifying and explaining his existence.
  - Unbearableness of “meaningless suffering”: the build-up of ressentiment
    - Humanity’s ‘problem was not suffering itself, but that there was no answer to the crying question, ‘why do I suffer?’: Man, the bravest of animals and the one most accustomed to suffering, does not repudiate suffering as such; he desires it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a meaning for it, a pur-
pose of suffering. The meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was
the curse that lay over mankind so far” (III:28).
• Pain and suffering can cause a spectrum of negative attitudes about our situa-
tion (anger, frustration, resentment, bitterness, etc.). We need relief; we need
some way of expressing the strong emotions that we feel.
• But because we’re agents we need some way of making sense of what we do;
we need to be able to say why we’re doing what we’re doing. (Contrast: tics.)
So, we can’t just express our negative attitudes in response to suffering in any
old way, or vent on whatever might be available when we feel we need relief.
Hence these attitudes have the potential to build up and fester, leading to
resentment. (Recall Essay I.)
  • “As a rational being, one has to have reasons for one’s For and Against” (D
34). “Most of our general feelings… excite our cause-creating drive: we
want to have a reason for feeling as we do” (TI: VI, 4).
• So, we look for some object as a “pretext” for discharging our resentment—
e.g., perhaps “a guilty culprit who is receptive to distress … upon whom” we
can rationalize “releas[ing] [our] emotions” (III:15).
• “The sufferers … are frighteningly willing and inventive in their pretexts
for painful emotions; they even enjoy being mistrustful and dwelling on
wrongs and imagined slights: they rummage through the bowls of their past
and present for obscure, questionable stories that will allow them to
wallow in tortured suspicion, and intoxicate themselves with their own
poisonous wickedness—they rip open the oldest wounds and make
themselves bleed to death from scars long-since healed, they make evil-
doers out of friend, wife, child and anyone else near to them” (III:15).
• NB: Merely knowing the cause of our suffering isn’t sufficient. As agents,
in general we need be able to rationalize discharging our psychological
energies in particular ways. There needs to be someone/something on
whom we can take ourselves to have reason to vent. (Contrast: knowing
all the naturalistic causes leading to a hurricane that destroys one’s com-
unity and livelihood.)
• But what if, in sufficiently many circumstances, there is no outlet, and no
object which we can take ourselves to have reason to vent on? …
• “Meaningless suffering”: suffering for which there is no (perceived) basis for
legitimizing/rationalizing discharging the resentment and strong emotions
that build up in response to suffering. Persisting without an outlet is psycho-
logically and physiologically unsustainable (recall the appeal to
repression/”internalization” in Essay II).
• Physiological, psychological, intellectual layers of the problem: The
“problem of meaningless suffering,” in Nietzsche’s sense, is not simply a
sort of “existential crisis”. If it was, the extent to which the ascetic ideal is
found compelling for people in general would be insufficiently explained.
The problem is also in part a physiological problem — which isn’t to deny
that the underlying physiological issues may sometimes become ex-
pressed in (quasi-)philosophical reflections on our situation.
• The ascetic ideal as a solution:
  • If humanity’s “problem was … the meaninglessness of suffering” (III:28) in
this sense—i.e., the problem of lacking perceived-as-reasonable grounds for
expressing the resentment that builds up in response to suffering—the re-
response of the ascetic ideal is that it “offered man meaning!” (III:28)—i.e., a
readily “available pretext” (III:15) for doing so: a basis for rationalizing expressing one’s ressentiment on oneself.

- Effectiveness of the ascetic ideal as a response: potential range of methods, diversity of instantiations, and scope of application…

- Key features of positing an ascetic ideal which runs counter to our basic instincts and desires:
  - (i) It is an ideal that we continually violate. Crucially, the responsible party—ourselves—is always available. So, there is always an object at hand on which we can rationalize expressing negative attitudes that build up in response to suffering. (cf. III:15, 20).
  - (ii) It is an ideal which we always fail to meet. Again, the basis for our falling short lies within ourselves. So, there is always a potential object at hand—namely, the relevant natural drives/instincts/desires—which we can take ourselves to have reason to struggle against.

- How would punishing oneself, suppressing one’s natural instincts, etc. help? (see e.g. III:15–20)
  - Recall the instinct for cruelty (Essay II), and the “will to power”—a drive to overcome resistance. Expressing these drives—even if over some other part of ourselves, or by inflicting physical/psychological pain—provides a kind of pleasure or relief.
    - “Fundamentally, it is [an] active force…, which here, internally, … turned backwards, … creates bad conscience for itself, and builds negative ideals, it is that very instinct for freedom (put into my language: the will to power): except that the material on which the formative and rapacious nature of this force vents itself is precisely man himself, his whole animal old self… I do not doubt that we know what kind of pleasure it is which, from the start, the selfless, the self-denying, the self-sacrificing feel: this pleasure belongs to cruelty.” (II:18; cf. III:20).
    - Cf. other “small pleasures,” such as the “pleasure of giving pleasure… The ascetic priest thereby prescribes, when he prescribes ‘love thy neighbour’, what is actually the arousal of the strongest, most life-affirming impulse, albeit in the most cautious dose,—the will to power.” (II:18; cf. III:17)

- The discharging of ressentiment through strong emotions provides relief: “Excess of feeling [is] employed as the most effective means of deadening dull, paralyzing, protracted pain” (III:19–20).

- Assumption: Discharging negative attitudes in these ways (by demonising/denying one’s natural instincts, punishing oneself, expressing strong emotions, etc.; cf. III:19) can sufficiently express enough of the negative attitudes that build up in response to suffering generally. (That is: If we’re to explain the extent of the influence of the ascetic ideal, the ascetic ideal better not necessarily require blaming oneself for every token instance of one’s own or others’ suffering; e.g., thinking that a natural disaster destroyed one’s village because of such-and-such sin that one committed isn’t the norm. Q: how exactly would this work?)

- The ascetic ideal can thus provide a general strategy for discharging attitudes such as ressentiment that build up in response to suffering, a strategy that can apply in diverse circumstances. (You don’t need to think of an ad hoc rationalisation in every case.)
Existing metaphysical and religious concepts can be exploited to provide a framework in terms of which we can make sense of “direct[ing] ressentiment … back upon [ourselves],” and “exploit the bad instincts of all sufferers for the purpose of self-discipline, self-surveillance, and self-overcoming” (III:20, 16). (recall Essay II and the “reinterpretation” of bad conscience as guilt)

Instances of the ascetic ideal may be expressed in religious/metaphysical terms, but they need not be; likewise, the “priest”, who promotes the ascetic ideal, needn’t be a literal priest. Recall that “the ascetic ideal,” in Nietzsche’s sense, is any kind of ideal that demonizes certain of our natural instincts, impulses, desires (cf. III:17). Yet not all of our instincts, etc. are purely “carnal” or “animalistic.” The ascetic ideal can even be manifested in atheistic contexts and the practice of science (cf. III:25)! (Though, as Nietzsche points out, it doesn’t have to be. See III:23–27.)

So, different instantiations of the ascetic ideal may differ in the extent to which they provide an outlet for the amount and diverse types of negative attitudes that build up in response to pain and suffering, and hence may differ in their effectiveness as responses to the “problem of meaningless suffering.” (Recall the potential physiological, psychological, intellectual, existential layers of the problem.)

Pluses and minuses of this response:

- It causes additional suffering; it isn’t a real cure.
  - “Medication’ of this sort, mere affect-medication, cannot possibly yield a real cure of the sick”—“this must constitute our most fundamental objection to priestly medication.” (III:16,17; cf. III:20–21)
  - “[The ascetic priest] brings ointments and balms with him, of course; but first he has to wound so that he can be the doctor; and whilst he soothes the pain caused by the wound, he poisons the wound at the same time.” (III:15)

- But the additional suffering provides an effective, much-needed outlet.
  - “This ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this negating one—he actually belongs to the really great conserving and yes-creating forces of life.” The ascetic priest “defends his sick herd” against “all of which smoulders in the herd itself, … where that most dangerous of blasting and explosive materials, ressentiment, continually piles up. His particular trick, and his prime use, is to detonate this explosive material without blowing up either the herd or the shepherd; if we wanted to sum up the value of the priestly existence in the shortest formula, we would immediately say: the priest is the direction-changer of ressentiment.” The priest’s answer “is bold enough, wrong enough: but at least one thing is achieved by it, the direction of ressentiment is, as I said—changed”—that is, “at least temporarily” (III:13, 15, 17; cf. III:20).
  - “[Any] meaning is better than none at all… In [the ascetic ideal], suffering was interpreted; the tremendous void seemed to have been filled; the door was closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism. This interpretation—there is no doubt of it—brought fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering; it placed all suffering under the perspective of guilt. But all this notwithstanding—man was saved thereby, he possessed a meaning…
—he could now will something; no matter at first to what end, why, with what he willed: *the will itself was saved* (III:28).

**Question:** An alternative ideal?
- "The ascetic ideal expresses a will: where is the opposing will, in which an *opposing ideal* might express itself? (III:23). Recall Essay II: “only... Zarathustra the godless,” “[this redeemer] that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness—*he must come one day.*—” (II:24–25).
- NB: The (near) universality of the “problem of meaningless suffering” and bad conscience helps explain the “triumph” of a “‘good’/’evil’" evaluative outlook: the masters also faced the problem and had (not-yet-moralized) bad conscience as raw material for a “reinterpretation” in the form of guilt.

**Q:** What is the epigram from *Zarathustra* about?
- expressing an attitude toward knowledge and truth that contrasts with the dominant ascetic attitude critiqued in III:23ff?
“Problem of meaningless suffering” overview (see pp. 5–9 of the Essay III handout):
• the problem of legitimising expressing/discharging the negative attitudes (e.g. ressentiment) that build up in response to suffering

1. Human beings generally have negative attitudes in response to pain and suffering.

2. Negative attitudes need to be expressed/discharged somehow or other. (cf. repression)

3. Human beings aren’t always able or willing to express the diversity of negative attitudes that they have in response to different types of pain and suffering.
   a. Not just any way of expressing/discharging negative attitudes/energies counts as satisfying a given drive/attitude.
   b. Human beings need to take themselves to have some reason or other for performing their actions. (They need to be able to answer a question ‘Why are you doing what you’re doing?’)
   c. There are limits to human beings’ capacities for rationalising their behaviour.

4. ⇒ threat of ressentiment

The Ascetic Ideal:
• (not simply an ideal of desire-regulation: requires an attitude of demonising one’s natural instincts (drives, impulses), and a practice of denying them an outlet or punishing oneself for having them)
• The ascetic ideal provides a distinctively effective means of expressing/discharging the negative attitudes that build up in response to suffering.
   i. It provides a general strategy for discharging one’s negative attitudes, which applies in diverse circumstances. (You don’t need to think of an ad hoc rationalisation that’s suitable in every given case.)
   ii. Assumptions:
      a. Discharging negative attitudes by demonising/denying one’s natural instincts (punishing oneself, etc.) counts as sufficiently discharging the negative attitudes that build up in response to suffering generally.
         i. Suppose one has a negative attitude A toward x, where the attitude isn’t expressed at the time. Sometimes it is possible for
at least some of the energies from A to be discharged (satisfied, addressed) by some later act/behaviour A’ even if it’s not the case that A’ is directed toward x. (e.g. an overreaction toward a friend that’s ultimately motivated by pent-up frustration about something totally different; indeed A’ might not be directed toward anything, e.g. a tic)

ii. Sufficiently many cases of exercises of the ascetic ideal are like this. (so, even if one doesn’t think one is to blame for every token instance of one’s suffering)

b. Human beings can take themselves to have reason for demonising/denying their natural instincts (punishing themselves, etc.), and to an extent that sufficiently expresses the negative attitudes that build up in response to suffering.

• Next step: constructing a positive “counterideal” that addresses this problem, but without demonising our natural instincts/drives/attitudes or ourselves for having them; a task of developing an ideal—and attitude/stance toward suffering—that integrates the plurality of (often conflicting) drives into a structured hierarchy, affirming and channelling them in a constructive, healthy way (cf. the end of Essay II)