

On the Genealogy of Morals

Notes by @adi

Essay I

Though he was virtually unread during his productive years, Nietzsche somehow maintained confidence in the readers he would have in the future. "Some men are born posthumously", he wrote in his preface to The Antichrist. In his case, that was absolutely true. His influence on twentieth-century writers and thinkers was immeasurable. And today the reverberations of his writings surround us like the cosmic residue from the Big Bang—imperceptible, perhaps, but ubiquitous.

—Introductory note in my text

What made it necessary for Nietzsche to write this book?

These thoughts were first given a raw expression 10 years ago in HA2H, but Nietzsche says that he was "haunted" by the problem of the origin of Evil even at the tender age of 13. He first attributed it to God, but credits his psychological discrimination to teach him to separate theology from it and ask, rather, under what conditions Man invented these values for himself.

His close friend Paul Ree's 1877 book on the same subject further drove him to write this because of how diametrically opposed it was to his own notions. With this book, Nietzsche's concern isn't a *theory* of morality, but the *value* of morality.

#1-3: The errors of the historians

The English psychologists have a gloomy tendency to reduce grand notions of morality to an undignified blind orchestra. Nietzsche disagrees, and would like to believe that this gloomy tendency to give up something grand for something undignified is itself something grand.

For them, 'Good' was reduced to a fourfold construction: Originally that which was *useful*, subsequently that which was altruistic based on our *forgetting* what it was originally for and falling into an *erroneous habit*.

For Nietzsche, the error in this genealogy lies in its origin: The baptism of 'Good' with meaning is due not to those towards whom 'Goodness' was *shown*, but rather, those who felt *themselves* to be the 'Goodness' in the society—which is to say, the aristocrats. And so, it had nothing to do with utility (what did *they* care for it?). The antithesis of good and bad is born with the "coming of association" of such a dominant race with a "meaner" race.

Another error lies in the inconceivability of "forgetting" the fact that good originally meant utility (if anything, this is something we keep getting reminded about)—this act of forgetting being part of the typical historian's explanation.

The novel point is that the dominance of the master race must naturally extend over to *language* as well; language itself is turned by them into another way to express their dominance/power. The conventional interpretation of morality given by historians is a result of the *decay* of aristocratic "values".

#4-5: Correcting the errors

An inquiry into their etymology in the German language further indicates the fact that 'Good' finds its origins in aristocracy and 'Bad' finds its in plebeianism. But the success of this etymological analysis goes beyond just German culture.

In this context, each culture has a *characteristic idiosyncrasy*.

In Iranian and Slav cultures, the nobility called itself the 'powerful'; and so, in their language, the word 'good' etymologically resembles 'power'. In Greece, the nobility called itself the 'truthful'; and so, in the Greek language, the word 'good', suggestively, etymologically resembles 'courage'. With the Gaelic language of the Celts, the same evolution is followed with the words 'blonde/white'. In the Latin of ancient Rome, it was 'warlike'. Anyway, the point being made is clear.

#6-7: The priestly cast

Until now, we were discussing how morality originated when the *knightly*-aristocratic caste was the highest one. But there is another type of caste whose hegemony our gaze now turns towards: The *priestly*-aristocratic cast.

In this case, "good" and "bad" find their origin in a very crude, coarse and 'physical' notion of "clean/pure" and "unclean/impure" respectively. (We may say that this is *their* 'characteristic idiosyncrasy'.) But in this case, the intensification and the sharpening of the originating values' opposition is a "hundred times more dangerous".

This is because the priestly cast is the *weakest*; while the knightly cast forms its antithesis by being the *strongest*. It is this *weakness* that gives their mode of valuation a *diseased taint*, teaches them to *hate*, lets their soul attain *depths* and become *evil*. Nietzsche goes on to describe what it is that he considers to be diseased in their language: The physiologically detached metaphysics, etc.

It is *weakness* that makes man, for the first time, an *interesting animal*.

#8-10: The slave revolt

With this, we have established the notions of "master-morality" and "slave-morality". Nietzsche's next move is to delineate how the latter emerged out of and destroyed the former.

He says that Christian love is a farce which grew out of priestly hate and impotence, and the Jesus of Nazareth is a symbol owes its creation to the cleverness of the latter. With it, the Jews inverted the knightly-aristocratic moral values in use until then ("the transvaluation of all values"), and put forward the contrary equation "suffering, weakness, lowliness, etc. = good". The symbol of the "God on the cross" was the ultimate "bait"; for even in siding with Jesus against the Jews, one adopts the Judeo-Christian moral code.

In the midst of all this, a section interpolated in the middle (#9) seems to indicate that Nietzsche believes the proper answer to the question of whether this transvaluation *should* have happened/be accelerated/slowed (and he thinks the Church *does* slow it down) is: Silence. (For note the suggestive appeal to an objective standard of morals inherent to the question.)

While master-morality is defined by a "Yes" to itself/what is inside itself, slave-morality is defined by a "No" to what is different from itself/outside itself. Thus, the action of the latter "is fundamentally a reaction" (stemming from *ressentiment*, that combination of the desire for revenge and impotence).

Nietzsche goes into a more elaborate explanation of the differences between the two moralities by way of contrasting the functioning of the following terms in the language of each:

1. Contempt (casual for the master, vindictive for the slave)
2. Happiness (active for the master, passive for the slave)
3. Prudence (a luxury for the master, a necessity of the slave)
4. Resentment (without venom/with love for the master, conceiving of evil for the slave).

#11-13: Nihilism & evil

Nietzsche makes a distinction here between 'bad' and 'evil'. 'Bad' was an extra nuance for the knightly-aristocrats, something unthinkingly called the downtrodden; 'evil' was a fundamental notion for the priestly-aristocrat's system of value, born from a "burning hatred".

He goes on to bemoan the nihilistic consequences of this transvaluation of values. He sees this "tool of civilization" as a deadening of the senses, a decline in humanity, the loss of hope and the will to be man; he says that we *suffer* from man, and declares that one would much rather prefer to have been living in fear mixed with admiration towards this blonde beast, than to live amidst today's mediocre and tame man who sees in himself a pinnacle.

This is paradoxical: How can he indicate a preference to master-morality over slave-morality if he calls himself an immoralist? A provisional answer is that he doesn't really *advocate* for master-morality, either. He gives a clearly horrific description of this master's proclivities, and likely considers it to be another system of ignorance which must be overcome to reach Zarathustra. He just thinks that nihilism is, in many senses, even worse than that monstrous cruelty of the master.

In #13, he makes the very important move of sublimating various two-tier systems. To begin with, the psychological is 'sublimated' into the physiological. Further, the two-tier system of 'free will' (the thought and the act, connected by the decision) is replaced by *one* Will; this Will is turned into a determinant in Nietzsche's system by making the phenomena a *necessary* expression of it. The two-tier system, he says finally, is a trick of the priest's language.

#14-17: Manufacturing ideals

Much polemic very wow. He seems to indicate again that a kind of metaphysics is a *necessary* component of the priestly mode of evaluation.

A long passage from a Christian text is cited to show that these dudes were really just putting up a farce with their love, and hatred was what lay underneath. Some more historical contextualization with regards to the whole master-slave tussle (the former was revived with the Renaissance but quickly pushed back down with the Reformation). Judaea has won a decisive victory against Rome.

It is notable—and further evidence for an authentic immoralism from him—that he thinks (#16) that the most decisive mark of a *higher nature* is not just adopting master-morality, but rather, to *be*, as an individual, the battleground for these two systems of values.

He ends with a note saying "Y'all should really look this value-systems shit up".

Essay II

#1-3: Promises, responsibility, conscience

“An animal that can promise” is almost a contradiction in terms for Nietzsche. Here’s why:

As an active ‘power’, forgetfulness is a sign of robust health in the animal, because of the relief it offers from the noise of the world and the room it makes for the new and noble. And the power of memory is in opposition to this.

The memory of the ‘will’ is deployed to keep forgetfulness in check when ‘promises’ have to be made. But the making of a promise is a remarkably sophisticated act:

1. One must be able to think causally (one must become *disciplined*)
2. One must know how to keep intact the ‘chain’ of the will by eliminating all the unnecessary phenomena between the promise and the act (one must become *necessitated*)
3. One must be able to anticipate a future for oneself (one must become *calculable*).

The ability to do these three was a hard-earned privilege which culminated in the ‘sovereign individual’: Autonomous and “super-moral”, one who is ‘competent’ to promise. This person, having mastered themselves, would have *earned the privilege of responsibility* (for their will is *truly* free).

The dominant instinct in this individual, which makes them as strong as they are, is what Nietzsche calls *conscience*. But how was such an individual—in other words, how was conscience—produced? (While conscience is a ripe fruit, Nietzsche says that it is also a *late* fruit.)

The answer is simple: Pain. “When man thinks it necessary to make for himself a memory, he never accomplishes it without blood, tortures and sacrifice.” Only through pain is an impression fixed upon the ‘incarnate forgetfulness’ of the animal. We go through various examples of this. “How much blood is at the foundation of all “good things!””

An afternote: Nietzsche’s take on responsibility here seems to be in stark contrast with his attempts to get rid of it in *Twilight of the Idols*. I suspect the difference is that, in the latter, “responsibility” was taken as a *reactive* emotion—invented by the priests for the sake of attributing guilt to the *other*—while here, it’s taken as an *active* emotion: An instinct the sovereign individual feels burst out from within.

#4-6: The origin of punishment

Two suggestions:

1. The moral idea of “ought” developed from the material idea of “owe” (the German words for the two—guilt and debt—is the same)
2. Punishment as moral justice developed from punishment as base retaliation.

Punishment on the basis of responsibility—attributed to the evil-doer via contrafactuals and should-haves—arrived onto the scene long after punishment on the basis of a blind fury which simply wishes to make the evil-doer suffer.

This relationship between injury and pain is grounded on the material relationship between creditor and ower. However, in this case, rather than any material compensation, the creditor is given a “sensation of satisfaction” (the intensity of which is inversely proportional to their social status): Because “the infliction of suffering [even more than the sight of suffering] produces the highest degree of happiness...*cruelty* constituted the great joy and delight of ancient man.”

Somewhere in the middle of #6, Nietzsche says, “These observations are purely conjectural; for, apart from the painful nature of the task, it is hard to plumb such profound depths.” It looks like the whole affair is *supposed* to diverge from “reality” in some sense. But what of substance are we supposed to take away from an unverified conjecture?

Another thing which caught my eye is Nietzsche saying that higher civilization is *spiritualizing* cruelty. This might cause some confusion, because “spiritualization of the passions” indicated the ‘correct’ way to deal with the passions in *Twilight of the Idols*. However, it sounds like, here, spiritualization is meant in a different sense—that which Christianity does; that of *deification*.

#7-10: Pessimism and community

Such horrific ideas may only serve to embolden the arguments of the “pessimists”, with their disgust towards the purported ugliness of life. However, this pessimistic outlook itself is a product of two things:

1. A revulsion of all instincts: This is a product of moralization; in the “evil age” of the human race, cruelty and suffering (or, rather, their infliction) were seen as an argument *for* existence.
2. A revulsion towards *senseless* suffering: Gods were invented to dispel this feeling of senselessness associated with suffering: An all-seeing eye taking account of all of it, a friend of spectacles of cruelty. “Free will”, by producing an endless stream of novel plots, thereby functions as something justifying the inexhaustibility of the interest of the gods in humanity. This reason sufficed to make the philosophers, “friends of the gods”, deny a deterministic world.

Nietzsche conjectures that pain may not have had the same “effect” now as it did back then (upon the inflictor or the inflicted?). This would suggest that cruelty and the craving for it would have transformed its mode of presentation in such a way that it obscures and hide its own “true” nature (this true nature given here by its origin).

Perhaps preoccupations related to buying and selling constituted *thinking* and the *meaning of man* (as the animal which “measures”) itself. Every civilization hitherto has manifested a trace of this relationship. As long as one respects it, one gets the privileges of being in a community; if one doesn’t, one gets punished—and at this stage, punishments simply mimicked the normal treatment of the hated enemy conquered in war. (And the real insult isn’t the debt he left unpaid but in the fact that he broke a promise.)

However, as a community grows in power, focus on the individual decreases. The bareness of the old punishments is transformed into the idea of *recompensation* for the injury, thereby separating the offender from his act. And at the peak of this power would be a society so comfortable in itself that it allows wrong-doers to just go scot-free. “The self-destruction of justice.”

#11-13: The evolution of punishment

Some attempted to trace the origin of justice down to *ressentiment*. Reactive emotions can be biologically meritorious, but of even higher biological value are the active emotions. “The *last* sphere conquered by the spirit of justice is the spirit of the feeling of reaction...being just is always a *positive* state.”

So, the story may run as follows:

1. We have the active, aggressive man in whose blind fury justice originates
2. We then have the reactive, resentful man who “recognizes nothing but the standpoint of the injured party” (and is actually the farthest from justice)
3. We have finally the “truly” just man, powerful enough to let the offenders go scot-free, who has created *laws* in order to control the resentful man with a more impersonal valuation (and also ends up constraining the active man)

A legal organization must be conceived of as a weapon in a fight between complexes of power. “Right” and “Wrong” make themselves manifest after the *valuation*, not the *violation*, and there is nothing “essential” about them.

The creation of the law (and the reification of punishment) was an act of *overpowering*. The historic evolution of anything is non-linear, consisting of successive acts of subjugation by the greater power, a process of true activity. Its final utility and its origin are thus worlds apart. Spencer’s idea of life as being defined by adaptation via reactivity has got it entirely backwards. In certain cases, even degeneration may correspond to genuine progress (for example, the slave revolt, perhaps). “Only that which has no history can be defined.”

The (material) procedure of punishment is the relatively permanent element. Its meanings, however, arrive on the scene after this; and they keep changing as punishment keeps getting re-interpreted:

1. Rendering the criminal harmless
2. Compensation to the victim for the injury
3. Isolation of that which disturbs the equilibrium
4. Inspiring fear of those in the authority
5. Compensation to the criminal for his advantages
6. Eliminating an element of decay
7. A festival of humiliating the subdued enemy
8. A mnemonic for the criminal’s memory
9. Protecting the evil-doer from excess revenge by exacting a stipulated fee
10. A compromise with the “natural” phenomenon of revenge
11. A declaration of war against an enemy of peace and the community

And even this list is incomplete—surely it is evidently absurd now to suppose punishment has some “essential” utility. People think nowadays that exciting remorse, guilt and bad conscience in the criminal are the essential utilities of punishment; but what it actually achieves is just the opposite effect: A sharpening of the consciousness of alienation. How could the criminal find his deeds intrinsically reprehensible when he sees the same acts practices under the name of justice and the like?

#15-17: The origin of bad conscience

To say it again: The *real* effect of punishment is more cunning, cautious, and suspicious; and as such, to make man quite the contrary of “better”. The punished does not think: “I ought not to have done this”, but rather, “Here is something which went wrong contrary to my anticipation”.

Nietzsche puts forward his own hypothesis concerning the origin of bad conscience: When social organizations developed to protect itself against the old instincts of freedom from the animalistic man of war, the instincts of the latter were constrained and unable to vent; consequently, they “turned inwards”: The “internalization” of man, this growth being what gave rise to his “soul” (the *deepening* of man, that which first made him an *interesting* animal). And when, due to this caging of

his *instinct of freedom*, he ill-treated himself, “bad conscience” was invented. This instinct, which otherwise is let loose on external objects, is now forced to vent itself on man himself.

This invention was no gradual organic evolution but a “jump...an inevitable fate”. And the people who enforced this cage upon man and molded him were merely other animalistic men of war, albeit ones with more overpowering active emotions. They constituted the oldest “State”; the myth of the “social contract” is replaced by the imposition of the will of a tyrannical majority on a minority. The story of master v/s slave.

#18-21: Beauty and guilt

The contradiction in finding the values of altruism and self-sacrifice beautiful is grounded on the contradiction of bad conscience itself: Both types are constituted by delight in the infliction of suffering upon the self. “This wholly *active* bad conscience...perhaps has really been the first to give birth to beauty at all.”

The creditor-debtor relationship was, before the development of bad conscience, interpreted as the relationship between a tribe and its ancestors. As the tribe increased in power, so did the debt (paid in blood, of course) felt towards the ancestors, and so did the fearsomeness of these ancestors. And perhaps in the most powerful races, these ancestors were promoted to the status of gods.

Those subjugated by these powerful races mimicked this sentiment of duty and thereby transformed it into *guilt*, with the Christian God becoming the creditor.

The present decline in the belief in a Christian God, far from indicating a lessening of guilt, is, rather, due to the internalization of these notions of guilt and duty. The violence of this internalization renders redemption incomprehensible (original sin and eternal punishment), and guilt (and the like) now turn from the debtor to the *creditor*: The result being God on a cross.

#22-25: God; conclusion

“[The] man of bad conscience exploited the religious hypothesis so as to carry his martyrdom to the ghastliest pitch of agonized intensity.” The *negating of the animal instincts* becomes what he owes to God...“without the punishment ever being able to balance the guilt”.

However, the idea of God need not *necessarily* function in this manner. The Greek Gods deified the animal and enabled the Greeks to continue enjoying their freedom of instincts. Evil resulted from *folly*, not sin; and the evil-doer took upon themselves guilt, rather than punishment. The gods were made responsible for the associated “brain disturbance” in the man of nobility.

Soon, there will come a man of the future who will redeem reality by destroying the rot of resentment and internalization, who will reinstate our natural proclivities in their proper heights, as that which affirm life, who will once again *free the will*.

Questions:

1. Given the irreverent disregard for “hard evidence” backing the claims made throughout the essay, what does Nietzsche *really* want to get at here?
2. How do we reconcile the “ideal” of responsibility praised here with his attempts to get rid of the notion altogether in *Twilight of the Idols*?

3. "Revenge" as the origin of punishment doesn't answer the question of *why* revenge offers the injured satisfaction; but is there nothing more to be said about the fact that inflicting suffering "produces the highest degree of happiness"? (Why should this be so?)

4. Pain does not have the same "effect": What does this mean?

5. What is it, really, that makes one interpretation more "powerful" than another? And what does it mean to "measure" power?

6. Isn't it slightly implausible to say that beauty didn't even *exist* before bad conscience originated?

7. Why is guilt "nobler" than punishment, especially given that it was the former which originated from the weaker races?

Essay III

What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?

1. The artist (2-6)

"Nothing, or too much."

The investigation is taken up with a case study of Wagner. Near the end of his career, Wagner performed a "turnabout" and praised chastity in an *ascetic* sense; while previously, Wagner would have praised chastity and sensuality both, and find in transcendence their antithesis/in their struggle a charm of life.

There is an unbridgeable gap between what an art expresses (what is felt to be "real") and what the artist is (what is felt to be "unreal"). The artist is merely the "presupposition" of the art.

Velleity is the version of *ressentiment* that strikes the artist, and it refers to a *reactive* emotion towards the art which makes the artist wish to bridge the gap; the wish to negate the condition of active artistry (which is the unreality of their inner life).

Wagner's Parsifal was, instead of him laughing from the heights at his own unreality, an expression of this slave-like quality. The 'true' origins of his art—his attempts at actuality—lie in the philosophy of Schopenhauer.

Nietzsche generalizes by claiming that velleity is essential to an artist; and due to this velleity, no artist is independent enough (thus, the meaning of the ideals is "nothing") for us to be interested in their change of valuations; they always lean on a prior philosophy (thus, the meaning of the ideals is "so much that it is as good as nothing at all").

What did Schopenhauer have to say about aesthetics, anyway?

It was an advancement on Kant. Kant himself tried to capture art from the point of view of the *spectator*; he gave importance to its impersonality and universality and defined the beautiful as "That which pleases without interesting". But this betrays a severe lack of knowledge about the spectator; Stendhal, who was one, called the beautiful "A promise of happiness", which already defies the "disinterestedness" in Kant's definition.

Schopenhauer interpreted 'without interest' in "the most personal fashion", i.e., as 'without *sexual* interest', and praises the aesthetic state thus. In this, Schopenhauer failed to understand Kant; he treated the pleasure of beauty with the "strongest and most personal interest of all, that of the victim of torture who escapes from his torture" (for Schopenhauer, the torture of sensuality).

2. The philosopher (7-10)

"A kind of 'flair' and instinct for the conditions most favorable to advanced intellectualism."

The conclusion above indicates that, for the philosopher, ascetic ideals represent an escape from a torture. This is because every creature seeks to optimize the favorable conditions for itself to express its power, and for the philosopher (claims Nietzsche), these conditions happen to be well-represented in the ascetic ideal—ones conducive to intellectuality—independence, away from family life and society, sensuality, and marriage^{cope}. And by being that which affirms their existence, the ascetic ideals cannot be unbiasedly valued by the philosophers.

The three primary characteristics of the ascetic ideal are: Humility, poverty, chastity. The intellect is the “dominant instinct” in the philosopher; thus, by its demand, these three qualities, as those which allow the intellect to have its best existence (and *not* as virtues), are expressed.

1. Poverty: The philosopher is a shadow who shuns “brilliant, noisy” things such as fame, princes and women.
2. Humility: The philosopher enjoys darkness, obscurity, and a dependence analogous to that of a mother’s, and dislikes enmity/friendship, as well as ambitious luxuries such as martyring.
3. Chastity: “Of what use is posterity to him whose soul is in the world?” Chastity is not a result of the hatred of the flesh, but, rather, of sensuality being overpowered (or transfigured from sexual excitement) by the dominant intellect.

Some traits which philosophers honor:

1. Being able to speak without speaking aloud
2. Thinking as a thinker and not as a speaker
3. Being able to speak softly and letting oneself be awaited

The ascetic ideals were a helpful backdrop which philosophy *needed* in order to get started, for philosophical tendencies contradict ancient morality and conscience; “all good things were once bad things”. (Two more examples of this: Modern hubris and modern marriage.) In that age, contemplation was considered evil; using the ascetic ideals, the first philosophers were forced to disguise themselves as a pre-existing type of religious man in order to survive by inspiring fear; they had to *believe* in these ideals in order to survive (for which they would self-flagellate).

Philosophy could exist only with the *ascetic priest* beneath it. And even today, is the philosopher in the world *possible*?

3. The ascetic priest (11-14)

“An attempt to pose as ‘too good’ for this world, a holy form of debauchery, their chief weapon in the battle with lingering pain and ennui.”

It is with the ascetic priest that our original problem becomes “vitally serious”; for they fundamentally depend on these ideals for existence, and for their right to existence.

The ascetic priest expresses his valuation of life—disgust, etc.—by placing the reality of life in relation to an abstract maze, and subsequently baptizing the latter as “really” real; by virtue of this maze, they denounce well-being and joy, and praise decay and misfortune.

The pervasiveness of the ascetic priest suggests that hostility to life is itself essential to life. This will, being a contradiction in terms (apparently, at least), vents itself by finding error in whatever the life instincts fix with greatest certainty. (An example: Vedanta Philosophy calls matter, pain, etc. illusions.) This is a “schism which likes to turn reason against reason”; the intellect comprehending so much that things become incomprehensible.

Two kinds of ‘objectivity’ are introduced and contrasted.

1. Priestly objectivity: Contemplation without interest. A pure, singular, willess eye, abstract and directionless.

2. Nietzschean objectivity: The ability to have the pros and cons of contemplation in one's *power*. A conglomeration of perspectives corresponding to the interplay of the wills associated with our mode of viewing.

"Life turned against life": Here is the contradiction of the ascetic, which we need to resolve.

In spite of appearances, even the ascetic ideal, in its own way, affirms and preserves life; in fact, it does so *by its decadence*. It is the very power with which it wishes for a higher life which binds him firmly to earthly life. "His 'nay', which he utters to life, brings to light as though by magic an abundance of graceful 'yeas'."

This sickly type (the slave) is a great danger to the stronger type. Their danger comes not from their fear of man but from their *nausea* of man, culminating in the will for nothingness: Nihilism.

Questions:

Artists find necessary philosophers find necessary priests. Page from *Ecce Homo*.

1. Nietzsche's aesthetics have taken a sharp turn, from treating art as a magnificent synthesis of Apollo-Dionysius to calling it the imitation of a pre-existing philosophy. Is the generalization from Wagner to all artists really warranted? Is artistry inherently incapable of independence? Does this tell us anything about Nietzsche himself (as a poet, etc. ("Wagner's lackey"))?
2. "Philosophers can't marry": Is this still true today, or just a romanticized view? Are philosophers *possible*? Or are there just no philosophers today?
3. How can philosophy be a "good thing", if it be grounded on these nihilistic ideals?
4. What does Nietzsche mean by 'objectivity'? What is 'objective' in his definition of it?
5. At what level does 'sickliness' first manifest? Individual? (The prose is as if in individualistic terms.) Cultural? (The sickness of an age...) Sub-individual? (Each person is a conglomeration of warring wills.) If all of the above, how?
6. In the first essay, we saw slave-morality devaluated because it denied life. Today, we see that actually, in its own perverse way, it ultimately affirms life; this seems to mean that there is no sensible hierarchy of life-affirmation Nietzsche can ultimately construct. Why, then, is the nihilistic affirmation of life 'worse' than master-morality? How does Nietzsche make this 'transcendent' critique (as if standing 'outside' of these valuations)?

#15-16: Priest as doctor

The strong cannot be reduced to being doctors of the weak; these doctors themselves must be sick. It is as this sick doctor of the sick that the ascetic priest comes into his own as a necessary historical force.

The priest wants to maintain this relationship of dependence the weak will have with him. To achieve this, he does the following:

1. Create an adversary (achieved by scorning the healthy)
2. Temporarily heal the wound/alleviate suffering/deaden the pain (achieved by diverting the course of resentment (towards *themselves*) through the venting of emotion towards made-up causes)
3. Poison the wound he heals (through his life-denial)

The essence of the priest lies in the diverting of resentment. The "medicine" administered to effect this was the invention of *sin*; a notion which exploited the sufferer's "bad instincts". At the end of

the day, all this moralizing merely amounts to an *interpretation* on a physiological discomfort; and no healing in the *real* physiological sense is achieved at all.

#17-18: Medicines of the priest (Innocent)

The biggest problem with the priestly medication is that it combats only the effect of the discomfort (the suffering), not its cause.

The main weapon used to fight this “black melancholy” is the suggestion of renunciation, bringing consciousness down to its bare minimum: “No more wishes, no more wants; shun everything which produces emotion”, etc., a kind of hibernation Nietzsche calls “hypnotism”. Salvation is seen as the final goal of hypnotic peace.

The problems this hypnotism brings notwithstanding, it *does*, to a limited extent, provide genuine relief. However, this salvation was always considered unattainable by the religions which spoke of it (Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity).

This desire for anesthesia is, at the end of the day, the same criticism of life Epicurus expressed; it is the supreme good, as held by the sufferers. “Nothingness in all pessimistic religions is called God.”

Another priestly weapon is what Nietzsche calls “mechanical activity”; the “blessing of work”; absorption in a routine makes us forget our pain.

Another weapon is “the ordaining of a little joy”; people are told to be joyous when producing joy. This propensity of the weak to form communities is a stimulation and satisfaction of their will to power; for the strong, it is satisfied in isolation.

#19-22: Medicines of the priest (Guilty)

The methods discussed till now, Nietzsche calls “innocent”; the more *interesting* ones, the *guilty* ones, all amount to the *production of emotional excess*.

He goes on a brief tirade about honest and dishonest lies before picking up the thread again.

These excesses, after undergoing a religious interpretation, “chase away” the “protracted melancholy”. The molding and exploitation of *guilt* by the priest was how this was achieved; the interpretation of bad-conscience as sin and the understanding of suffering as a state of punishment made life “exciting” again.

Its success in conquering the great depression notwithstanding, is all this of any real “use”? For it has simultaneously destroyed the health of the patient in its own ways (in the *real* physiological sense).

Old Testament>New Testament

#23-28: Science and truth

The ascetic ideal is will which strives for complete power and dominion over every aspect of life. Now, it has been suggested that modern science, with the absence of positing God and another world, represents the opposition ideal/will to this. Nietzsche disagrees, and claims that the antagonism between science and the ascetic ideal is only superficial.

Science, he says, appears as either the latest version of the ascetic ideal, or the anxiety of having no ideal. The hard work of science is paradigmatically nothing but an anesthetic for the sufferer.

These so-called “anti-idealists” have, in Nietzsche’s eyes, a belief *too* vehement in their distance from the ascetic ideal (which they purport to achieve by virtue of their ephectic bent); the intensity of this belief makes us suspicious and makes them stand too close to the ascetic ideals themselves (thereby becoming its latest manifestation). The essence of this being their [fanatic] belief in *truth*: Belief in the intrinsic, metaphysical value of truth.

This background philosophy and faith (which amounts to nothing but the assertion of a different world) is a necessary presupposition for science to feel it has the “right” to existence; science needs a power to create its values beforehand. The modality by which it “repudiates the senses” is by its “renunciation of interpretation”.

“The will to truth needs a critique...the value of truth is to be called in question.”

Interpolated here is the suggestion of how art, which is based on the will to *deception*, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than science. This seems to clash jarringly with how, in the beginning of this very essay, Nietzsche spoke about how art needs a philosophy to frame it beforehand.

Science merely builds an outwork disfiguring the basic appearance of ascetism and ascetic medication—the need for a “transcendental solution [for the] riddle of existence” is maintained (God is done away with, but we now worship our very query as God). The peculiarity of its outwork consists in its elevation of man’s self-contempt, by making his life dissolve into a certain insignificance, making existence random and superfluous. Responsibility for suffering is shifted from “desiring” to “knowing”.

Christian morality, ascetic ideals and the will to truth, as attempts for mastery over life, “go to ruin by reason of themselves”; when taken to their logical ends, the question finally concerns their own value, and they finally draw the strongest conclusion against themselves.

In the final analysis, the ascetic ideal has meant so much to mankind because it was an attempt to give meaning to one’s suffering; and it matters not if this meaning was grounded in life-denial: “Man will wish Nothingness rather than not wish at all.”

Questions:

1. What does “healing in the physiological sense” mean? Does Nietzsche literally mean illnesses of the body, or is the claim more abstract?
2. What makes hypnotism etc. “innocent” and emotional excess “guilty”?
3. Isn’t an “optimistic religion” a contradiction in terms? If not, what would it look like?
4. Is science even possible without a will to truth backing it?
5. Is art independent or not?