

Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morality

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Preface: Sections 3, 5-7 & The First Treatise

Taken as fact: Values are created by people from various motives.

- This includes the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the dominant values in our culture.

Question: “Under what conditions did man invent those value judgments good and evil? (3)

- The question(s) lead to another question: are these values worth having?
 - “We need a critique of *moral* values, for once the value of these values must itself be called into question” (5).

General Methodology

- 1) Look to see how these values came about.
 - a. Critiquing the values requires knowing how they came about.
 - b. Utilize, for instance, the etymology of evaluative terms (e.g. good, bad, noble, base, etc.).
- 2) Offer an account that is psychologically plausible/persuasive.

Noble Evaluation: The Birth of Good and Bad (10).

- Good = strong, powerful, wealthy, healthy, happy, skilled, talented, beautiful, lucky, brave
 - ‘Good’ is the result of a spontaneous self-affirmation; ‘bad’ is simply whatever is not good – it is ‘what is not us’.
 - What is required for its preservation: war, adventure, the hunt, dance, athletic contests, and in general, that which requires free, cheerful-hearted activity (16).
- Bad = common, low, weak, poor, pathetic, sad, miserable, ugly, cowardly, luckless, the suffering
- Etymological evidence (evidence relating to the origin of words and their development) (12).

Note: There is no evaluation of character here; one is not responsible for being bad; one is just unlucky.

The Revaluation of Values: The Birth of Good and Evil

The priests (the Jews) are:

- a. Powerless
- b. Jealous, envious, angry, filled with hate and *ressentiment*

“The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of beings denied the true reaction, that of the deed, who recover their losses only through an imaginary revenge” (19).

- The old ‘good’ is turned ‘evil’, and the old ‘bad’ is now ‘good’ (16-17).
- Noble morality grows out of a triumphant yes-saying to oneself, from the outset slave morality says ‘no’ to an ‘outside,’ to a ‘different,’ to a ‘not-self’: and *this* ‘no’ is its creative deed” (19).
- Feeling oneself to be happy vs. lying oneself into it (20).
- The weak interpret their weakness as virtue (26, 27).
- Christianity grows out of Judaism. It is its “completion.”

For the *ressentiment* of the noble human being, when it appears in him, runs its course and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, therefore it does not *poison*.” Forgetting as a kind of *strength* (21).

Note: There is an evaluation of character with this sort of evaluation. One is not merely bad but *evil*; one is responsible for being the sort of person one is.

What Nietzsche wants: Beyond Good and Evil, *not* beyond good and bad.

What we have so far is an analysis of good, bad, and evil. We have heard nothing of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. Hence the second treatise...

The Second Treatise

“Its beginning, like the beginning of everything great on earth, was thoroughly and prolongedly drenched in blood” (41).

The Development of Man

(a) Flighty, forgetful creature → (b) creature capable of remembering and becoming prudent → (c) capable of being in debt and feeling indebted → (d) creature capable of feeling guilt

As for (a) → (b)

Question: How does one impress something onto this partly dull, partly scattered momentary understanding, so that it remains present? That is, how does one create a memory?

Answer: One burns something in so that it remains in one’s memory: only what does not cease *to give pain* remains in one’s memory” (37).

Brutal punishments are given for offenses to ensure that people follow the law; it instills fear.

- Punishment was not originally about giving the offender the pain he has earned *because* he could have acted otherwise; it was not because one held him responsible for the deed. Rather, as parents even today punish their children, from anger over an injury suffered, which is vented on the agent of the injury.
- Submitting to punishment: “something has gone wrong here,” not “I should not have done that.”
- Punishment teaches one to be more prudent; it lengthens the memory and one proceeds afterward more cautiously, more mistrustfully, more secretively...Punishment *tames* man, but it does not make him ‘better’” (56).
- Punishment does not arouse feelings of guilt. Instead it hardens and makes cold the victim; it sharpens the feeling of alienation and strengthens the power of resistance (54).

As for (b) → (c)

The creditor/debtor relationship

The debtor, to ensure his creditor that he will pay him back in some form, pledges something else he “possesses,” e.g. his body, his freedom, his life. The creditor could subject the debtor to pain.

Question: But why should this count as payment?

Answer: The creditor gets “the feeling of satisfaction that comes from being permitted to vent his power without a second thought on one who is powerless...the enjoyment of doing violence.” Making suffer *feels good*. (38-9).

Evidence: Punishments were festive occasions (public hangings), the Coliseum, Bull-fighting; all illustrate the having of an aggressive instinct, and the joy found in being and feeling superior.

The creditor/debtor relationship as applied to the society

Individual debtor : individual creditor :: individual citizen : community

- When one breaks the law one is reminded just how many advantages one previously received.
 - With an increase in power and a consciousness of that power, one cares little about punishment; this is mercy.

As for (c) → (d)

The Origins of the Bad Conscience – Man enters Society

The turning in of instincts no longer allowed to be expressed, the “internalizing” of man. “Hostility, cruelty, pleasure in persecution, in assault, in change, in destruction—all of that turning itself against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of ‘bad conscience’” (57).

Note: we do not yet have the bad conscience, but only its “origin”. Further development is necessary...

“Thus first grows in man that which he later calls his ‘soul’” (57).

- “On the other hand, with the appearance on earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, something so new, deep, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, *and full of future* had come into being that the appearance of the earth was thereby essentially changed” (57).
- The virtues of selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice; they bring pleasure. And the pleasure is had because one is delighting in being cruel; that it is cruelty to oneself makes no difference. This is the true origin of the “moral value” of the unegoistic (59).

But we don't have guilt or the bad conscience yet!

- The idea of being in debt, and the feeling of being indebted, must first be taken to an extreme.
- We combine the extreme feeling of debt and, in order to satisfy the need to be cruel, become cruel to ourselves for being in that extreme debt.
- So, how does an extreme form of debt get created?

The Invention of God(s)

Reverence and gratitude for one's ancestors → gods → God.

- The community is indebted to them and needs to keep them happy lest they punish the community. Thus, God is borne of *fear* of evil for not paying a debt.

The notion of being indebted, the cruelty one needs to inflict on oneself, the idea of a god (or gods) whom one owes, all combine and we have feelings of guilt.

- Christianity's stroke of genius: man is guilty due to original sin; he is in debt for the bad that he has done to the creditor, God. And then God sacrifices himself to redeem the sins of man. And now we have infinite debt to the creditor! A debt that can never be paid off (not in this life time)
- One now sees one's instincts as guilt before God; We have learned to feeling guilty for what we have done (sinning as thinking “bad” thoughts) and ashamed for what one is. **(63)**.

Why is the Judeo/Christian Ideal Adopted?

What arouses indignation is not suffering itself but the senselessness of suffering; the Christians have given it a meaning.

- The feelings of sin, are feelings of sickness, of misery, from not being able to vent one's natural, aggressive instincts. The idea of guilt before god allows one to give meaning to this suffering (63-4).
- The ascetic ideal uses this technique: a few ideas are to be made indelible, omni-present, unforgettable, “fixed,” for the sake of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system (38). (Section 22).

But Is There Progress to be Made?

“There are *more noble* ways of making use of the fabrication of gods than for this self-crucifixion and self-defilement of man.” Look at the Greek gods, for instance.

The Feeling of Justice Is Not Grounded in the Reactive Feelings (*contra* Mill)

Some think we ought go ground the sense of justice in the reactive feelings, in *ressentiment*, in the desire for revenge **(48-9)**.

Everywhere justice is practiced and upheld one sees a stronger power seeking means to put an end to the senseless raging of *ressentiment* among weaker parties...” **(49)**.

- The most decisive thing the highest power does is establish *law*.

Freud, Civilization and its Discontents

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55-70.

Religious claim: Love all of mankind; Love thy neighbor as thyself. (56-57).

Question: What motivates this claim?

Answer:

- a) Those tired of unrequited love invest themselves in loving others.
- b) People encourage it because it promotes the unity of the community, which is faced with the prospect of disintegration.
 - a. The principle combats smaller cliques that oppose the welfare of the community as a whole, *e.g.* the family, romantic relationships.
 - b. The principle combats the aggressive instincts with which we are endowed.

Objections to the principle:

- i. That sort of love, which does not discriminate, forfeits a part of its own value, by doing an injustice to its object" (57).
- ii. Not all men are worthy of love (57, 66-7).
- iii. It denies, and so cannot come to terms with, the fact that we are, in part, *aggressive* animals, and we want to express our aggressive instincts (68-9).
- iv. Obeying it creates unhappiness – as much unhappiness as aggression causes – because so many people will not obey it; one gets taken advantage of easily.