



Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was one of the nineteenth century's most significant philosophers, whose ideas had an important influence upon Western society. He was born in eastern Germany, the son of a Protestant minister. He studied classics at the Universities of Bonn and Leipzig, and in 1869 became a professor of classics at the University of Basel, in Switzerland. Although he became a Swiss citizen, and in later years had no love for the German Empire, he nevertheless served as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. He published his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in 1872. Like most of the rest of his published work during his life, it was badly received.

In 1879, suffering from poor health, Nietzsche resigned his position, and devoted himself to his writing. Over the next decade he wrote a series of important works of philosophy, including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–84) and *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887). In 1889 he lost his sanity, probably the result of a long-standing syphilitic infection. He lived eleven years more, but never recovered from his illness.

Beyond Good and Evil, excerpted here, was Nietzsche's attempt to systematize his philosophy. The current selection concerns his views of modern society and democracy.

Inasmuch as at all times, as long as there have been human beings, there have also been herds of men (clans, communities, tribes, peoples, states, churches) and always a great many people who obeyed, compared with the small number of those commanding—considering them, that nothing has been exercised and cultivated better and longer among men so far than obedience—it may fairly be assumed that the need for it is now innate in the average man, as a kind of *formal conscience* that commands: "thou shalt unconditionally do something; unconditionally not do something else," in short, "thou shalt." This need seeks to satisfy itself and to fill its form with some content. According to its strength, impatience, and tension it seizes upon things as a rude appetite, rather indiscriminate, and accepts whatever is shouted into its ears by someone who issues commands (parents, teachers, laws, class prejudices, public opinions).

The strange limits of human development, the way it hesitates, takes so long, often turns back, and moves in circles, is due to the fact that the herd instinct of obedience is inherited best, and at the expense of the art of commanding. If we imagined this instinct progressing for once to its ultimate excesses, then those who command and are independent would eventually be lacking altogether; or they would secretly suffer from a bad conscience and would find it necessary to deceive themselves before they could command (as if they, too, merely obeyed). This state is actually encountered in Europe today: I call it the moral hypocrisy of those commanding. They know no other way to protect themselves against their bad conscience than to pose as the executors of more ancient or higher commands (of ancestors, the constitution,

only permissible kind of man, and glorifies his attributes, which make him tame, easy to get along with, and useful to the herd, as if they were the truly human virtues, namely, public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, and pity. In those cases, however, where one considers leaders and bellwethers indispensable, people today make one attempt after another to add together clever herd men by way of replacing commanders: all parliamentary constitutions, for example, have this origin. Nevertheless, the appearance of one who commands unconditionally strikes these herd-animal Europeans as an immense comfort and salvation from a gradually intolerable pressure, as was last attested in a major way by the effect of Napoleon's appearance. The history of Napoleon's reception is almost the history of the higher happiness attained by this whole century in its most valuable human beings and moments.

In an age of disintegration that mixes races indiscriminately, human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest. Such human beings of late cultures and refracted lights will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they are should come to an end. Happiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian) medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting, of not being disturbed, of satiety, of finally attained unity, as a "sabbath of sabbaths,"

in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too—then those magical, incomprehensible, and unflattering ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar (to whose company I should like to add that *first* European after my taste, the Hohenstauben Frederick II), and among artists perhaps Leonard Da Vinci. They appear in precisely the same ages when that weaker type with its desire for rest comes to the fore: both types belong together and owe their origin to the same causes.

201

As long as the utility reigning in moral value judgments is solely the utility of the herd, as long as one considers only the preservation of the community, and immorality is sought exactly and exclusively in what seems dangerous to the survival of the community—there can be no morality of "neighbor love." Supposing that even there was a constant little exercise of consideration, pity, fairness, mildness, reciprocity of assistance; supposing that even in that state of society all those drives are active that later receive the honorary designation of "virtues" and eventually almost coincide with the concept of "morality"—in that period they do not yet at all belong in the realm of moral valuations; they are still *extra-moral*. An act of pity, for example, was not considered either good or bad, moral or immoral, in the best period of the Romans; and even when it was praised, such praise was perfectly compatible with a kind of disgruntled disdain as soon as it was juxtaposed with an action that served the welfare of the whole, of the *res publica*. In the last analysis, "love of the neighbor" is

strong and dangerous drives, like an enterprising spirit, foolhardiness, voraciousness, craftiness, rapacity, and the lust to rule, which had so far not merely been honored insofar as they were socially useful—under different names, to be sure, from those chosen here—but had to be trained and cultivated to make them great (because one constantly needed them in view of the dangers to the whole community, against the enemies of the community), are now experienced as doubly lacking, and, step upon step, they are branded as immoral and abandoned to slander.

Now the opposite drives and inclinations receive moral honors; step upon step, the herd instinct draws its conclusions. How much or how little is dangerous to the community, dangerous to equality, in an opinion, in a state or affect, in a will, in a talent—that now constitutes the moral perspective: here, too, fear is again the mother of morals.

The highest and strongest drives, when they break out passionately and drive the individual far above the average and the flat of the herd conscience, wreck the self-confidence of the community, its faith in itself, and it is as if its spine snapped. Hence just these drives are branded and slandered most. High and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called *evil*; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors. Eventually, under very peaceful conditions, the opportunity and necessity for educating one's feeling to severity and hardness is lacking more and more; and every severity, even in justice, begins to disturb the conscience; any high

those who harm it, criminals, and does this quite seriously and honestly. Punishing somehow seems unfair to it, and it is certain that imagining "punishment" and "being supposed to punish" hurts it, arouses fear in it. "Is it not enough to render him *undangerous*?" Why still punish? Punishing itself is terrible. With this question, herd morality, the morality of timidity, draws its ultimate consequence. Supposing that one could altogether abolish danger, the reason for fear, this morality would be abolished, too: *no* *plus*: it would no longer be needed, it would no longer *consider itself* necessary.

Whoever examines the conscience of the European today will have to pull the same imperative out of a thousand moral folds, and hideouts—the imperative of herd timidity: "we want that some day there should be *nothing any more to be afraid of!*" Throughout Europe, the will and way to this day is now called "progress."

202

Let us immediately say once more what we have already said a hundred times for today's ears resist such truths—*our* truths. We know well enough how insulting it sounds when anybody counts man, unadorned and without metaphor, among the animals; but it will be charged against us as almost a *guilt* that precisely for the men of "modern ideas" we constantly employ such expressions as "herd," "herd instincts," and so forth. What can be done about it? We cannot do anything else; for here exactly lies our novel insight. We have found that in all major moral judgments Europe is now of one mind, including even the countries dominated by the influence of Europe: plainly, one now *braves* its

itself with its praises and reproaches, calling it good, that is the instinct of the herd animal man, which has scored a breakthrough and attained prevalence and predominance, over other instincts—and this development is continuing in accordance with the growing physiological approximation and assimilation which it is the symptom. *Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality*—in other words, as we understand it merely one type of human morality, beside which, before which, and after which many other types of, above all *higher* moralities are or ought to be, possible. But this morality resists such a "possibility," such an "ought" with all its power: it says stubbornly and inexorably, "I am morality itself and nothing besides is morality." Indeed, with the help of a religion which indulged and flattered the most sublime herd animals desires, we have reached the point where we find even in political and social institutions an ever more visible expression of their morality: the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement.

But there are indications that its tempo is still much too slow and sleepy for the more impatient, for the sick, the sufferers of the instinct mentioned: witness the ever-increasing howling of the anarchist dogs who are baring their fangs more and more obviously and roam through the alleys of European culture. They seem opposites of the peacefully indistinct democrats and ideologists of revolution, and even more so of the delishious philosophers and brotherhood enthusiasts who call themselves socialists and want a "free society"; but in fact they are at one with the lot in their thorough and instinctive hostility to every other form of society except that of the *autonomous* herd (even to the point of *resisting* its

(which means in the last analysis, *every right* for once all are equal nobody needs "rights" any more). They are at one in their mistrust of punitive justice (as if it were a violation of those who are weaker, a wrong against the *necessary* consequence of all previous society). But they are also at one in the religion of pity, in feeling with all who feel, live, and suffer (down to the animal, up to "God"—the excess of a "pity with God" belongs in a democratic age). They are at one, the lot of them, in the cry and the impatience of pity, in their deadly hatred of suffering generally, in their almost feminine inability to remain spectators, to let someone suffer. They are at one in their involuntary plunge into gloom and unmanly tenderness under whose spell Europe seems threatened by a new Buddhism. They are at one in their faith in the morality of *stared* pity, as if that were morality in itself, being the height, the *attained* height of man, the sole hope of the future, the consolation of present man, the great absolution from all former guilt. They are at one, the lot of them, in their faith in the community as the *savior*, in short, in the herd in "themselves"—

203

We have a different faith: to us the democratic movement is not only a form of the decay of political organization but a form of the decay, namely the diminution, of man, making him mediocre and lowering his value. Where, then, must we reach with our hopes?

Toward *new philosophers*: there is no choice; toward spirits strong and original enough to pro-

far been called "history"—the nonsense of the "greatest number" is merely its ultimate form: a some time new types of philosophers and commanders will be necessary for that, and whatever has existed on earth of concealed, terrible, and benevolent spirits, will look pale and dwarfed by comparison. It is the image of such leaders that *we envisage*: may I say this out loud, you free spirits! The conditions that one would have party to create and partly to exploit for their genesis; the probable ways and tests that would enable a soul to grow to such a height and force that it would feel the *compulsion* for such tasks; a revaluation of values under whose new pressure and hammer conscience would be steeled; a heart turned to bronze, in order to endure the weight of such responsibility; on the other hand, the necessity of such leaders, the frightening danger that they might fail to appear—that they might turn out badly or degenerate—these are *our* real worries and gloom—do you know that, you free spirits—these are the heavy distant thoughts and storm that pass over the sky of *our* life.

There are few pains as sore as once having seen, guessed, felt how an extraordinary human being strayed from his path and degenerated. But anyone who has the rare eye for the overall danger that "man" himself *degenerates*; anyone who, like us, has recognized the monstrous forlornity that has so far had its way and play regarding the future of man—a game in which no hand, and not even a finger, of God took part a player; anyone who fathoms the calamity that lies concealed in the absurd, guiltlessness and blind confidence of "modern ideas" and ever

202

Part V The Age of Reform

painful memories what wretched things have so far usually broken a being of the highest rank that was in the process of becoming, so that it broke, sank, and became contemptible.

The *overall degeneration of man* down to what today appears to the socialist dolls and flatheads as their "man of the future"—as their ideal—this degeneration and diminution of

man into the perfect herd-animal (or, as they say to the man of the "free society"), this animalization of man into the dwarf-animal of equal rights and claims, is *possible*; there is no doubt of it. Anyone who has once thought through this possibility to the end knows one kind of nausea that other men don't know—but perhaps also a *new task*—

QUESTIONS

1. What is the "herd," what does it believe?
2. When Nietzsche talks about "the good" what does he mean? Is it a good thing?
3. What is the role of a hero like Napoleon in Nietzsche's philosophy?
4. What are the "new philosophers"? How do they differ from the "old philosophers"?
5. Few thinkers had as great an impact upon the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Nietzsche. Why do you think he was so popular?