

Nietzsche's Moral Immoralism

Gregory Kimbrell

Friedrich Nietzsche is a philosopher who, over the past century, has been accused by many critics of not being a “legitimate” philosopher. A typical claim that serves as the basis for this accusation is that Nietzsche offers no *positive* philosophy. Nietzsche is famed for his so-called “immoralism,” his attack on Christianity and Christian morality, but it is often believed that he *does nothing but attack* – that is, he never goes beyond the merely negative moment of his attack by offering a replacement morality or ethic by which human beings can live.¹ However, to claim that Nietzsche offers nothing positive, that Nietzsche is not in any sense a moral philosopher, is to ignore the true importance of one the central elements in Nietzsche’s writings: the group he calls “the good Europeans.” As I will argue in this essay, Nietzsche himself belongs to the good Europeans, and this group is in possession of a positive moral project for the protection and development of Western culture. In this way, Nietzsche’s immoralism turns out to be a *morally*-motivated project, as Nietzsche suggests in the preface to *Daybreak*: “in this book faith in morality is withdrawn – but why? *Out of morality!*”²

To begin an investigation of the good Europeans, one should start with the obvious question – “What is a good European?” – though the answer itself is in no way obvious. The name “good Europeans” suggests a specific group or category of people: “good” appears to indicate that the group’s members follow a particular ethic or morality, and the word “European” suggests that they come from a particular background. Beyond this, however, the name alone cannot reveal to us the nature of this group. What morality or ethic do the good

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Europeans follow, and from what background do they actually come? Here we must turn to Nietzsche's writings for answers. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche presents his lengthiest, most thorough depiction of the good Europeans:

We who are homeless. – Among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honorable sense: it is to them that I especially commend my secret wisdom and *gay scienza* [gay science]...We children of the future, how *could* we be at home in this today? We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home in this fragile, broken time of transition; as for its "realities," we do not believe that they will *last*...We "conserve" nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods; we are not by any means "liberal"; we do not work for "progress"...we count ourselves among conquerors; we think about the necessity for new orders, also for a new slavery – for every strengthening and enhancement of the human type also involves a new kind of enslavement...We who are homeless are too manifold and mixed racially in our descent, being "modern men," and consequently do not feel tempted to participate in the mendacious racial self-admiration and racial indecency that parades in Germany today as a sign of a German way of thinkingWe are, in one word – and let this be our word of honor – *good Europeans*, the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit. As such, we have also outgrown Christianity and are averse to it – precisely because we have grown out of it, because our ancestors were Christians who in their Christianity were uncompromisingly upright: for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions and position, blood and fatherland. We – do the same. For what? For our unbelief? For every kind of unbelief? No, you know better than that, friends! The hidden Yes in you is stronger than all Nos and Maybes that afflict you and your age like a disease; and when you have to embark on the sea, you immigrants, you, too, are compelled to this by – a *faith!*³

There are a number of curious elements to be found here. Aside from the fact that the book in which this passage appears is called *The Gay Science*, what exactly is the “gaya scienza” of which Nietzsche speaks in the opening sentence? In what way are the good Europeans “conquerors?” What is this “enslavement?” What is this “faith” that compels the good Europeans? Nietzsche’s depiction of the good Europeans seems to generate more questions than it could possibly answer, though we can make at least one assertion which seems fully justified: Nietzsche associates himself with the good Europeans. He proudly uses the pronoun “we” to include himself among the good Europeans and to separate himself from nationalism and racism in Germany, as he constantly does in his writings, and he also speaks of an “aversion” to Christianity, fully in keeping with his immoralism. While this is significant information, it in itself is not a substantial enough clue to the nature of the good Europeans, to the characteristics they possess. We need a fuller, clearer account of the good Europeans, yet Nietzsche offers no such explicit account in his writings. Therefore, we must find some context in which to place the good Europeans, some way of comparing them to other groups of people so that we can better understand their characteristics. The best place to seek this context is Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, for even though it does not deal with the good Europeans directly, it does contain Nietzsche’s most sustained examination of numerous other groups. The *Genealogy* presents a kind of history of the moral world, from a hypothetical past to the actual present, and shows us where to place the good Europeans in Nietzsche’s picture.

However, *The Genealogy of Morals* is a book that presents a number of perils to Nietzsche critics and scholars. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche discusses a wide variety of groups such as “the nobles,” “the slaves,” “the strong,” “the weak,” “the healthy,” “the sick,” and “the free spirits.” Some of these groups can be seen as roughly equivalent: for instance, Nietzsche describes the healthy as being both strong and noble and the sick as being weak.⁴ However, the *Genealogy* consists of three separate essays which place these groups in different contexts. It is not always appropriate to assume that because certain groups are described in the same or similar terms, these groups are absolutely equivalent – i.e., that because these groups have formal similarities,

the content of the features they share must be the same. We must fully attend to the settings in which Nietzsche's groups appear and attribute to them features according and appropriate to their contexts. To understand these contexts, we require a brief summary of the *Genealogy*; after our summary, we can return to our investigation of the good Europeans.

On the Genealogy of Morals

In the first of the *Genealogy's* three essays, Nietzsche presents a kind of Hobbesian "state of nature" account of morality in which all morality is reducible to a power struggle. He describes the hypothetical origins of the oppositions "good and bad" and "good and evil" and, in doing so, provides us with portraits of two main character groups: the nobles and the slaves. According to Nietzsche, "the judgement 'good' did *not* originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown." That is, the judgement "good" was not developed by people in order to describe the actions of their benefactors. "Rather," Nietzsche says, "it was 'the good' themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebian,"⁵ and simultaneously the terms "'common,' 'plebian,' 'low' [were]... transformed into the concept 'bad.'"⁶ This conception of "good and bad" is not really a moral designation and refers, instead, to power. The nobles were originally those who possessed power, specifically power over other people and things in the external world, whereas the slaves were simply those who lacked this power and were therefore deemed by the nobles as being of less worth and as having a lower social status.⁷ This is to say that value originated in power. Unlike the slaves, the nobles were in a position to name people, things and actions "good" or "bad" because they had the power to conquer, and this very act of naming created value and was itself an act of power and conquering. Everything which the nobles conquered was subjugated and given the value "bad" while the nobles reserved for themselves the highest value "good."⁸

Unlike "good and bad," the opposition "good and evil" was created by the slaves themselves. Because they lacked the power of the nobles, the slaves came to hate the nobles and desired to take revenge on

them, but because they lacked precisely the nobles' power, they did not have the power necessary to overthrow the nobles and take their desired revenge. For this reason, the slaves can be described as "impotent," and "because of their impotence...in them hatred [grew]...to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred."⁹ However, the slaves also hated *their own impotence*. Here, the slaves made a discovery: they could turn inward and seek to subjugate their own thoughts. Whereas the power of the nobles was power over the *external* world, the power which the slaves discovered was power over the *internal*, i.e., the psychological, realm.¹⁰

By gaining power in the psychological realm, the slaves realized that they were able to achieve a different sort of revenge against the nobles: they could take revenge *on the noble values of good and bad*. The slaves could not advance in the noble value system because they lacked the power to conquer others and were thus unable to be anything but "bad." Therefore, the slaves "were ultimately satisfied with nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies' values, that is to say, an act of the *most spiritual revenge*." If the slaves could not overthrow the nobles themselves by a physical act, they could at least overthrow the nobles' value system by a psychological act. They realized that the nobles simply declared that what they conquered was bad and that they as conquerors were good, so the slaves mimicked the nobles' act of valuation and declared themselves to be good. In the noble value system, the value "good" was bestowed by the nobles upon their own power, independence, selfishness and straightforwardness, and the value "bad" was bestowed upon the slaves' lack of power, lack of independence and inability to be selfish and straightforward. The slaves, however, used their cleverness to assert that their own apparent weaknesses are "good," whereas the characteristics of the nobles are "evil." The slaves declared that "the wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good" and that "the powerful and noble...are on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity."¹¹ Here, the non-moral opposition "good and bad" was transformed into the moral opposition "good and evil," and the nobles became the anti-ideal of everything the slaves affirmed.

It is important to see that in a strange way,¹² the slaves are the victors in this first essay of the *Genealogy*. While the nobles were wholly occupied in conquering the external world, the slaves turned inward, and in their need for the development of cleverness and the revaluation of noble values, their inner selves became available to them as objects for inspection, cultivation, and of course, subjugation. As Nietzsche says, “While the noble man lives in trust and openness with himself...the [slave]...is neither upright nor naive nor honest and straightforward with himself....[H]is spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors....A race of such men...is bound to become eventually *cleverer* than any noble race.”¹³ This development of cleverness is crucial in the history of the West. By turning inward, the slaves discovered the realm of self-consciousness, and as they learned about themselves through self-consciousness, the slaves also learned how to think, to deliberate, to plan, to be clever and cunning. All of Western philosophy as well as the dominant Western religion, Christianity, are founded upon and made possible by thought and the thinking self and thus owe their development to the slaves’ having turned inward and having developed cleverness as a tool for achieving power. Yet, as much as the nobles’ marauding use of power disturbs him, Nietzsche is worried by the elevation of the slaves’ cleverness over the nobles’ straightforwardness. A similar concern appears again in the next section of the *Genealogy*.¹⁴

In the second essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche presents another account of morality, this time a predominantly psychological account of the origins of guilt and what he calls “the bad conscience.” At the same time, he describes two character groups: the strong and the weak. “It was in...the sphere of legal obligations,” Nietzsche claims, “...that the moral conceptual world of ‘guilt,’ ‘conscience,’ ‘duty,’ ‘sacredness of duty’ had its origin.” By “sphere of legal obligations,” Nietzsche refers to the socio-political realm.¹⁵ “It was here [in this realm],” Nietzsche says, “that *promises* were made; it was here that a memory had to be *made* for those who promised.” That is, it was here that humankind first needed a way of making people accountable for their actions. Buyers, sellers, all members of society required a means of ensuring that their debts be paid, that they not be overcharged, that they not be betrayed, and in general that they not come to harm at the

hands of others. “[T]he debtor,” Nietzsche says, “made a contract with the creditor” “[t]o inspire trust in his promise to repay, to provide a guarantee of the seriousness and sanctity of his promise, to impress repayment as a duty, an obligation upon his own conscience.”¹⁶ Guilt, duty, and conscience were thus all originally non-moral, legal terms: guilt was legal debt; duty was the duty to uphold the legal system; and conscience was a mechanism for preventing infractions against the legal system.

Guilt and conscience became moral concepts only in the hands of the weak. The weak may best be characterized in contradistinction to the strong. The strong are those who possess self-mastery; what this means will become clear momentarily. Nietzsche claims that the strong are people who have a powerful “instinct for freedom” or “will to power.” That is, they are beings who constantly seek to establish, preserve and make known their own independence in the world, and for this they must overcome obstacles that stand in their way. This ability to overcome obstacles in order to establish, preserve and make known their independence is made possible by the strong’s being in a straightforward relationship with themselves, i.e., with their psychological material. In affirming their independence, the strong affirm themselves as they exist and do not attempt to refashion themselves in a new way. That is, in overcoming external obstacles, they adapt the world to themselves as they exist rather than adapt themselves to the world as it exists. This affirmation of one’s self as one exists is self-mastery and is also the strength that gives the strong their name.¹⁷

The weak lack the strength and independence of self-mastery. Unlike the self of a strong person, the self of a weak person is “at odds with itself.”¹⁸ The weak find the world full of insurmountable obstacles; they cannot adapt the world to themselves. They turn away from the world and seek mental independence by overcoming psychological obstacles.¹⁹ Their instinct for freedom turns inward; “this instinct for freedom pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what the *bad conscience* [the original moral form of conscience] is in its beginnings.”²⁰ When the weak meet with obstacles and fail to achieve independence, they feel guilt, for they have failed

to realize themselves as they exist in the world. The bad conscience is a way of dealing with this guilt. Nietzsche describes the bad conscience as a “will to self-maltreatment” in which one who has failed to realize oneself as independent in the world renounces the world and attempts to gain and maintain independence within one’s own mind.²¹ One achieves this independence through continually denying oneself worldly pleasures or anything else which might draw one’s focus away from one’s mind and back to the world. Furthermore, the feeling of independence and power within oneself is so pleasurable that the weak aim to develop this system of world-renunciation to a greater extent. In order to most powerfully stimulate their bad consciences, i.e., in order to best motivate themselves to renounce the world and thus gain inner independence and power, the weak transform guilt into a moral concept by considering their personal failings to be irredeemable failings before God: they claim to be afflicted with ineradicable original sin against the dictates of God. The “man of the bad conscience...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” which, along with the concept of original sin, necessitates his entering into an unending process of self-chastisement and the pursuit of inner independence.²²

Like the slaves in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, the weak emerge from the second essay as the source of an important development in Western civilization. With the appearance of the bad conscience and moral guilt, we see, for the first time, the division between the physical and mental worlds, between body and mind. Because of their self-mastery and success at becoming and being independent in the world, the strong see the world as an extension of themselves. That is, in adapting the world to themselves as they exist, they find that the world is completely compatible with themselves, so there is no reason for them to see the world as something set over and beyond themselves. On the other hand, the weak see the world in precisely this way, as something impossible to shape. The weak’s perception of the world divides them from the world and forces them inward. Here we find the origins of all dualistic thought, philosophy and religion in the West. This is thus the birthplace of such things as metaphysics and

Christianity, the Western institutions which Nietzsche so frequently attacks in his writings, but these are the very things that have made Nietzsche and contemporary Westerners possible: as Nietzsche says, "We modern men are the heirs of the conscience-vivisection and self-torture [i.e., bad conscience] of millennia." Yet, as in the first essay, Nietzsche sees the total overpowering of straightforwardness by cleverness as disturbing. We as Westerners often turn to the tactics of repression in dealing with our desires and emotions rather than affirm ourselves as we exist. Nietzsche says, "Man has all too long had an 'evil eye' for his natural inclinations, so that they have finally become inseparable from his 'bad conscience.' An attempt at the reverse would *in itself* be possible – but who is strong enough for it?" Just as the mentality of the slave has fully permeated Western culture, so has the bad conscience of the weak become a mainstay of the West, but Nietzsche believes that this is not entirely a positive thing.²³ In the last section of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche's concerns grow even stronger.

In the third and final essay of the *Genealogy*, we find an analysis of the development of the ascetic ideal, and we meet four new groups: the sick, the healthy, the ascetic priests and the free spirits. Asceticism as such is the denial of certain pleasures or the release of certain emotions; the ascetic *ideal* is the fanatical pursuit, the worship, the deification of asceticism in which one devotes one's life to ascetic practice. Such an ideal appears to be a denial of the richness of life in all its varied pleasures and emotions. Furthermore, it seems to be a denial of life itself: to continually deny oneself the satisfaction or pursuit of desires and emotions, one must wholly withdraw from the everyday flow of life in which such desires and emotions are stimulated, and one must aim for some as yet unrealized state, a state other than that of present life, in which these desires and emotions are not a problem. However, the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche explains, is actually "an artifice for the *preservation* of life" that "*springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life.*" That is, when one finds desires and emotions that stand in opposition to certain norms in society or morality, one could attempt to satisfy these desires and emotions regardless, but one would thereby face resistance from society or morality and would become frustrated. Eventually, one might fall into a despairing belief in the futility of one's existence. However, when faced with

the opposition of one's own desires and emotions against social and moral norms, one could also pursue the elimination of one's desires and emotions in order to overcome the opposition and to affirm social and moral norms and values. Here, the ascetic denial of life preserves stability and value in one's life.²⁴

Those who require the ascetic ideal in order to continue living life Nietzsche calls "the sick." The priests – Nietzsche speaks of specifically the Christian priests – are famous for their ascetic practices and for the preaching of such practices; these priests are the sickest of all. They practice extreme asceticism and claim that self-denial is the route to holiness, but of course, because asceticism preserves life, "this ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *denier* – precisely he is among the greatest *conserving*...forces of life."²⁵

Those who do not require the ascetic ideal in order to live are called "the healthy." Unlike the sick, the healthy do not see desire and emotion as problematic. Perhaps this is because they do not rely on social and moral norms for their values.²⁶

The great problem with the ascetic ideal is that it can *infect* the healthy – though not in the way we might at first imagine. The healthy are able to seek the satisfaction or release of their desires and emotions without facing the opposition of their own values, so they are able to be happy. The sick, however, do find their desires and emotions in opposition to social and moral norms, so they must repress their desires and emotions into nonexistence, i.e., to eliminate them. While they may overcome this opposition, the sick are unsatisfied in terms of their desires and emotions and are thus unhappy, but this unhappiness is all they know how to make of their lives. They envy the happy state of the healthy, and for this reason, they grow to hate the healthy. They possess what Nietzsche calls "*ressentiment*," literally a resentment of the good fortune and satisfaction of others. We might guess that the sick then seek to revenge themselves against the healthy by attempting to poison "*the consciences* of the fortunate [i.e., the healthy] with their own misery...so that one day the fortunate [begin] to be ashamed of their good fortune." To achieve this poisoning, the ascetic priest might transform the ascetic ideal into a universal religious imperative, an imperative which demands fanatical asceticism even of the healthy.²⁷ However, even when they make universal claims,

religions are not necessarily accepted universally. It is predominately the sick themselves who subscribe to the universal claims of the ascetic priest's religion because they are the ones who require this asceticism to live. In this way, the ascetic priest does not draw the healthy into sickness but actually draws the sick *away* from the healthy. The sick become so involved in the work of self-denial that they cease to concentrate on revenging themselves on the healthy: "You will guess what...the curative instinct of life has at least *attempted* through the ascetic priest...to render the sick to a certain degree *harmless*, to work the self-destruction of the incurable, to direct the *ressentiment* of the less severely afflicted sternly back upon themselves" so that they cannot damage others.²⁸ It is thus *not* the ascetic priest who is at fault for the poisoning of the healthy.

The healthy become poisoned by the ascetic ideal once this ideal is wed with what Nietzsche calls "will to truth." To make this clear, we must examine the group known as "the free spirits." The free spirits are those who have freed themselves from, or at least resist, the traditional morality of Christianity, i.e., the morality of the ascetic priest, and promote the dissolution of this morality. They uphold science, rather than religion, as being an institution worthy of humankind's respect; they believe that science is a non-metaphysically based institution which does not involve universal moral imperatives such as the ascetic priest's insistence upon the ascetic ideal or faith in such things as God or afterworlds like the sick's desired end to emotional oppression. This ideal of the free spirits seems to be a direct opposition to the ascetic ideal; however, Nietzsche claims that it is actually the highest, most spiritual form of asceticism yet to exist. The free spirits believe themselves to be free from all metaphysical imperatives and faiths, but they themselves have faith in the absolute, i.e., metaphysical, value of truth. They no longer believe in God or in Christian afterworlds and imperatives, but it is out of *asceticism* that they have *denied* themselves these things. They have recognized these as founded on untruth, and because they believe that truth must always be upheld and that life can be lived as meaningful only in truth, they have cast them aside. That is, with their will to truth they have affirmed the ascetic ideal in its highest form yet. As Nietzsche says, "they certainly believe they are as completely liberated from the ascetic

ideal as possible, these 'free, *very* free spirits' ; and yet...this is precisely *their* ideal, too....They are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in the truth.*"²⁹ The free spirits, "in the audacious and ultimate sense presupposed by the faith in science, *thereby [affirm] another world* than that of life, nature, and history....It is still a *metaphysical faith* that underlies...faith in science." What this means is that the healthy are poisoned by the ascetic ideal when they become free spirits by reacting against Christianity and popular morality; in other words, once people such as *philosophers* and *scientists* make the metaphysical claim that only truth ought to be pursued, the healthy as free spirits ascetically deny Christianity and popular morality. More importantly, this also means that all of Western culture, based as it is on philosophy and science in addition to religion, is essentially infected with the ascetic ideal.³⁰

Nietzsche sees in this poisoning of the healthy by the ascetic ideal the potential for dire consequences. The spread of sickness can inspire in people a great nausea, an overwhelming disgust at the state of humankind's sick existence. The spread of sickness can also make people feel pity, a deeply sentimental concern, toward sick humankind. Nietzsche claims that if nausea and pity "were one day to unite, they would inevitably beget one of the uncanniest monsters: the 'last will' of man, his will to nothingness, nihilism." Here, the ascetic ideal ceases to be a tool for the preservation of life and instead inspires a genuine and motivated desire to end life. When one becomes so sick that one feels disgust at human existence and at the same time pities human beings for their disgusting existence, it becomes a service to the human race to promote the end of all human life. In fact, it becomes the right, correct, best, *truest* act; that is, it becomes the last remaining choice on the ascetic path to truth.³¹ This ending of human life becomes the last available reason to live, and Nietzsche claims that "man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will." That is, even if the last human option were to end human life, human beings would readily seize upon this option as something meaningful and worthwhile, as something that they have chosen.³²

It would seem, then, that the free spirits are the most dangerous and thus the worst development in Western civilization. However, Nietzsche does not repudiate the free spirits. The free spirits are of capital importance to the development of Western thought, for their

ascetic denial of traditional morality opens up a new realm of profound philosophical import: “[f]rom the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, a *new problem arises*: that of the value of truth.” This is the philosophical realm in which even faith in truth, the highest form of the ascetic ideal hitherto, comes under examination, and for this reason, only this realm might offer us a way out of the deathtrap which the ascetic ideal appears to be.³³

Good Europeans as Free Spirits

We seek a context for the good Europeans, but all we know at the moment is that Nietzsche associates himself with them. In the *Genealogy*, we have seen three parallel oppositions among the groups: nobles vs. slaves, the strong vs. the weak, and the healthy and the free spirits vs. the sick. We have also seen the free spirits as a group intimately related to the healthy. It appears to be with the nobles, the strong, the healthy, and the free spirits that Nietzsche's sympathies lie – at least for the most part. We will focus our attention on these groups, for the good Europeans, with whom Nietzsche himself associates, are more likely to be related to them than to any of the other groups in the *Genealogy*.

What characteristic do these parallel groups have in common? From our summary, it seems that they all share a certain quality of standing alone as unique, independent, straightforward individuals. In the context of the first essay of the *Genealogy*, the group known as “the nobles” is made up of people who possess brute power which allows them to cultivate themselves as independent, straightforward individuals. Similarly, the strong who appear in the second essay are those who have self-mastery and can straightforwardly pursue, uphold, and make known their independence in the world. The healthy appearing in the third essay are those who can pursue the satisfaction of their desires and emotions in the world without facing the opposition of their own values; the healthy are thus independent and straightforward in that they need not resort to the repression of their desires and emotions. The free spirits of the third essay are also unique individuals and seek straightforwardness in that they resist traditional morality. This quality of standing alone as a unique, independent, straightforward individual Nietzsche calls “nobility”; it is, to use a

Nietzschean expression, a kind of selfishness in which one desires to maintain oneself in a position of uniqueness, independence and straightforwardness, as is suggested by an aphorism in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Signs of nobility: never thinking of degrading...[one's] duties into duties for everybody; not wanting to delegate, to share, one's own responsibility; counting one's privileges and their exercise among one's *duties*.³⁴

The *Genealogy* presents us with four different types of this nobility: nobility of brute power, nobility of self-mastery, nobility of health and nobility of resistance to traditional morality. The form of nobility which ought to draw our attention is the nobility of resistance to traditional morality, for Nietzsche himself is famous for precisely his resistance to traditional, Christian morality. It would seem that Nietzsche would most want to associate with the free spirits, those who resist traditional morality. If Nietzsche were said to have a general audience, it would have to consist of these free spirits, for one must be resistant to, or at least capable of resisting, traditional morality in order to be at all receptive to Nietzsche's principal writings and ideas.³⁵ The free spirits, however, are not all alike, and as we will see momentarily, the good Europeans actually appear amongst the free spirits as a special subset, the subset of free spirits most closely related to Nietzsche himself.

The free spirits are simply those who possess the nobility of resistance to traditional morality, and the broadness of this definition allows for many different patterns of free-spirited psychology and behavior. In *The Twilight of the Idols*, we find a long passage entitled "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth" which offers, in addition to a history of Western thought, a kind of hierarchy of the free spirits:

1. The real world, attainable to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man – he dwells in it, *he is it*.
(Oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, convincing. Transcription of the proposition 'I, Plato, *am* the truth.')

2. The real world, unattainable for the moment, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man ('to the sinner who repents').

(Progress of the idea: it grows more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible – *it becomes a woman*, it becomes Christian...)

3. The real world, unattainable, undemonstrable, cannot be promised, but even when merely thought of a consolation, a duty, an imperative.

(Fundamentally the same old sun, but shining through mist and skepticism; the idea grown sublime, pale, northerly, Königsbergian.)

4. The real world – unattainable? Unattained, at any rate. And if unattained also *unknown*. Consequently also no consolation, no redemption, no duty: how could we have a duty towards something unknown?

(The grey of dawn. First yawnings of reason. Cockcrow of positivism.)

5. The 'real world' – an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer – an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it!

(Broad daylight; breakfast; return of cheerfulness and *bons sens*; Plato blushes for shame; all free spirits run riot.)

6. We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?...But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*

(Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind; INCIPIIT ZARATHUSTRA)³⁶

Free spirits appear in the final four stages. The free spirits of the third stage have begun to question traditional morality but have yet to break away from it. The free spirits of the fourth stage are specifically those who delight in their skepticism and optimistically attempt to correct morality, to destroy traditional morality and build or reveal a truer one. In the fifth stage, we find free spirits who "run riot," those who gleefully destroy any and every morality they find. These last two types of free spirit we saw earlier in the *Genealogy*. They judge old

moral customs to be unfounded, false and useless, and they demolish these customs in the name of progress and science.³⁷ Interpreters often place Nietzsche himself amongst these free spirits, but to place him here is incorrect. Unlike Nietzsche, these free spirits fail to realize that they themselves still subscribe to the metaphysical faith underlying all moralities, the belief that truth ought to be always pursued and upheld and that falsity ought to be always abolished. As the author of the *Genealogy* and discoverer of these free spirits' predicament, Nietzsche has passed beyond this stage of freedom of spirit into a *higher* one, one of greater understanding.

In the sixth stage of "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth," we see a final, circumspect type of free spirit, a type characterized by the realization that belief in the absolute value of truth is itself a problem. Here we may locate Nietzsche himself, as well as the good Europeans; we may refer back to the passage from *The Gay Science*:

[W]e have...outgrown Christianity and are averse to it – precisely because we have grown out of it, because our ancestors were Christians who in their Christianity were uncompromisingly upright: for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions and position, blood and fatherland. We – do the same. For what? For our unbelief? For every kind of unbelief? No, you know better than that, friends! The hidden Yes in you is stronger than all Nos and Maybes that afflict you and your age like a disease; and when you have to embark on the sea, you immigrants, you, too, are compelled to this by – a *faith!*³⁸

Like the other free spirits, the good Europeans have a faith, but what makes the good Europeans different from other free spirits is that they realize the problematic nature of faith in the truth and then set about examining this value system of truth in order to reconsider – or revalue, as Nietzsche would say – the values of this value system itself as well as all the values which this value system once discarded in the quest for truth. The good Europeans seek to determine the value system under which they can best, most happily live. This pursuit of a *livable* value system is what Nietzsche calls "revaluation of

values,” “philosophy of the future,” or “gay science.”³⁹

It is often assumed that “philosophy of the future” refers to some philosophy that has yet to come into existence, some philosophy unlike any philosophy that has been seen hitherto. In his essay “Who Are ‘The Philosophers of the Future?’ A Reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*,” Alexander Nehamas notes that the word ‘future’ “need not necessarily be interpreted in the obvious chronological sense in which...[it has] been taken by Nietzsche’s readers. A philosophy of the future need not be a philosophy *that is composed in the future*. It can also be a philosophy *that concerns the future*.”⁴⁰ As we have seen in the long passage from *The Gay Science* above, the good Europeans certainly are concerned with the future; they are philosophers of the future in that they philosophize for the purpose of shaping or otherwise affecting the future. However, this philosophy is nothing truly *new*. As Nietzsche says of himself and the good Europeans,

[W]e have...outgrown Christianity [including the related value system of truth] and are averse to it – precisely because we have grown out of it, because our ancestors were Christians who in their Christianity were uncompromisingly upright: for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions and position, blood and fatherland. We – do the same.⁴¹

As we have seen in the *Genealogy*, we as Westerners are who we are because of our history and culture; it is neither possible nor desirable to discard this history and culture and to start afresh. The good Europeans are fully aware that they cannot help but work in and with the history and culture of the West. Their philosophy of the future is a revaluation of values in that it takes up the various values that are currently held or have already been held in the West and reassesses their worth in order to reveal the best, most livable way of life.

This helps us to make better sense of the name “good Europeans.” Because the good Europeans’ philosophy aims for a system of revalued values, this is a philosophy which transcends the present state of traditional, metaphysical morality, as well as the nationalist rationale of nation-states. The good Europeans are those who enter the greater community of Europe as people concerned with the future of both

themselves and the world, not with immediate nationalistic or traditional moral goals.

Yet, there is still something peculiar about the good Europeans. Nietzsche clearly states that the good Europeans have a faith, but what is this faith? It seems that the good Europeans must pass beyond faith in the truth, the faith characteristic of the free spirits of the *Genealogy*, in order to realize that faith in the absolute value of truth is problematic. To say this, however, is to assume, as it is typically assumed of Nietzsche's immoralism, that to question truth and attack morality one must leave things at that and not engage in any actual truth-asserting or actual moralizing. Yet, the passage above seems to indicate that the good Europeans do, in fact, have a morality, a faith.

According to several basic definitions of morality, morality is "[m]oral discourse or instruction; a moral lesson or exhortation"; it is "[e]thical wisdom; knowledge of moral science" – i.e., "[t]he doctrine or system concerned with conduct and duty."⁴² The root-word "moral" means "[o]f or pertaining to character or disposition, considered as good or bad, virtuous or vicious; of or pertaining to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, volitions, or character of responsible beings."⁴³ In other words, morality is an ethic or code of conduct based on certain values – such as good and bad, good and evil, or right and wrong – which are taken to be authoritative. Historically, these authoritative values have been rooted in such concepts as God, truth, life and happiness.

Nietzsche and his good Europeans certainly have values on which to base a morality. The good Europeans are concerned with the future, both their own and that of the human race, and seek a livable way of life which will preserve and promote human life. Life is thus of tremendous value to the good Europeans. At the same time, they also give great value to culture, as when Nietzsche says that he and the good Europeans are "the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit."⁴⁴ As philosophers of the future, the good Europeans do not merely preserve and promote life in any form. They seek a *livable* way of life, and this way of life must take into account, make use of, and honor their own history and culture as Europeans, the history and culture of the West. Truth must also be valued by the good Europeans. They

believe the revelation of the problem of the faith in the truth to be a significant development in Western thought, but this revelation is itself brought about by a philosophical commitment to truth. One would not have this revelation about the nature of faith in the truth if one were not pursuing the *truth* of faith in the truth. This helps us to reach an understanding of the passage we read earlier:

[O]ur ancestors were Christians who in their Christianity were uncompromisingly upright: for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions and position, blood and fatherland. We – do the same. For what? For our unbelief? For every kind of unbelief? No, you know better than that, friends! The hidden Yes in you is stronger than all Nos and Maybes that afflict you and your age like a disease; and when you have to embark on the sea, you immigrants, you, too, are compelled to this by – a *faith!*⁴⁵

Nietzsche and the good Europeans share with their ancestors the same basic faith in truth as a value.⁴⁶ We can see that Nietzsche and the good Europeans have values on which to found a morality, but it is not yet fully apparent that they do, in fact, have an authentic morality. For this, we must come to understand the role which Nietzsche means for the good Europeans to play in society.

Nietzsche's Ideal Society of the Good European

As we have said, the good Europeans' philosophy of the future is a philosophy that is oriented toward the future – that is, the good Europeans wish to affect the future. Here, we may consider Nietzsche himself in his role as a good European and philosopher. Nietzsche presents his philosophy in his writings in order that others may read his works and discover in them his philosophy. We can thus think of Nietzsche as a kind of teacher. The role of the teacher must be the center of the philosophy of the future, for teaching is a basic future-oriented enterprise. A teacher teaches his or her pupils in order that they acquire some new knowledge, whether of academic or ethical or technical subjects. Nietzsche is a philosopher of the future to the extent that he affects the future, and he affects the future through

others' readings his works. As we have said earlier, however, not just anyone is receptive to Nietzsche's writings; one must be resistant to or capable of resisting traditional morality – i.e., one must be a free spirit. Nietzsche's writings are teachings for the benefit of the free spirits, aimed at transforming free spirits of all types into good Europeans. As a good European, a free spirit must revalue and cultivate moralities, ethics and goals but not simply for his or her own benefit. A good European is a teacher, concerned with the education of others, specifically other free spirits; therefore, the good European must take the well-being and education of all other free spirits into account.

Also, a good European is one of "the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit."⁴⁷ The good Europeans have an obligation to Europe; their philosophy of the future concerns not just their own future but that of Europe, even that of the entire world. Nietzsche often speaks of a "great task" which the good Europeans must perform: good Europeans have the "great task of *preparing* the earth for the production of the greatest and most joyful fruitfulness."⁴⁸ That is, the good Europeans are a "community held together, not by external forms and regulations, but by a fundamental idea. It is the fundamental idea of *culture*."⁴⁹ Their ultimate goal is to "secure the foundations [of culture], so that the whole future can safely build upon them...[The good Europeans] make it henceforth impossible for the fruitful fields of culture again to be destroyed overnight by wild and senseless torrents."⁵⁰ In other words, the good Europeans take culture out of the hands of the masses, that is, out of the hands of the weak and sick, who endanger culture and human existence with their moralizing, their ascetic ideal and their *ressentiment*. The weak and sick preach absolute moral codes and, in this way, seek to eliminate all other moral codes, all other customs, all other cultures. They wish to abolish all difference. They wish to destroy everything that does not belong to their own local way of life, and they especially wish to destroy everything which appears to them as better than what they themselves have. In their *ressentiment*, they wish to reduce everything to their own level. The "mission" of the good Europeans "is to maintain the *order of rank* in the world."⁵¹ That is, like the ascetic priest in the third essay of the *Genealogy*, they must keep the weak and sick in their place;

they must prevent them from reducing everything to the level of weakness and sickness. The good Europeans become guardians of culture and thereby act as “good shepherds of the flock,” protecting the flock of the weak and sick as well as all the world from the flock itself.

Nietzsche intends for this shepherding activity of the good Europeans to provide for the well-being of those who do not resist traditional morality – we could call this group Nietzsche's secondary audience, while the free spirits and good Europeans could be called his primary audience. Nietzsche wants the members of his secondary audience to find happiness and alleviation of suffering through performing the highest activity of which they are capable. This activity is the perfection of certain occupations and pursuits or, to put it in disagreeable terms, “mechanical activity.” Nietzsche desires that the members of his secondary audience pursue such activity in order that they respect the order of rank, for “[i]t is *not* the strongest but the weakest who spell disaster for the strong.”⁵² “The weakest,” i.e., the sick from the *Genealogy's* third essay, belong to Nietzsche's secondary audience, and they possess the tremendous power of *ressentiment*, of the ascetic ideal, and of the kind of morality that makes universal claims. They are thus dangerous and, without the restraining hand of the ascetic priest or the good European, they can easily destroy the free spirits and bring about the ruination of culture. Mechanical activity focuses the attention of the secondary audience on harmless, productive enterprises and in this way relieves them of their *ressentiment* by forcing it out of their minds: “The alleviation [brought by mechanical activity] consists in this, that the interest of the sufferer is directed entirely away from his suffering – that activity, and nothing but activity, enters consciousness, and there is consequently little room left in it for suffering.”⁵³ This alleviation allows the secondary audience to lead a more pleasant life and, because it protects the free spirits as well as human life and culture from harm, it also allows them to play a necessary role in the preservation of the foundations of culture.

Furthermore, Nietzsche wants people to recognize that all human beings are not created with equal capabilities. To say that people are equal, Nietzsche says, is a “*denial* of life, a principle of disintegration and decay”;⁵⁴ it is to force everyone into the same generic mold. Some

people will already fit this mold, others may be able to adapt themselves to the mold without problems, but there will be others who are unable to adapt themselves without sacrificing their only chance at reaching happiness. If people are not equal, then to resent others for their happiness is ridiculous, for the happiness of each person is possible only for that person and not for everyone. By admitting that each person has his or her own particular talents and by each person's pursuing that which only he or she is capable of pursuing, every person in society can seek a happy existence without resorting to destruction. It is the good Europeans' duty to affirm the fundamental differences among human beings in order to combat the leveling tendency of the secondary audience.

As we can see, Nietzsche wants to develop a social organization which will allow and encourage every person to pursue his or her highest activity. While this may seem like an attractive social picture, what motivates Nietzsche to move toward this sort of ideal society or utopia? That is, what is the alternative to this ideal system? – and to ask this is essentially to ask how Nietzsche characterizes his own society.

Nietzsche sees contemporary society as horrifically decadent, and he sees the root of this in the continued influence of Christianity. It is for this reason that he initiates an attack on Christian values, his famous immorality. At the end of *The Anti-Christ* we may hear Nietzsche attack Christianity most strongly:

I *condemn* Christianity, I bring against the Christian church the most terrible charge any prosecutor has ever uttered. To me it [Christianity] is the extremest thinkable form of corruption, it has had the will to the ultimate corruption conceivably possible. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity, it has made of every value a disvalue, of every truth a lie, of every kind of integrity a vileness of soul. People still dare to talk to me of its 'humanitarian' blessings! To *abolish* any state of distress whatever has been profoundly inexpedient to it: it has lived on states of distress, it has *created* states of distress in order to externalize *itself*.... The worm of sin, for example: it was only the Church which enriched mankind with this state of distress! – 'Equality of souls before God,' this

falsehood, this *pretext* for the *rancune* [grudge] of the base-minded....To cultivate out of *humanitas* a self-contradiction, an art of self-violation, a will to falsehood at any price, a contempt for every good and honest instinct! These are the blessings of Christianity! – Parasitism as the *sole* practice of the Church; with its ideal of green-sickness, of ‘holiness’ draining away all blood, all love, all hope for life; the Cross as the badge of the most subterranean conspiracy there has ever been – a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-constitutedness, bravery, *benevolence* of soul, *against life itself*....I call Christianity the *one* great curse, the *one* great intrinsic depravity, the *one* great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, *petty* – I call it the *one* immortal blemish of mankind...⁵⁵

Despite the spread of atheism in his time, Nietzsche saw Christian morality continue to propagate itself in the West.⁵⁶ He targets contemporary democracy in particular as being suffused with Christian morality. Nietzsche believes that democracy can be of great benefit, for by placing political power in the hands of the citizens, it makes it difficult for fanatical, revolutionary factions to come to power. In this way, democracy helps to preserve culture from destruction.⁵⁷ However, contemporary democracy enshrines as a universal right the concept “equality,” a political adaptation of the Christian concept “equal[ity] before God.” Nietzsche says that Christian morality “with...[its] ‘equal before God’...[has produced] a herd animal... something eager to please, sickly, and mediocre has been bred, the European of today.”⁵⁸ In the same way, by saying that all people are equal, democracy denies that every person has a unique talent or capability and essentially demands that no one excel, that everyone remain on a uniform and mediocre level. In this mediocrity, “man has no higher duty than to serve the state,” and the state has the power to reduce everyone to the same level.⁵⁹

Accompanying this rise in *ressentiment*-driven loyalty to the state is the ascetic ideal as it is realized in science. “[N]othing is more democratic than logic,” Nietzsche says, for logic is meant to be a universal authority above and beyond the judgement of individual

human beings.⁶⁰ Science can be seen as democratic in precisely the same way. While Christianity as a religion may be waning, the Christian morality of democracy can put forward science as a realm of impartial, absolute truths. As we saw earlier, free spirits use science to pursue the truth; thus, not even Nietzsche and the good Europeans *reject* natural science. The essential difference between the science of the free spirits and that of democracy is one of motive. Out of their asceticism, free spirits wish to use science to tear down traditional Christian morality, but democratic scientists wish to use science to ultimately *affirm* this morality. That is, they carry the ascetic ideal in the form of science beyond the free-spirited level of asceticism. Democratic science has “the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself”; that is, by pursuing science as an impartial and absolute realm of truth, democratic scientists ascetically deny themselves feelings of personal superiority and human dignity in order that they become selfless and be on the same level as everyone else in democratic society.⁶¹

According to Nietzsche, all of this means that humankind is becoming increasingly mediocre and weak.⁶² The propagation of sickness by the ascetic ideal and the will to truth is precisely what can poison the strong and provoke great nausea and pity at humankind’s sickness, and when nausea and pity are united, they produce the “will to nothingness, nihilism.”⁶³ Humankind, then, is in grave danger of bringing about its own demise through the continuance of Christian morality, and if it is consumed by the will to truth and the ascetic ideal of science, humankind will not even notice, or will refuse to acknowledge, its own danger. Nietzsche sees in contemporary science a dangerous kind a mechanical activity which allows people to flee from the problems that matter most of all:

[The scientific man] behaves like the proudest idler of fortune, as though existence were not a dreadful and questionable thing but a firm possession guaranteed to last for ever. He seems to be permitted to squander his life on questions whose answer could at bottom be of consequence only to someone assured of an eternity. The heir of but a few hours, he is ringed around with frightful abysses, and every step he takes ought to make him ask: Whither? Whence? To what end? But his soul is

warmed with the task of counting the stamens of a flower or breaking up the stones of the pathway...Nowadays he works as hard as the fourth estate, the slaves: his study is no longer an occupation but a necessity, he looks neither to the right nor left, and goes through all the business of life, and its more questionable aspects, with the half-consciousness or the repellent need for entertainment characteristic of the exhausted worker.

Now this is his attitude towards culture too. He behaves as though life were to him only *otium* [idleness] but *sine dignitate* [lacking dignity]: and even in his dreams he does not throw off his yoke....[M]en pursue their businesses and their sciences so eagerly only so as to elude the most important questions.⁶⁴

Here, the mechanical pursuit of science covers up the dangers of the will to truth, so those who pursue this science and who are poisoned by the will to truth never admit to their danger and thus do nothing about it.

Of course, good Europeans will be able to recognize this danger. However, the propagation of sickness and Christian morality in the form of democracy and science makes it difficult for free spirits to arise and to become good Europeans, and those that do arise are easily ruined. “[T]he herd man in Europe today,” Nietzsche says, “gives himself the appearance of being the only permissible kind of man, and glorifies his attributes...as if they were the truly human virtues: namely, public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, and pity.”⁶⁵ Proponents of Christian democracy continually try to level those who wish to pass beyond their own morality, and with the power of its unconditional morality and the union of the ascetic ideal and will to truth, they can easily succeed in poisoning potential free spirits *even before* they achieve their free-spirited status. Christian democrats can make herd animals out of potential free spirits and thus prevent any free spirits from appearing at all. This is disastrous for Nietzsche's project and for human life and culture: the shortage of free spirits means that there will also be a shortage of good Europeans to recognize the dangers in contemporary society and to become teachers, and the lack of teachers to act as

good shepherds of the weak means that the weak and sick will have free reign in the realm of culture. There will be nothing to stop the weak and sick from destroying culture and from spreading weakness and sickness until nihilism fully takes hold and succeeds in destroying the human race.

Nietzsche's envisioned ideal society is the opposite of this dire state. It is founded on his conception of culture: "Culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant...it is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood, it is the perfecting of our nature when it deflects her cruel and merciless assaults and turns them to good."⁶⁶ Culture is a protection of human life and society against the destructive forces of nature, including the destructive forces of humankind, and it is also an affirmation of life and humanity in which the culture from which we have arisen, namely, Western culture, is taken into account and honored. Here, we may refer to a passage from *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*:

A vision. – Lectures and hours of meditation for adults, for the mature and the maturest, and these daily, without compulsion but attended by everyone as a command of custom: the churches as the worthiest venues for them because richest in memories: every day as it were a festival of attained and attainable dignity of human reason: a new and fuller efflorescence of the ideal of the teacher, in which the priest, the artist and the physician, the man of knowledge and the man of wisdom, are fused with one another, with a resultant fusion of their separate virtues into a single total virtue which would also be expressed in their teaching itself, in their delivery and their methods – this is my vision: it returns to me again and again, and I firmly believe that it lifts a corner of the veil of the future.⁶⁷

Nietzsche desires a culture which, through voluntary participation in customs and academic activity, resembles "a festival of attained and attainable dignity of human reason" and which affirms and is founded on the ideal of the teacher.⁶⁸ The good Europeans as teachers of the

free spirits and as good shepherds of the weak and sick stand at the pinnacle of this culture: “They are those true *men, those who are no longer animal, the philosophers, artists and saints*: nature, which never makes a leap, has made its one leap in creating them, and a leap of joy moreover, for nature then feels for the first time it has reached its goal.”⁶⁹ Nietzsche believes that the production of good Europeans as teachers is the fulfillment of nature: “[T]he fundamental idea of culture...[is] *to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature.*”⁷⁰ The members of Nietzsche's primary audience affirm culture by working toward the status of the good European and teacher, and Nietzsche's secondary audience, who cannot work toward this status, can affirm culture by not hindering the production of good Europeans and by respecting good Europeans as teachers. Nietzsche says, “[O]nly he who has attached his heart to some great man [and works toward the production of more great men] receives thereby the...*consecration to culture.*” One may affirm life and human dignity, that is, culture, only through respecting and affirming great individuals such as the good Europeans and through promoting their rise to existence, through upholding the order of rank and letting each person pursue his or her greatest possible activity.⁷¹

We must keep in mind that this ideal culture which Nietzsche envisions is “merely” an ideal social *structure*. Nietzsche has no desire to commit human beings to a single, predefined society; he wishes to reveal the shape, not the specific content, of a livable society. He does not specify what the content of culture is or will be, but only the structure of culture. Neither does he specify what the good Europeans as teachers teach but only the kinds of things they teach. More importantly, he does not specify who belongs among the free spirits, the good Europeans, or any other group in his society; he specifies only the structural features of these groups. In this way, Nietzsche's ideal society resembles Plato's imagined Republic: one is not “predestined” to belong to any particular social group.⁷² As in Plato's Republic, Nietzsche's ideal society does not have an inflexible caste system; one belongs to a group solely on the basis of certain propensities, activities or structural features such as the nobility of resistance to traditional morality. Nietzsche's ideal society has no

fixed content, for to have such content would be to propose essentially what Christian democracy proposes: everyone must fit into an unchanging system whether or not it is compatible with one's desires, goals, and aspirations. It would be to deny the richness, the variety in life and humanity which Nietzsche wishes to affirm. Nietzsche's ideal society is meant to be a dynamic one which can accommodate the ever-changing wants and needs of human beings⁷³ and which can thereby honor the desire of the free spirits, particularly the good Europeans, to gain both knowledge and wisdom, as Nietzsche suggests in a passage from *Daybreak*:

From the company of thinkers. – In the midst of the ocean of becoming we awake on an island no bigger than a boat, we adventurers and birds of passage, and look around us for a few moments, as sharply and as inquisitively as possible, for how soon may a wind not blow us away or a wave not sweep across the little island so that nothing more is left of us! But here, on this little space, we find other birds of passage and hear of others still who have been here before – and thus we live a precarious minute of knowing and divining, amid joyful beating of wings and chirping with one another, and in spirit we adventure out over the ocean, no less proud than the ocean itself.⁷⁴

We can see now quite clearly that Nietzsche's project is a moral one. Nietzsche does not pursue his immoralism, his attack on metaphysical moralities and especially Christian morality, for the sake of destroying morality in general. He has a definite moral agenda: the protection and development of Western life and culture. Nietzsche's immoralism is thus a moral project: to repeat Nietzsche's statement of *Daybreak's* methodology once again, "in this book faith in morality is withdrawn – but why? *Out of morality!*"⁷⁵

While it is true that Nietzsche says in *The Gay Science*, "I do not wish to promote any morality," and occasionally says similar things elsewhere in his body of writings, we must take into account a distinction between traditional morality and Nietzsche's own moral project.⁷⁶ Nietzsche says that he has no morality, for he offers no

metaphysical, i.e., unconditional, moral code, no code that demands to be practiced by all human beings, yet he does have a kind of morality, a *non-metaphysical* morality. As we have seen, Nietzsche has certain values, namely, life and truth, and wishes to reveal, through revaluation of past moralities and value systems, a livable way of life, and the responsibility for revealing this way of life falls to the free spirits alone. Nietzsche teaches his free spirits but does not demand anything of anyone who does not want, or at least who simply does not, listen to his teaching. Yet, Nietzsche's code of conduct and system of values do constitute a morality nonetheless – here, we may look to a passage from *The Gay Science*:

Consider how every individual is affected by an overall philosophical justification of his way of living and thinking: he experiences it as a sun that shines especially for him and bestows warmth, blessings, and fertility on him [...] Those who are evil and unhappy and the exceptional human being – all these should also have their philosophy, their good right, their sunshine! What is needful is not pity for them. We must learn to abandon this arrogant fancy, however long humanity has hitherto spent learning and practicing it. What these people need is not confession, conjuring of souls, and forgiveness of sins; what is needful is a new *justice!* And a new watchword. And new philosophers. The moral earth, too, is round. The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist. There is yet another world to be discovered – and more than one. Embark, philosophers!⁷⁷

Notes

¹ Cf. Crane Brinton, *Nietzsche* (Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 142, 167, 250. Also see Bertrand Russell's chapter on Nietzsche in his *A History of Western Philosophy and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (George Allen and Unwin, 1946). Russell writes, "King Lear, on the verge of madness, says: 'I will do such things – / What they are yet I know not – but they shall be / The terror of the earth.' This is Nietzsche's philosophy in a

nutshell” (p. 795).

² Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1997), preface, section 4.

³ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Random House, 1974), 377.

⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Random House, 1992) Essay III, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Essay I, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷ We should note that the term “nobles” as it is used here does not necessarily refer to members of a hereditary aristocracy, and neither does the term “slaves” necessarily indicate actual slaves, as in the designation “slave laborers.”

⁸ Nietzsche suggests such groups as the upper class of feudal Japan, the Homeric heroes, and the Vikings as excellent examples of nobles who conquer and bestow values in this way (*Ibid.*, 11).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹² A way reminiscent of Hegel’s famous passage “Lordship and Bondage” from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in which the bondsman, even though he is conquered by the lord, is able to achieve self-consciousness more fully than the lord himself (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller [Oxford University Press, 1977], sections 191-196.).

¹³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* Essay I, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Essay II, 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ As we can see, “strong” and “weak” are not physical descriptions, just as the terms “noble” and “slave” in the first essay did not refer to traditional conceptions of hereditary aristocrats or slave laborers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²² *Ibid.*, 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Essay III, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² *Ibid.*, 28.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (Random House, 1992), 272.

³⁵ It thus seems quite appropriate that the subtitle of Nietzsche's book *Human, All Too Human* is *A Book for Free Spirits*.

³⁶ Nietzsche, "How the 'Real World' at Last Became a Myth," in *Twilight of the Idols: or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, in *Twilight of the Idols / The Anti-Christ* (Penguin Books, 1990).

³⁷ Here we might think of David Hume at the end of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: "When we run over libraries, persuaded of...[false] principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quality or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion." David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd Ed. (Clarendon Press, 1975), section 13, part 3, p. 165.

³⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 377.

³⁹ Alexander Nehamas also stresses livability in his account of the philosophers of the future: "One is a genuine philosopher [i.e., a philosopher of the future] only to the extent that one produces a coherent and livable picture of life – coherent and livable at least for

oneself” (“Who Are ‘The Philosophers of the Future’ ? : A Reading of *Beyond Good and Evil*,” in *Reading Nietzsche*, eds. R. Solomon and K. Higgins [Oxford University Press, 1988], p. 65).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴¹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 377.

⁴² “Morality,” in *The Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd Ed., eds. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 9, pp. 1070-1071.

⁴³ “Moral,” in *The Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd Ed., eds. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 9, p. 1068.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 377.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Many interpreters may be likely to find this notion absurd, for just as Nietzsche is meant to be a great immoralist who believes in no morality, he is also meant to be a great denouncer of truth who believes that all truths are relative and thus not truths at all. Yet Nietzsche himself says, at the beginning of the first essay in the *Genealogy*, “[P]lain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth....such truths do exist” (Essay I, 1).

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 377.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, in *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 189.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge University Press, 1997), section 5, p. 160.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* 275.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 219.

⁵² Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* Essay III 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 259.

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* 62.

⁵⁶ Cf. Nietzsche, “David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer,” in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge University Press, 1997), section 4, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁷ Cf. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* 275. Cf. Maudemarie Clark’s paper “Nietzsche’s Anti-Democratic Rhetoric,” which makes

use of this passage from *The Wanderer and His Shadow* in this way, to explain Nietzsche's appreciation for democracy (paper presented at the Eastern Division Meeting, American Philosophical Association, Washington DC, 29 December 1998).

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 62.

⁵⁹ Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," section 4, p. 148.

⁶⁰ Cf. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 348.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* Essay III, 25.

⁶² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 62.

⁶³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, 14.

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer," section 8, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 199.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," section 1, p. 130.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* 180.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," section 5, p. 159.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, section 6, p. 163.

⁷² Cf. Plato's "myth of the metals" (*Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve, in *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, 2nd Ed., eds. S. Marc Cohen et al. [Hackett Publishing, 2000], 415a-d).

⁷³ Cf. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 289.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Daybreak* 314. Cf. Chapter Two of Sheridan Hough's *Nietzsche's Noontide Friend* for a thorough analysis of Nietzsche's sea/ocean metaphor. In connection with *Daybreak* 314, Hough says, "Although we did not choose the traditions and practices that socialized us, it will be the case that after reflection some of these notions will be untenable, while other will still appeal. The concepts that continue to move us are the ones in which we can have confidence. These behaviors will not seem as stable as the ones of our cultural past, but Nietzsche urges us to take joy in them anyway" (pp. 79-80).

We could say that by simultaneously working upon and taking joy in one's cultural material, one honors both one's cultural heritage and one's possibilities for the future. As we have seen, such honoring is the foundation of Nietzsche's ideal society. Cf. Nietzsche, *Assorted*

Opinions and Maxims 180.

⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, preface, section 4.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 292.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.