On the Genealogy of Morals – Friedrich Nietzsche

*Preface*

The only thing Nietzsche says here is that the thing missing in all moral commentary up to now is a ‘*critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*’ (p456) and in order to do this we must find out how they originated, hence this book.

*First Essay* – “Good and Evil,” “Good and Bad”

Nietzsche criticises philosophers and psychologists for holding that unegoistic actions were held to be good originally because they were *useful*, it was later *forgotten* how this decision was reached and then finally unegoistic actions were *habitually* praised ‘as if they were something good in themselves’ (p461).

Nietzsche holds however that the designation ‘good’ came not from those for whom actions were performed but from ‘”the good” themselves… the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded’ (p461-2) who were in a position to assert their authority.

This noble class distinguish themselves from the commoners ‘by their superiority in power (as “the powerful,” “the masters,” “the commanders”) or by the most clearly visible signs of this superiority, for example, as “the rich,” “the possessors”… But they also do it by a *typical character trait*: and this is the case that concerns us here. They call themselves, for instance, “the truthful”… as distinct from the *lying* common man’ (p465). The Greeks did this.

Nietzsche goes into a discussion of the etymology of words that trace back to ‘good’ and ‘bad’. He identifies a Latin word *malus* which he suggests may ‘designate the common man as the dark-coloured, above all as the black-haired man… who was distinguished most obviously from the blond, that is the Aryan, conqueror race by his colour’ (p466).

When the highest caste is the priestly caste “pure” and “impure” also become ‘designations of station’ (p467) and evolve into a “good” and “bad”. Nietzsche identifies the priestly aristocracies as being unhealthy. The priests advocate treatments which are ‘a hundred times more dangerous… that the sickness it was supposed to cure’ (p468) such as, fasting, abstaining from meat, sexual continence, asceticism and the whole anti-sensualistic attitude. Curiously Nietzsche adds that ‘it was only on the soil of this *essentially dangerous* form of human existence, the priestly form, that man first became *an interesting animal*’ by this soul acquiring ‘*depth* and [becoming] *evil*’ (p469).

Nietzsche contrasts the priestly mode of valuation with the *knightly-aristocratic* which ‘presupposed a powerful physicality… overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity’ (p469). It is because the priests are impotent that they are so dangerous. In them ‘hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions’ (p469). And here Nietzsche criticises the Jews as being the worst of this kind. It was the Jews who ‘dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God)… saying “the wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious’ (p470). The Jews began the ‘*slave revolt in morality*’ (p470).

This slave revolt in morality itself begins when ‘*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values… While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside”’ (p472). Slave morality is always a negative reaction to something external. The well-born know themselves to be happy in themselves and they recognise the active in the conception of happiness unlike slave morality where “happiness” is a ‘narcotic, drug, rest, peace’ (p474), i.e. passive. The noble man is open and upright, honest; but the man of *ressentiment* is the opposite, ‘His soul *squints*; his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors’ (p474).

Should resentment occur in a noble man he is able to expel it with a single reaction so it does not fester inside as it does in the lower man. The noble man does not hold grudges, because, being able to create so prolifically, he recovers and forgets easily. ‘Such a man shakes off with a *single* shrug many vermin that eat deep into others; here alone genuine “love of one’s enemies” is possible’ (p475). The noble man reveres his enemies while the man of resentment despises them portraying them as evil. Such a man of *ressentiment* is bound to become cleverer than the noble man and through this overcome his more naïve betters.

The noble man creates from “good” in himself to “bad” in everyone else, while the man of *ressentiment* creates from “evil” in the others back to “good” in himself. This noble man adheres to strict rules of conduct with his peers that when he leaves such company we cannot blame them for ‘a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture… as if it were no more than a students’ prank’ (p476), because after locking up their exuberant, wilful natures ‘the hidden core needs to erupt from time to time’ (p477). Here Nietzsche mentions for the first time the ‘*blond beast*’ but it is clear from the context that it is not racial as some of his examples of the *blond beast* include the Roman, Arabian and Japanese nobility as well as the Germanic and Scandinavian Vikings. Nietzsche says that it is ‘the noble races that have left behind them the concept of “barbarian” wherever they have gone’ praising ‘their indifference to and contempt for security, body, life, comfort, their hair-raising cheerfulness and profound joy in all destruction, in all the voluptuousness of victory and cruelty’ (p477-8). Again Nietzsche distances himself from a racial interpretation of *blond beast* by mentioning the ‘blond beast at the core of all noble races’ (p479) which we should fear but can also admire.

Nietzsche defines nihilism as the loss of the fear of man, the love of man, our reverence and hopes for him, but also our will to him. ‘We are weary of *man*’ (p480).

Nietzsche compares an eagle preying on a lamb to the noble man and the man of *ressentiment* saying that it is absurd to ‘demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome… a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs’ (p481) because ‘there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything’ (p481). It is the weak man who needs this fiction because he wants to maintain that ‘the weakness of the weak… were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act. This type of man *needs* to believe in a neutral independent “subject” (p482).

This man of *ressentiment* lies to himself about everything. He is forced to wait and so says that he has developed the virtue of “patience”, his inability to exact revenge, he calls “forgiveness”, his misery becomes a ‘testing ground” which will someday be rectified (after death of course, in heaven). ‘I can’t take it any more. Bad air! Bad air!’ (p483). They don’t desire retaliation, only the triumph of *justice*, ‘the victory of God, of the *just* God, over the godless’ (p484).

Nietzsche praises the Romans saying that ‘nobody stronger and nobler has yet existed on earth or even been dreamed of… The Jews on the contrary, were the priestly nation of *ressentiment par excellence*’ (p489).

The Renaissance sparked an awakening of the noble ideal but the Reformation (*ressentiment*) crushed it. The French nobles of the 17th and 18th centuries collapsed under the *ressentiment* of the French Revolution.

*Second Essay* – “Guilt,” “Bad Conscience,” and the Like

Forgetting is not a passive activity. Rather it is an active one which is necessary in order to ‘make room for new things… for regulation, foresight, pre-meditation’ (p494), it helps us maintain psychic order. In the same way making a promise is not a passive ‘inability to rid oneself of an impression’ (p494), but an active desire to remember. But before man could do this, he must have learned how to plan and deliberate and anticipate the future, but above all, he must ‘first of all have become *calculable, regular, necessary*’ (p494). Nietzsche thinks that what he calls the ‘morality of mores’ or ‘morality of custom’ (nothing more than following the customs of the tribe) made man this calculable and regular beast. It led man to the position where he is *responsible* and *able to make promises*. This sense of responsibility has sunk into his depths where it becomes a dominating instinct, called *conscience*.

The question is how to best preserve a memory for men so that they can remember their responsibilities. In a word, pain. All manner of ‘blood, torture, and sacrifices’ (p497), such as sacrificing the first-born, mutilation (castration), all cruel religious rites, the whole of asceticism (the intense focus on a few central ideas and the exclusion of all competing ones) and the severity of the penal code serve to create and fix a memory in the mind of man and overcome forgetfulness. With this kind of practice, serious, sombre *reason* and *reflection* were born.

Nietzsche now turns to how ‘guilt’ and ‘bad conscience’ came onto the scene.

Punishment was not originally imposed because an offender was responsible for his act (as we might think today) but because of the idea that ‘every injury has its *equivalent* and can actually be paid back, even if only through the *pain* of the culprit’ (p499) and this notion came about from the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*.

Originally, the debtor made a contract with the creditor and promised that if he failed to pay he would substitute it for something else he possessed, but the creditor could ‘inflict every kind of indignity and torture upon the body of the debtor; for example, cut from it as much as seemed commensurate with the size of the debt’ (p500). This implies that the causing of pain could satisfy, or was equivalent, to a debt, i.e. some kind of pleasure was derived from the inflicting of pain on another, ‘to what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt? To the extent that to *make* suffer was in the highest degree pleasurable’ (p501). ‘To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more’ (p503).

There was nothing wrong with this desire and Nietzsche feels that life was more ‘cheerful’ in the past when people weren’t ashamed of this desire to cause suffering. The feeling of *shame* over this desire led to suffering being seen as the ‘principle argument *against* existence’ (p503), and gave us pessimism, the opposite of Nietzsche’s cheerfulness.

From here (legal obligations) moral conceptions of “guilt”, “conscience”, and “duty” emerged.

From the legal sphere, this mode of living (exchange, contract, guilt, right, obligation, etc) was transferred to the social sphere; ‘the community, too, stands to its members in that same vital basic relation, that of the creditor to his debtors’ (p507). Everyone lives in the community and derives benefits from this therefore there is some kind of contract between the two parties. If this pledge is broken the offender is ‘deprived henceforth of all these advantages and benefits, as is fair… [and] the community, throws him back again into the savage and outlaw state against which he has hitherto been protected’ (p507).

As a society grows in power, the transgressions of an individual seem less serious and attempts are made, not to eject the individual, but to ‘localise the affair and to prevent it from causing any further, let alone a general, disturbance’ (p508). Eventually, it could be possible for a society to become so strong that it lets ‘those who harm it go *unpunished*’ (p508). This is the most noble act and occurs when a society *overcomes itself*. The name for this act is *mercy* which is a reflection of the greatest strength. When ‘the just man remains just even toward those who have harmed him… this is a piece of perfection and supreme mastery on earth’ (p510).

Nietzsche now briefly turns to *ressentiment* (which he says anti-Semites are full of) and how it calls revenge, justice. He observes that an active, aggressive man (somewhere between the truly noble and the man of *ressentiment*) is always behind the formation of laws which are a ‘struggle *against* the reactive feelings’ (p511) of the man of *ressentiment*. Nietzsche’s point with this detour is that “just” and “unjust” exist only *after* the institution of a law and not just the perpetration of the injury. The reason for this is a keystone in Nietzsche’s philosophy; that ‘*in itself*, of course, no injury, assault, exploitation, destruction can be “unjust,” since life operates *essentially*, that is in its basic functions, through injury, assault, exploitation, destruction’ (p512), in short the will to power.

Coming back to punishment, Nietzsche says that the origin and the utility of a thing are invariably different, as in ‘the eye being made for seeing, the hand being made for grasping… [and] punishment was devised for punishing’ (p513). Nietzsche reveals his take on evolution here; it ‘is thus by no means its *progressus* toward a goal’ (p513) and often in order to advance something must be sacrificed, ‘mankind in the mass sacrificed to the prosperity of a single *stronger* species of man – that *would* be an advance’ (p514). He rejects the notion of ‘adaptation’ (which is a species of ‘reactivity’) in favour of a more wilful, aggressive, spontaneous force.

There are two aspects of punishment, the *enduring* (the custom, the actual act) and the *fluid* (the meaning, purpose). Nietzsche cites many possible ‘meanings’ for punishment concluding that ‘punishment is overdetermined by utilities of all kinds’ (p517). One of these meanings it is believed to have is providing the reaction in the punished of ‘guilt’ or ‘bad conscience’ (or the ‘sting of conscience’) but it is far more often the case that punishment makes the punished harder and colder. The punished sees ‘exactly the same kind of actions practiced in the service of justice and approved of and practiced with a good conscience… [proving that] his judges in no way condemn and repudiate *as such*, but only when they are applied and directed to certain particular ends’ (p518).

Bad conscience did not come from punishment.

Before society and peace, men were much more savage and barbaric, but afterwards they had to curb these lustful and wanton drives, instead relying on thinking, ‘reduced to their “consciousness,” their weakest and most fallible organ’ (p520). However the old instincts (for destruction, joy in persecuting, attacking) had not gone away and so they were turned inward – what Nietzsche calls the ‘*internalisation* of man’ (p520). (Punishment was one of the ways the political institution protected itself from these old instincts.) ‘Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the “bad conscience.”’ (p521)

Two presuppositions: one, this change was not gradual or voluntary but a break; two, the society was formed and maintained by violence.

The state was first founded by the ‘blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race’ (p522) which commands with pure power. They do not know anything about guilt or bad conscience or contracts, they know themselves justified in what they do, their bold creating. ‘It is not in *them* that the “bad conscience” developed… but it would not have developed *without them*’ (p523). This bad conscience attacked the individual itself and led to concepts like selflessness, self-denial and self-sacrifice becoming virtues. Nietzsche sees the delight with which the unegoistic man carries out his actions as confirmation of this whole thesis – ‘this delight is tied to cruelty’ (p524). The ‘bad conscience… provided the conditions for the *value* of the unegoistic’ (p524).

From here Nietzsche is interested in the most terrible consequences of bad conscience. Tribes always recognised a duty to their elders for their sacrifices and accomplishments which the tribe was built on. There is a debt which must be continually paid back but as the tribe grows stronger, the forebears also grow in strength as powerful spirits. As the tribe grows stronger, the spirit of the ancestors grows stronger and they begin to exert more and more fear over the tribe, until eventually they may transform into a god. A god with an origin in fear.

The maximum God attained thus far was the Christian God and by this stage the indebtedness of the tribe to him was beyond what they could pay and so His divine birth was ‘therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth’ (p526). As the faith in this God declines, so does the feeling of guilt.

 This indebtedness leads to an ‘irredeemable penance’ and the idea that it can never be discharged (eternal punishment). From here the guilt can be turned back against the race’s primal ancestor (Adam) or nature or existence in general (nihilism, Buddhism, etc). In Christianity an ingenious solution arrives to this intractable problem; God makes payment to himself!

The real reason behind all of this Nietzsche thinks, is that the suppressed terrible, barbaric man has used religion as the ultimate self-torturing device. ‘Guilt before *God*’ (p528). God represents the diametric opposite of all his animal instincts and he see himself as guilty before such a spectacle.

He concludes by saying that the invention of gods need not lead to guilt, as in the Greek gods, who reflected man’s animalistic traits back in a noble form. They (the Greeks) ‘used their gods precisely so as to ward off the “bad conscience,” so as to be able to rejoice in their freedom of soul’ (p529-30). Not just this but when one of their noble brothers acted terribly, they used the gods as a scapegoat saying “He must have been deluded by a god”; in this the gods ‘took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt’ (p530).

*Third Essay* – What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?

The fact that ascetic ideals have been important to so many people ‘is an expression of the basic fact of the human will, its *horror vacui*. *it needs a goal* – and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not* will’ (p533).

Artists

In the case of artists, the ascetic ideal means nothing. Artists do not have a solid stance in the world to be deserving of consideration here, they tend to promote ideas that *others* have asserted have value. They ‘never stand apart; standing alone is contrary to their deepest instincts’ (p538).

Nietzsche gives the example of Richard Wagner who followed Schopenhauer in such a way, changing his aesthetic creed to make music the primary instrument in art (as opposed to how he formerly saw it as a part of drama).

Philosophers

Kant promoted the ideas of impersonality and universality regarding beauty, however in doing so he ‘considered art and the beautiful purely from that [point of view] of the “spectator”’ (p539). He said “That is beautiful… which gives us pleasure *without interest*” but compare this with a true artist, Stendhal, who ‘once called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*’ (p540).

Schopenhauer too, followed Kant in finding in aesthetic contemplation a reprieve or liberation from the will. Nietzsche points out that even if Schopenhauer is right, this is not the *only* right interpretation as people like Stendhal have shown where beauty *arouses* the will. So when a philosopher follows the ascetic ideal he is attempting to ‘*gain release from a torture*’ (p542).

Nietzsche points out that Schopenhauer was not a pessimist because his enemies were a source of continual *happiness* for him.

Philosophers have always found irritation at sensuality. This is because in striving for the most favourable conditions under which they can expend their strength and find maximal power, (not conditions for happiness, but conditions for power, which often turns out to be the path to unhappiness) they find that marriage and children are anathema to them. None of the great philosophers were married.

*Independence* is what philosophers value above all else and the ascetic ideal revels in independence.

So for the philosopher, what is the meaning of ascetic ideals? He sees in them the ‘optimum condition for the highest and boldest spirituality… he does *not* deny “existence,” he rather affirms *his* existence and *only* his existence’ (p544).

The three slogans of the ascetic life are, poverty, chastity and humility. Fruitful, inventive spirits always possess these traits but they don’t strive to hold these values as virtues, they naturally gravitate towards them because their *dominating instincts* force them to seek such a life. They voluntarily withdraw from the normal, busy life out of a natural dislike of noise. A philosopher avoids three things; fame, princes and women; ‘their motto is “he who possesses is possessed” – *not*, as I must say again and again, from virtue, from a laudable will to contentment and simplicity, but because their supreme lord [their dominating instinct] demands this of them’ (p546). This kind of man does not like to be disturbed by enmities nor friendships.

The Ascetic Priest

In the early days of philosophy the first philosophers had to conceal their spirit because the traits they valued, such as doubting, suspending judgement, impartiality, etc, were contrary to established the morality. In this time the morality that dominated (Nietzsche calls this the morality of mores) praised suffering and revenge while well-being, thirst for knowledge, peace and pity were immoral.

The only way the first contemplators could survive in such an atmosphere was to arouse fear in them. Even within themselves, they had to fight against the philosophic spirit, ‘they did this by using frightful means: cruelty toward themselves, inventive self-castigation’ (p551), ‘whoever has at some time built a “new heaven” has found the power to do so only in his *own hell*’ (p551). It used the ‘mask’ of previously established types of the contemplative man, i.e. some kind of religious type, priest, sorcerer, etc. In any case, the ascetic ideal came naturally with this type and the contemplative man was forced to don it.

This ascetic priest is ‘*representative of seriousness*’ (p552). He appears ‘in almost every age; he belongs to no one race; he prospers everywhere; he emerges from every class of society’ (p553). Yet the ascetic life is a contradiction, it is pure *ressentiment*, ‘an insatiable instinct and power-will that wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful, and basic conditions’ (p553-4). This instinct dislikes wellbeing, beauty and joy while finding pleasure in decay, pain, ugliness and self-sacrifice. If such an attitude towards life is to philosophise it will downgrade physicality, pain and the subject/object distinction to illusions. It will reject all sensory impressions. This drive yearns to see the world through a true objective, disinterested eye, but this is impossible. Nietzsche denounces the ‘pure, will-less subject’, ‘pure reason’, ‘absolute spirituality’, knowledge in itself’, and all other ‘dehumanised’ perspectives, ‘these demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction’ (p555). ‘There is *only*  a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our objectivity,” be’ (p555). He instead defines objectivity as ‘the ability *to control* one’s Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge’ (p555).

The ascetic ideal seems to be a struggle of life against life but this is impossible. The drive springs from ‘*the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence’ (p556). Actually at the heart of the ascetic ideal is life, fighting against death for its preservation, the preservation of life.

This sickness springs from the weak in a society. They are more fearful than the strong, evil, individual “beasts of prey” because they inspire not fear in people, but nausea and pity. When these two come together we find a will to nothingness, nihilism. Here we find ‘the conspiracy of the suffering against the well-constituted and victorious, here the aspect of the victorious is *hated*’ (p558). They aim to *represent* love, justice, wisdom, and they become skilful in this task.

In more class distinctions, Nietzsche says that the healthy cannot nurse these sick individuals, rather they need doctors and nurses who are already sick, i.e. the ascetic priest, a man who is both sick himself (full of *ressentiment*) but also strong (to defend his herd). In this Nietzsche finds the priest’s value, he ‘*alters the direction* of *ressentiment*’ (p563). Every sufferer seeks a cause for his suffering, a guilty agent, and the priest tells the sick that ‘*you alone are to blame for yourself!*’ (p564). He works this through concepts like ‘guilt’ and ‘sin’ and ‘damnation’. In providing this ‘cure’ the priest is not really a saviour because he doesn’t cure the disease, merely eases the suffering. Christianity in particular offers a great consolation to its followers without actually addressing the problem.

Thus Nietzsche defines religion as the attempt to treat a physiological problem through the psychological-moral domain. Rather the cause may be something like the crossing of different races, a race introduced into a climate unsuitable for it or the after effects of age and exhaustion in a race.

These treatments take four ‘innocent’ forms:

* Eliminate all that stimulates will and desire reducing the ‘feeling of life in general to its lowest point’ (p567). They often succeed in this and achieve a total hypnotisation or repose, or deep sleep. Absence of suffering is the greatest goal of this cure.
* Mechanical activity, i.e. being too busy to notice the suffering. This is a robotic way of life.
* Prescribing a petty pleasure easy to regularly attain; often the act of *giving* pleasure, as in, love thy neighbour. This is a happiness of ‘slight superiority’.
* The formation of a herd. ‘The strong are as naturally inclined to *separate* as the weak are to *congregate*’ (p572).

The ‘guilty’ (guilty because they actually make the sick sicker) treatments offered by the priests all involve ‘some kind of an *orgy of feeling* – employed as the most effective means of deadening dull, paralyzing, protracted pain’ (p572). The aim of this is to ‘immerse [the soul] in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression as by a flash of lightning’ (p575). Almost any affect can do this as long as it ‘explodes suddenly: anger, fear, voluptuousness, revenge, hope, triumph, despair, cruelty’ (p575).

The greatest ploy in this category was the exploitation of guilt creating ‘Sin’. And so the sick in looking for the cause of his suffering is led to himself, to some guilt in his past and he is then given to see that his suffering is in fact a punishment. This then became a desire for more punishment to ‘atone’ for this guilt.

Nietzsche likes the Old Testament but hates the New. He seems to like Luther as well for rebelling against the church and wanting to speak informally with his God.

Nietzsche now looks for an opposing force, something to have resisted the ascetic ideal.

Modern science does not fit the bill, for it’s not the opposite of the ascetic ideal, merely the ‘*latest and noblest form of it*’ (p583). Nietzsche condemns almost all scholars as petty and weak.

How about the few idealists left among the scholars and philosophers? They believe they are but Nietzsche rules them out as free spirits because they still have faith in truth and on this point they are unconditional. ‘Nothing is true, everything is permitted’ (p586). This faith in truth is a faith in the ascetic ideal itself, it asserts the ‘truth is Divine’ (p588). The truthful man affirms another world and in so doing devalues this one.

There is ‘no such thing as science “without any presuppositions”’ (p587). All science is built on a philosophy, a faith which gives it its direction, meaning, a limit, a method and a right to exist.

The fact is the will to truth requires justification, justification it has not found yet. This is the conclusion of this essay, ‘the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*’ (p589).

‘Science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation… the same overestimation of truth (more exactly: on the same belief that truth is inestimable and cannot be criticised). Therefore they are *necessarily* allies’ (p589). They also both advocate the *impoverishment of life*, seriousness, disinterest, lack of spirit, etc.

Since Copernicus we have lost our faith in the uniqueness and specialness of man. He is nothing more than an animal, all science ‘has at present the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself’ (p591-92).

Attacking the ascetic ideal also involves attacking science.

Modern historiography is no enemy of the ascetic ideal for it no longer seeks to ‘prove’ anything, it is impartial, affirming nothing, describing. This is highly ascetic and even nihilistic.

Art however, where ‘the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science’ (p589-90). This is Plato versus Homer.

Although atheism is strong, it lacks any ideals at all – except for its will to truth. Atheism is the ‘two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*’ (p596).

The only enemy of the ascetic ideal are ‘the comedians of this ideal – for they arouse mistrust of it’ (p596).

What has finally defeated the Christian God? ‘Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness taken more and more strictly… and sublimated into the scientific conscience’ (p596). This serves to illustrate Nietzsche’s point that ‘all great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming’ (p597).

Without the ascetic ideal, man’s existence had no meaning, no goal. He suffered from the problem of his meaning, his existence. Man will endure all manner of suffering, he will even seek it out, if, he can be shown a meaning for it. ‘The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind… *and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning*’ (p598).