The Genealogy of Morals: The Complete Works, Volume Thirteen, edited by Dr. Oscar Levy.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

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THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

A POLEMIC

BY

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PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES (FRAGMENT)

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

In 1887, with the view of amplifying and completing certain new doctrines which he had merely sketched in _Beyond Good and Evil_ (see especially aphorism 260), Nietzsche published _The Genealogy of Morals_. This work is perhaps the least aphoristic, in form, of all Nietzsche's productions. For analytical power, more especially in those parts where Nietzsche examines the ascetic ideal, _The Genealogy of Morals_ is unequalled by any other of his works; and, in the light which it throws upon the attitude of the ecclesiast to the man of resentment and misfortune, it is one of the most valuable contributions to sacerdotal psychology.

CONTENTS.

FIRST ESSAY. "GOOD AND EVIL," "GOOD AND BAD"

SECOND ESSAY. "GUILT," "BAD CONSCIENCE," AND THE LIKE

THIRD ESSAY. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ASCETIC IDEALS?

PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES. Translated by J. M. Kennedy

PREFACE.

1.

We are unknown, we knowers, ourselves to ourselves: this has its own good reason. We have never searched for ourselves--how should it then come to pass, that we should ever _find_ ourselves? Rightly has it been said: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." _Our_ treasure is there, where stand the hives of our knowledge. It is to those hives that we are always striving; as born creatures of flight, and as the honey-gatherers of the spirit, we care really in our hearts only for one thing--to bring something "home to the hive!"

As far as the rest of life with its so-called "experiences" is concerned, which of us has even sufficient serious interest? or sufficient time? In our dealings with such points of life, we are, I fear, never properly to the point; to be precise, our heart is not there, and certainly not our ear. Rather like one who, delighting in a divine distraction, or sunken in the seas of his own soul, in whose ear the clock has just thundered with all its force its twelve strokes of noon, suddenly wakes up, and asks himself, "What has in point of fact just struck?" so do we at times rub afterwards, as it were, our puzzled ears, and ask in complete astonishment and complete embarrassment, "Through what have we in point of fact just lived?" further, "Who are we in point of fact?" and count, _after they have struck_, as I have explained, all the twelve throbbing beats of the clock of our experience, of our life, of our being--ah!--and count wrong in the endeavour. Of necessity we remain strangers to ourselves, we understand ourselves not, in ourselves we are bound to be mistaken, for of us holds good to all eternity the motto, "Each one is the farthest away from himself"--as far as ourselves are concerned we are not "knowers."

2.

My thoughts concerning the _genealogy_ of our moral prejudices--for they constitute the issue in this polemic--have their first, bald, and provisional expression in that collection of aphorisms entitled _Human, all-too-Human, a Book for Free Minds_, the writing of which was begun in Sorrento, during a winter which allowed me to gaze over the broad and dangerous territory through which my mind had up to that time wandered. This took place in the winter of 1876-77; the thoughts themselves are older. They were in their substance already the same thoughts which I take up again in the following treatises:--we hope that they have derived benefit from the long interval, that they have grown riper, clearer, stronger, more complete. The fact, however, that I still cling to them even now, that in the meanwhile they have always held faster by each other, have, in fact, grown out of their original shape and into each other, all this strengthens in my mind the joyous confidence that they must have been originally neither separate disconnected capricious nor sporadic phenomena, but have sprung from a common root, from a fundamental "_fiat_" of knowledge, whose empire reached to the soul's depth, and that ever grew more definite in its voice, and more definite in its demands. That is the only state of affairs that is proper in the case of a philosopher.

We have no right to be "_disconnected_"; we must neither err "disconnectedly" nor strike the truth "disconnectedly." Rather with the necessity with which a tree bears its fruit, so do our thoughts, our values, our Yes's and No's and If's and Whether's, grow connected and interrelated, mutual witnesses of _one_ will, _one_ health, _one_ kingdom, _one_ sun--as to whether they are to _your_ taste, these

fruits of ours?--But what matters that to the trees? What matters that to us, us the philosophers?

3.

Owing to a scrupulosity peculiar to myself, which I confess reluctantly,--it concerns indeed _morality_,--a scrupulosity, which manifests itself in my life at such an early period, with so much spontaneity, with so chronic a persistence and so keen an opposition to environment, epoch, precedent, and ancestry that I should have been almost entitled to style it my "_â priori_"--my curiosity and my suspicion felt themselves betimes bound to halt at the question, of what in point of actual fact was the _origin_ of our "Good" and of our "Evil." Indeed, at the boyish age of thirteen the problem of the origin of Evil already haunted me: at an age "when games and God divide one's heart," I devoted to that problem my first childish attempt at the literary game, my first philosophic essay--and as regards my infantile solution of the problem, well, I gave quite properly the honour to God, and made him the _father_ of evil. Did my own "_â priori_" demand that precise solution from me? that new, immoral, or at least "amoral" "_â priori_" and that "categorical imperative" which was its voice (but oh! how hostile to the Kantian article, and how pregnant with problems!), to which since then I have given more and more attention, and indeed what is more than attention. Fortunately I soon learned to separate theological from moral prejudices, and I gave up looking for a _supernatural_ origin of evil. A certain amount of historical and philological education, to say nothing of an innate faculty of psychological discrimination _par excellence_ succeeded in transforming almost immediately my original problem into the following one:--Under what conditions did Man invent for himself

those judgments of values, "Good" and "Evil"? _And what intrinsic value do they possess in themselves?_ Have they up to the present hindered or advanced human well-being? Are they a symptom of the distress, impoverishment, and degeneration of Human Life? Or, conversely, is it in them that is manifested the fulness, the strength, and the will of Life, its courage, its self-confidence, its future? On this point I found and hazarded in my mind the most diverse answers, I established distinctions in periods, peoples, and castes, I became a specialist in my problem, and from my answers grew new questions, new investigations, new conjectures, new probabilities; until at last I had a land of my own and a soil of my own, a whole secret world growing and flowering, like hidden gardens of whose existence no one could have an inkling--oh, how happy are we, we finders of knowledge, provided that we know how to keep silent sufficiently long.

4.

My first impulse to publish some of my hypotheses concerning the origin of morality I owe to a clear, well-written, and even precocious little book, in which a perverse and vicious kind of moral philosophy (your real English kind) was definitely presented to me for the first time; and this attracted me--with that magnetic attraction, inherent in that which is diametrically opposed and antithetical to one's own ideas. The title of the book was _The Origin of the Moral Emotions_; its author, Dr. Paul Rée; the year of its appearance, 1877. I may almost say that I have never read anything in which every single dogma and conclusion has called forth from me so emphatic a negation as did that book; albeit a negation tainted by either pique or intolerance. I referred accordingly both in season and out of season in

the previous works, at which I was then working, to the arguments of that book, not to refute them--for what have I got to do with mere refutations but substituting, as is natural to a positive mind, for an improbable theory one which is more probable, and occasionally no doubt, for one philosophic error, another. In that early period I gave, as I have said, the first public expression to those theories of origin to which these essays are devoted, but with a clumsiness which I was the last to conceal from myself, for I was as yet cramped, being still without a special language for these special subjects, still frequently liable to relapse and to vacillation. To go into details, compare what I say in _Human, all-too-Human_, part i., about the parallel early history of Good and Evil, Aph. 45 (namely, their origin from the castes of the aristocrats and the slaves); similarly, Aph. 136 et seq., concerning the birth and value of ascetic morality; similarly, Aphs. 96, 99, vol. ii., Aph. 89, concerning the Morality of Custom, that far older and more original kind of morality which is _toto cœlo_ different from the altruistic ethics (in which Dr. Rée, like all the English moral philosophers, sees the ethical "Thing-in-itself"); finally, Aph. 92. Similarly, Aph. 26 in _Human, all-too-Human_, part ii., and Aph. 112, the _Dawn of Day_, concerning the origin of Justice as a balance between persons of approximately equal power (equilibrium as the hypothesis of all contract, consequently of all law); similarly, concerning the origin of Punishment, _Human, all-too-Human_, part ii., Aphs. 22, 23, in regard to which the deterrent object is neither essential nor original (as Dr. Rée thinks:--rather is it that this object is only imported, under certain definite conditions, and always as something extra and additional).

5.

In reality I had set my heart at that time on something much more important than the nature of the theories of myself or others concerning the origin of morality (or, more precisely, the real function from my view of these theories was to point an end to which they were one among many means). The issue for me was the value of morality, and on that subject I had to place myself in a state of abstraction, in which I was almost alone with my great teacher Schopenhauer, to whom that book, with all its passion and inherent contradiction (for that book also was a polemic), turned for present help as though he were still alive. The issue was, strangely enough, the value of the "un-egoistic" instincts, the instincts of pity, self-denial, and self-sacrifice which Schopenhauer had so persistently painted in golden colours, deified and etherealised, that eventually they appeared to him, as it were, high and dry, as "intrinsic values in themselves," on the strength of which he uttered both to Life and to himself his own negation. But against _these very_ instincts there voiced itself in my soul a more and more fundamental mistrust, a scepticism that dug ever deeper and deeper: and in this very instinct I saw the _great_ danger of mankind, its most sublime temptation and seduction--seduction to what? to nothingness?--in these very instincts I saw the beginning of the end, stability, the exhaustion that gazes backwards, the will turning _against_ Life, the last illness announcing itself with its own mincing melancholy: I realised that the morality of pity which spread wider and wider, and whose grip infected even philosophers with its disease, was the most sinister symptom of our modern European civilisation; I realised that it was the route along which that civilisation slid on its way to--a new Buddhism?--a European Buddhism?--_Nihilism_? This exaggerated estimation in

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