

tivities, togetherness, and all sorts of diversions. The increase in church attendance after World War II and the so-called revival of religion would have sickened Kierkegaard no less than the Hebrew prophets.

He was authoritarian. He reminds us that almost all of the great Christians were authoritarian. But he was also a voice crying in the wilderness, telling each of us to leave father and mother, instead of saying like the false prophets: "The family that prays together stays together."

Those who would credit Kierkegaard with a theory or partial but imperfect formulations of ideas that were better formulated by Aquinas may well underestimate their man. Against all such endeavors, and many more, Brother Brash's critique may stand; but it does not do justice to Søren Kierkegaard, "that individual!" Thus spoke Brother Brash!

From W. Kaufmann (1951) *From Shakespeare to Nietzsche*  
 Prof. Ystad, Kierkegaard, Princeton, NJ  
 Praveen Shrivastava, Penn, Chicago, IL  
 PP: 201-217

# I I HOW NIETZSCHE REVOLUTIONIZED ETHICS

In the development from Shakespeare to existentialism no figure is more important than Nietzsche. Compared with him, Kierkegaard seems narrow for all his intensity, and few other writers of any age equal his fusion of scope and passion, of range and depth. In this respect there is something Shakespearean about Nietzsche, although his often strident polemical tone leaves no doubt about the differences between the two men.

More often than most great writers, Nietzsche has been seen in the perspective of his relation to some specific man or movement: at one time it was evolutionism; at another, Nazism; and, after the defeat of Hitler, existentialism. But no one approach of this kind is at all adequate to bring out that experience of the world on which Nietzsche's philosophy was based. To that end, it would be more fruitful to juxtapose Nietzsche with a great poet—and this will be done in the next two chapters. The danger of that approach is that it may be too aesthetic and may fail to do justice to the bite of Nietzsche's thought. Before we develop Nietzsche's continuity with a great tradition, we ought to ask ourselves in what way he revolutionized thought. And if a single field must be chosen to give at least some idea of the break that Nietzsche brought about, ethics is the best choice. Indirectly, this discussion should also illuminate his relation to the Nazis and the existentialists.

Nietzsche's ideas about ethics are far less well known than some of his striking coinages: immoralist, overman, master morality, slave morality, beyond good and evil, will to power.

revaluation of all values, and philosophizing with a hammer. These are indeed among his key conceptions, but they can be understood correctly only in context. This is true of philosophic terms generally: Plato's ideas or forms, Spinoza's God, Berkeley's ideas, and Kant's intuition all do not mean what they would mean in a nonphilosophic context; but scarcely anybody supposes that they do. In Nietzsche's case, however, this mistake is a commonplace—surely because few other philosophers, if any, have equaled the brilliance and suggestiveness of his formulations. His phrases, once heard, are never forgotten; they stand up by themselves, without requiring the support of any context; and so they have come to live independently of their sire's intentions. In this chapter an attempt will be made to sketch the context from which Nietzsche's central conceptions derive their meaning.

## 2

Nietzsche revolutionized ethics by asking new questions. As he saw it, his predecessors had simply taken for granted that they knew what was good and what was evil. Moral judgments had been accepted as incontrovertible facts, and the philosophers had considered it their task to find reasons for them. In other words, traditional moral philosophers made it their business to rationalize the moral idiosyncrasies of their environment. What F. H. Bradley was to say of metaphysics in his *Preface to Appearance and Reality* (1891) is what Nietzsche said in effect of traditional ethics: it is "the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct." But Nietzsche would not have added like Bradley that "to find these reasons is no less an instinct." Nor, indeed, did he consider moral idiosyncrasies instinctive in any literal sense. Far from constructing them as part of our biological make-up, Nietzsche was struck by the great variety of moral views in different times and places.

To cite Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* ("On Old and New Tablets," §2): "When I came to men I found them sitting on an old conceit: the conceit that they have long known what is good and evil for man. All talk of virtue seemed an old and

wearily matter to man; and whoever wanted to sleep well still talked of good and evil before going to sleep." With Nietzsche, our common moral valuations are suddenly considered questionable, and ethics, instead of being a matter of inconsequential rationalizations, becomes a critique of culture, a vivisection of modern man.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (§186) Nietzsche presents the other side of the coin: in a sense, his undertaking is more modest than that of his predecessors.

One should own up in all strictness what is still necessary here for a long time to come, what alone is justified so far: to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast realm of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, grow, beget, and perish—and perhaps attempts to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms of such living crystallizations—all to prepare a *typology* of morals. To be sure: so far one has not been so modest. With a stiff seriousness that inspires laughter, all our philosophers demanded something far more exalted, presumptuous, and solemn from themselves as soon as they approached the study of morality: they wanted to supply a *rational foundation* for morals; and every philosopher so far has believed that he has provided such a foundation. Morality itself, however, was accepted as "given." How remote from their coarse pride was that task which they considered insignificant and left in dust and dirt—the task of description, although the subtlest fingers and senses can scarcely be subtle enough for it. Because our moral philosophers knew the facts of morality only very approximately in arbitrary extracts or in accidental epitomes—for example, as the morality of their environment, their class, their church, their time, their climate and part of the world—because they were poorly informed and not even very curious about different peoples, ages, and the past, they never laid eyes on the real problems of morality; for these emerge only when we compare *many* moralities. In all previous studies of morality one thing was lacking, strange as that may sound: the problem of morality itself; what was lacking was the suspicion

*to be precise, all the previous moralities were given*

that there was anything at all problematic here. What the philosophers called "a rational foundation for morality" and tried to supply was, properly considered, only a scholarly variation of a common *faith* in the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* of this faith; in short, itself simply another feature of, or rather another fact within, a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis, a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic—certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith.

Nietzsche is prepared to press two new questions. How does our prevalent morality compare with other moralities? And what can be said about morality in general? To begin with the first question, the morality of his society does not strike Nietzsche as divine or as supremely venerable; and he has no wish, any more than Freud a quarter of a century later, to defend its surpassing wisdom. On the contrary, he finds it far from admirable in many respects and in some ways quite contemptible in comparison with other moralities, developed elsewhere. We have quoted Nietzsche's demand for "attempts to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms . . . to prepare a *typology* of morals." Later in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§260), he suggests two types:

Wandering through the many subtler and coarser moralities which have so far been prevalent on earth, or still are prevalent, I found that certain features recurred regularly together and were closely associated—until I finally discovered two basic types and one basic difference. There is *master morality* and *slave morality*. I add immediately that in all the higher and more mixed cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities, and yet more often the interpenetration and mutual misunderstanding of both, and at times they occur directly alongside of each other—even in the same human being within a single soul. The moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of their difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight—or among the ruled group, the slaves and the dependent of

all degrees. In the first case, when the ruling group determines what is "good," the exalted, proud states of the soul are experienced as conferring distinction and determining the order of rank. The noble man separates from himself those in whom the opposite of such exalted, proud states finds expression: he despises them. It should be noted immediately that in this first type of morality the opposition of "good" and "bad" means about the same as "noble" and "contemptible." (The opposition of "good" and "evil" has a different origin.) One feels contempt for the cowardly, the anxious, the petty, those who are intent on narrow utility; also for the mistrustful with their untrusting glances, those who humble themselves, the doglike people who allow themselves to be maltreated, the begging fathers, above all the liars: it is part of the fundamental faith of all aristocrats that the common people lie. "We truthful ones"—thus the nobility in ancient Greece referred to itself. It is plain that moral designations were everywhere first applied to *human beings* and only later, derivatively, to actions. Therefore it is a gross mistake when historians of morality start out from such questions as: why was the compassionate action praised? The noble kind of man experiences *itself* as determining values. . . . Such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of fullness, of power that wants to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth which would give and bestow. The noble man, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, out of pity, but more prompted by an urge which is begotten by the excess of power. The noble man honors himself as one who is powerful—also one who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness.

This contrast of the two types is elaborated in the first of the three inquiries that constitute Nietzsche's next book, *Toward a Genealogy of Morals*. The first chapter is entitled "Good and Evil versus Good and Bad." Here Nietzsche attempts a detailed portrait of slave morality, which contrasts

not good and bad but good and evil. Slave morality, he suggests (§10), is created by

the resentment of those who are denied the real reaction, that of the deed, and who compensate with an imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant affirmation of oneself, slave morality immediately says No to what comes from outside, to what is different, to what is not oneself; and this No is its creative deed. This reversal of the value-position glance—this necessary direction outward instead of back to oneself—is of the nature of resentment: to come into being, slave morality requires an outside world, a counterworld.

The noble morality begins with self-affirmation, "and its negative concept, 'base,' 'mean,' 'bad,' is only an after-born, pale, contrasting image." Slave morality, on the other hand, begins with a negation; and its positive ideals are afterthoughts, contrasts to what is hated. *the noble morality*

Misconceptions about Nietzsche's two types are legion, and they shall not be catalogued here. But another passage from the section just cited may dispel some of them: nobility precludes resentment.

*by Dierckx/LeClude*

To be unable to take one's own enemies, accidents, and misdeeds seriously for long—that is the sign of strong and rich natures. . . . Such a man simply shakes off with one shuffling much vermin that would have hurtled itself deep in others; here alone it is also possible—assuming that it is possible at all on earth—that there be real "love of one's enemies." How much respect has a noble person for his enemies! And such respect is already a bridge to love. After all, he demands his enemy for himself, as his distinction; he can stand no enemy but one in whom there is nothing to be despised and much to be honored. Conversely, imagine "the enemy" as conceived by a man of resentment—and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived "the evil enemy," "the evil one"—and indeed as the fundamental concept from which he then derives, as an afterimage and counterinstance, a "good one"—himself.

*Some 11 distinctions  
or obvious ones  
on 11/10/15*

We are now ready to understand the phrase "beyond good and evil." The first chapter of the *Genealogy* ends: "Beyond Good and Evil—at least this does not mean 'Beyond Good and Bad.'" Nietzsche associates the contrast of good and evil with the morality of resentment; and the suggestion that we might go "beyond good and evil" invites comparison with Zarathustra's challenge in the chapter "On the Virtuous": "you are too pure for the filth of the words: revenge, punishment, reward, retribution." The same chapter contains a typology of different conceptions of virtue with vivisectional intent. The conception of resentment—as the source of many moral judgments—is one of Nietzsche's central themes. A powerful early statement will be found in *The Dawn* (§202); and in *Zarathustra* the theme is developed in the chapters "On the Adder's Bite," "On the Pitying," "On the Tarantulas" ("For that man be delivered from revenge, that is for me the bridge to the highest hope"), and "On Redemption."

Nietzsche presents master and slave morality as two types without claiming that every morality must represent either one or the other; and least of all does he claim, as is often supposed, that every man is either a master or a slave. When he speaks of these two types, he uses the words master and slave in a fairly literal manner to suggest that moral judgments will differ, depending on whether they were developed among men who ruled or men who were oppressed. And immediately after first introducing the terms he adds, as we have seen, "that in all the higher and more mixed cultures" the two types interpenetrate, and moral views derived from both strains may be encountered in the same person. Here he is of course referring to our own culture. And he devoted much effort to pointing up the inconsistencies in our moral judgments; and particularly he sought to uncover the ways in which the Christian virtues were molded by the resentment of the oppressed classes among which Christianity first made headway.

What Nietzsche opposed in Christian morality was not, as is often claimed, a humane attitude. On the contrary, what he opposed were such features as these: resentment, an antagonism against excellence, a predisposition in favor of mediocrity or even downright baseness, a leveling tendency, the convic-

tion that sex is sinful, a devaluation of both body and intellect in favor of the soul, and the devaluation of this whole world in favor of another. In the end, he suggests that all these traits are rooted in resentment.

## 3

"How one philosophizes with a hammer" is the subtitle of one of Nietzsche's last works, *The Twilight of the Idols*, and he explains in the preface what he means: he speaks of idols "which are here touched with a hammer as with a tuning fork"; and instead of crushing the idols he speaks of hearing "as a reply that famous hollow sound which speaks of bloated entrails." The book was originally to bear the title "A Psychologist's Idleness," and Nietzsche's instrument is clearly the little hammer of the psychologist, not a sledge.

It is similar with the "revaluation of all values." Nietzsche does not arbitrarily invert our traditional valuations but tries to show, by an act of internal criticism, how the moral judgments of Christianity are born of resentment and how Christian morality, being profoundly hateful, must be condemned by its own professed standards.

Beyond that, Nietzsche pictures Christianity as the "revaluation of all the values of antiquity" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, §46). He claims that the Christians turned the embodiment of classical morality into the prototype of evil. He has in mind not only the Christian revaluation of pride, physical excellence, and sex but also such passages as this one from the first chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, which Nietzsche cites in his *Anti-Christ* (§45): "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to ruin the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to ruin what is strong; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and what is nothing, to bring to nought what is something." Far from seeing himself as a wayward iconoclast who turns upside down the whole Western tradition in morals, Nietzsche claims that Christianity stood classical morality on its head.

While the epithets "master morality" and "slave morality"

are intended, first of all, to be descriptive and to refer to origins, Nietzsche's contrast is, of course, hortatory too. He wants to wean us from those elements in our moral heritage that are characteristic of slave morality. But two points should be noted. First, Nietzsche's analyses do not stand or fall with his preferences, any more than his preferences stand or fall with his analyses. And, secondly, his typology does not by any means commit him to any unreserved acceptance, let alone glorification, of master morality. In the chapter on "The Impovers of Mankind" in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche discusses the Indian "law of Manu" as an example of master morality and leaves no doubt whatever about his own reaction to Manu's inhumane treatment of the outcastes, the chandalas: "These regulations are instructive enough: here we encounter for once *Arzhan* humanity, quite pure, quite primordial—we learn that the concept of 'pure blood' is the opposite of a harmless concept."

## 4

This brief account may give some indication of Nietzsche's answer to his own question of how our prevalent morality compares with other moralities. There remains the question: What can be said about morality in general? If we do not accept morality as simply given, and if we acknowledge that there are many different moralities, what can we make of this whole phenomenon of morality? There are two sections in *Beyond Good and Evil* (188 and 198) that offer interesting suggestions in answer to this question.

Every morality is, as opposed to *laissez aller*, a bit of tyranny against "nature"; also against "reason"; but this in itself is no objection, as long as we do not have some other morality which permits us to decree that every kind of tyranny and unreason is impermissible. What is essential and ineliminable in every morality is that it constitutes a long compulsion: to understand Stoicism or Port Royal or Puritanism, one should recall the compulsion under which every language

Strongly  
opposed to  
unreason?

so far has achieved strength and freedom—the metrical compulsion of rhyme and rhythm.

Nietzsche goes on to point out how all "freedom, subtlety, boldness" require discipline; and without discipline we should not have the achievements "for whose sake life on earth is worthwhile; for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality." Nietzsche concludes this section (188):

"Thou shalt obey someone, and for a long time: else thou wilt perish and lose the last respect for yourself"—this appears to me to be the moral imperative of nature which, however, is neither "categorical" as the old Kant would have it (hence the "else") nor addressed to the individual (what do individuals matter?), but to peoples, races, ages, classes—but above all to the human animal, to *man*.

In the other section (198) it is suggested that every morality that addresses itself to the individual is really a prescription for living with one's passions. Nietzsche tries to show this in the cases of Stoicism, Spinoza, Aristotle, and Goethe, and claims that these moralities are "without exception baroque and unreasonable in form—because they are addressed to all and generalize where generalizations are impermissible." Interpreted conditionally and taken with a grain of salt, they contain a good deal of wisdom, but no moral code can be unconditionally applied to all men.

## 5

The type that Nietzsche himself most admires is by no means his own invention. He resembles Socrates and the great-souled man of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (IV, 3) as well as Shakespeare's ninety-fourth sonnet and these lines from *Measure for Measure*: "O, it is excellent/To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous/To use it like a giant." To cite *Zarathustra* ("On Those Who Are Sublime"): "There is nobody from whom I want beauty as much as from you who are powerful: let your kindness be your final self-conquest. Of all evil I deem you capable: therefore I want the good from you.

Verily, I have often laughed at the weaklings who thought themselves good because they had no claws" (cf. chapter 1 above).

The highest type, to Nietzsche's mind, is the passionate man who is the master of his passions, able to employ them creatively without having to resort to asceticism for fear that his passions might conquer him. But not everybody is capable of this achievement, and Nietzsche does not believe in the possibility of a universal morality. He prefers self-control and submission to both license and asceticism, but concedes that for some asceticism may be necessary. "Those who require such a radical prescription strike him as weaker, less powerful types than men like Goethe, for example."

The will to power is, according to Nietzsche, a universal <sup>in every</sup> drive, found in all men. It prompts the slave who dreams of a heaven from which he hopes to behold his master in hell no less than it prompts the master. Both resentment and brutality, both sadism and asceticism are expressions of it. Indeed, Nietzsche thinks that all human behavior is reducible to this single basic force. He does not endorse the will to power any more than Freud endorses sexual desire; but he thinks we shall be better off if we face the facts and understand ourselves than if we condemn others hypocritically, without understanding.

The overman, finally, is not what Nietzsche expects from the evolutionary process (he himself rejected this misinterpretation unequivocally) but the image and incarnation of the accomplishment of man's striving. Instead of placing perfection either above the clouds or in the past, nineteen centuries ago, and instead of asking man to adore a perfection of which he is constitutionally incapable, Nietzsche places it before man as an object of will and purpose: here is what man should make of himself. In the words of *Zarathustra*'s first speech to the people: "I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"

Every morality is a recipe for a certain type of man, an explicitation of a vision of what man might be. Nietzsche suggests that we examine every morality with this in mind, and ask ourselves what we think of this vision—or that. And he offers us a vision of his own.