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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
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Daybreak

Thoughts on the prejudices of morality

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Introduction

The place of *Daybreak* in the Nietzschean corpus

Nietzsche began compiling the notes that would comprise *Daybreak* in January of 1880, finishing the book by May of the following year. Like all of Nietzsche's books, it sold poorly (fewer than 250 copies in the first five years, according to William Schaberg). Unlike most of his other works, however, it has been sadly neglected during the Nietzsche renaissance of the past three decades. *Daybreak* post-dates his famous, polemical study of classical literature, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) – the book that, at the time, destroyed Nietzsche's professional reputation in classical philology (the subject he taught at the University of Basel, until ill health forced his retirement in 1879). *Daybreak* also post-dates a somewhat less-neglected prior volume, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (1878–80), the book often said to constitute the highwater mark of Nietzsche's "positivist" phase (in which he accepted, somewhat uncritically, that science was the paradigm of all genuine knowledge).

Daybreak's relative obscurity, however, is due more to his subsequent writings, which have overshadowed it in both the classroom and the secondary literature: *The Gay Science* (1882), the four books of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–84), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), and, to a lesser extent, the works of his last sane year (1888): *Twilight of the Idols, The Antichrist,* and *Ecce Homo.* Even the compilation made (against Nietzsche's wishes) from his notebooks after his mental collapse (in January 1889) and subsequently published as *The Will to Power* (first German edition, 1901) has received more scholarly scrutiny

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than *Daybreak* – a book Nietzsche intended to publish, and one that he pronounced (in late 1888) the "book [in which] my campaign against morality begins" (*Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," sub-section 1 of section on *Daybreak*).[1]

This last observation is of crucial importance: for as he goes on to tell us in the same passage, *Daybreak* "seeks [a] new morning…[i]n a *revaluation of all values*, in a liberation from all moral values." The book, in short, marks the beginning of Nietzsche's central philosophical project: a revaluation of all values, a thorough-going critique of morality itself. It is the book that broaches "[t]he question concerning the origin of moral values" (*ibid.*), the question he returns to in *Beyond Good and Evil* (esp. Section 260) and, most famously, in the *Genealogy*. More importantly, it is the book that first develops in a substantial way themes that mark the "mature" Nietzsche: for example, his critique of the conventional view of human agency, as well as his development of a "naturalistic" conception of persons.

That it is a serious mistake to neglect *Daybreak*, and that this new edition presents a splendid opportunity for students and scholars to reconsider its central place in the corpus, we hope will become apparent in the following pages. We also hope to demonstrate how wrong-headed is the following common view of *Daybreak*, most recently expressed by the editors of *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*: "Nietzsche seems bent [in *Daybreak*] on conveying a particular type of experience in thinking to his readers, much more than he is concerned to persuade his readers to adopt any particular point of view." Nietzsche's ambitions are, we will show, far more philosophically substantial, as would befit the book in which Nietzsche's "campaign against morality" begins. First, however, we must set the intellectual stage on which *Daybreak* enters.

Nietzsche and Nietzsche's Germany

The widespread pedagogic practice of treating Nietzsche as a figure of "nineteenth-century philosophy," along with Hegel and Marx, actually does considerable violence to the real intellectual

[1] We will generally refer to Nietzsche's texts by their standard English-language acronyms: D=*Daybreak*; HA=*Human, All Too Human*; BGE=*Beyond Good and Evil*; GM=*On the Genealogy of Morality;* EH=*Ecce Homo.* Roman numerals refer to major parts or chapters; Arabic numerals refer to sections, not pages.

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history of Germany. While Hegel did dominate German philosophical life in the first quarter of the century, by 1830 his influence was waning seriously. By the 1840s and 1850s, Hegel's critics – Karl Marx, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach, among others – were both better known and more widely read than Hegel. By the time Nietzsche (born 1844) was being educated at the post-secondary level, it was not Hegel's Idealism that dominated the intellectual landscape, but rather Schopenhauer's own more Kantian metaphysical system, as well as the broad-based intellectual movement known as "German Materialism," of which Feuerbach was an early figure. (There is no evidence, however, that Nietzsche ever read Marx, who was not himself part of the "Materialist" movement at issue here.) For purposes of understanding Nietzsche, the key German figures are really Kant, Schopenhauer, and the Materialists.

Nietzsche, of course, was trained not in philosophy *per se*, but in classical philology, the exacting study of the texts and cultures of the ancient world. Unlike contemporary literary theorists, nineteenth-century German classicists viewed the interpretation of texts as a *science*, whose aim was to discover what texts *really mean* through an exhaustive study of language, culture and context. Nietzsche proved a brilliant student, and was awarded a professorship in 1869, even before earning his doctorate. Yet Nietzsche was always ill-at-ease with the narrow academic horizons of professional philology. He sought to do more than solve mere scholarly "puzzles"; he wanted to connect the study of classical civilization to his far more pressing concern with the state of contemporary German culture. It was this project he undertook in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a book that was, not surprisingly, poorly received by his academic peers.

Evidence of Nietzsche's classical training and his admiration of classical civilization abounds throughout *Daybreak*. Two themes, in particular, recur. First, Nietzsche embraced the "realism" of the Sophists and Presocratics, philosophers who had the courage, in Nietzsche's view, to look reality in the eye, and report things as they really are, without euphemism or sentimentality. Nietzsche saw, with good reason, the great Greek historian Thucydides as the embodiment of this perspective on human nature and human affairs, noting that in Thucydides, "that *culture of the most impartial knowledge of the world* finds its last glorious flower: that culture which had in Sophocles its poet, in Pericles its statesman, in Hippocrates its

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physician, in Democritus its natural philosopher; which deserves to be baptized with the name of its teachers, the Sophists..." (168). Nietzsche himself strives to imitate Thucydides' realistic appraisal of human motivations, for example, when he observes that "egoistic" actions "have hitherto been by far the most frequent actions, and will continue to be so for all future time" (148).

Second, Nietzsche defends the "empiricism" of the Presocratics against the "idealism" of Plato; indeed he sees as fundamental to the whole history of philosophy the dispute between those who accept as the only reality what the "senses" reveal about the world and those who claim that the "real" world exists beyond the sensible world. It is clear where Nietzsche stands on this question. He rejects the "dialectic" method as a way of getting behind "the veil of appearance" – a project he attributes to Plato and Schopenhauer – noting that "For that to which they want to show us the way does not *exist*" (474). Elsewhere in *Daybreak*, he observes: "Thus did Plato flee from reality and desire to see things only in pallid mental pictures; he was full of sensibility and knew how easily the waves of his sensibility could close over his reason" (448; cf. 43). Here we see a characteristic Nietzschean move (to which we will return shortly): to explain a particular philosophical position (e.g. Plato's view that the "real" world is the world of "Forms" or "Ideas," that are inaccessible to the senses) in terms of facts about the person who advances the position (e.g. Plato's excessive sensitivity).

These critical remarks about Plato must be balanced with Nietzsche's admiration for Plato's "genius" (497). Thus, in a remark that remains apt today, Nietzsche contrasts the "Platonic dialogue" in which "souls were filled with drunkenness at the rigorous and sober game of concept, generalization, refutation, limitation" with "how philosophy is done today" in which philosophers "want to be 'artistic natures'" and to enjoy "the divine privilege of being incomprehensible" (544).

Nietzsche's engagement with the classical world marks just one of the three important intellectual influences on his philosophical writing. The other two were the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the German Materialist movement of the 1850s and 1860s. We shall discuss Schopenhauer's impact on Nietzsche in detail below in the context of *Daybreak*'s central theme, the critique of morality. Here we introduce some of the main themes of German Materialism.

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INTRODUCTION

German Materialism had its origins in Feuerbach's work of the late 1830s and early 1840s, but it really exploded on to the cultural scene in the 1850s, under the impetus of the startling new discoveries about human beings made by the burgeoning science of physiology. The medical doctor Ludwig Büchner summed up the Materialist point of view well in his 1855 best-seller *Force and Matter*, the book that became the "Bible" of Materialism. "The researches and discoveries of modern times," he wrote in the preface to the eighth edition, "can no longer allow us to doubt that man, with all he has and possesses, be it mental or corporeal, is a *natural product* like all other organic beings." Our evidence of Nietzsche's familiarity with the Materialists is extensive. For one thing, it is impossible that a literate young person in Germany at the time could have been *unfamiliar* with the Materialists. As one critic wrote in 1856: "A new world view is settling into the minds of men. It goes about like a virus. Every young mind of the generation now living is affected by it" (quoted in Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, p. 10). More concretely, we do know that Nietzsche read (with great enthusiasm) Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* (published 1866), a book which mounted an extensive (but sympathetic) NeoKantian critique of the Materialists. In fact, in a letter of February 1868 (quoted in Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche*, p. 13), Nietzsche called Lange's book "a real treasure-house," mentioning, among other things, Lange's discussion of the "materialist movement of our times," including the work of Feuerbach, Büchner, and the physiologists Jacob Moleschott and Herman von Helmholtz. From Lange, Nietzsche would have learned of the Materialist view that "The nature of man is...only a special case of universal physiology, as thought is only a special case in the chain of the physical processes of life." Indeed, that he took the lesson to heart is suggested in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, where he tells us (in his discussion of *Human, All Too Human*) that in the late 1870s, "A truly burning thirst took hold of me: henceforth I really pursued nothing *more* than physiology, medicine and natural science." A bit earlier in the same work (II: 2), he complains of the "blunder" that he "became a philologist – why not at least a physician or something else that opens one's eyes?"

Yet the most compelling evidence of the Materialist impact on Nietzsche is the extent to which Materialist themes appear in Nietzsche's work, including *Daybreak*. The Materialists embraced the idea that human beings were essentially *bodily* organisms,

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whose attitudes, beliefs, and values were explicable by reference to *physiological* facts about them. Spiritual, religious, and moral explanations of human beings were to be supplanted by purely physical or physiological explanations.

Thus, Moleschott's 1850 work *The Physiology of Food* contained 500 pages of detailed information about the physical and chemical properties of food and human digestion, while his popular companion volume, *The Theory of Food: For the People*, spelled out the implications of this research in terms of the different diets that different types of people need to flourish. In reviewing Moleschott's book, Feuerbach expressed the core idea as follows: "If you want to improve the people then give them better food instead of declamations against sin. Man is what he eats" (quoted in Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, p. 92). Büchner's *Force and Matter* took a related tack, seeking to explain human character and belief systems in physiological terms. So, for example, he suggested that "A copious secretion of bile has, as is well known, a powerful influence on the mental disposition" and arguing elsewhere in the same work that it was, "Newton's atrophied brain [that] caused him in old age to become interested in studying the…Bible."

With figures like Moleschott and Büchner ascendant on the intellectual scene, it is hardly surprising to find Nietzsche writing as follows in *Daybreak*:

> Whatever proceeds from the stomach, the intestines, the beating of the heart, the nerves, the bile, the semen – all those distempers, debilitations, excitations, the whole chance operation of the machine of which we still know so little! – had to be seen by a Christian such as Pascal as a moral and religious phenomenon, and he had to ask whether God or Devil, good or evil, salvation or damnation was to be discovered in them! Oh what an unhappy interpreter. (86; cf. 83)

Like the Materialists, Nietzsche replaces "moral" or "religious" explanations for phenomena with *naturalistic* explanations, particularly explanations couched in physiological or quasi-physiological language. Thus, he suggests that "Three-quarters of all the evil done in the world happens out of timidity: and this [is] above all a physiological phenomenon" (538), and that "our moral judgments and evaluations…are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us" (119). Indeed, he endorses, as a general explanatory scruple, the view that "all the products of [a

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person's] thinking are bound to reflect the condition he is in" (42), noting, accordingly, that any particular philosophy "translate[s] as it were into reason" what amounts to a "personal diet" (553).

The critique of morality

The central theme of *Daybreak* is its attack on morality. The attack proceeds essentially along two fronts. First, Nietzsche takes traditional morality to involve *false* presuppositions: for example, a *false* picture of human agency (roughly, the view that human beings act autonomously or freely, and thus are morally responsible for what they do). He attacks this picture of agency from the perspective of a *naturalistic* view of persons as *determined* in their actions by the fundamental physiological and psychological facts about them. Second, he takes traditional morality to be inhospitable to certain types of human flourishing. This second theme, which is less prominent than the first, is voiced at various points in *Daybreak*: for example, when Nietzsche complains that morality entails "a fundamental remoulding, indeed weakening and abolition of the individual" (132), a result of the fact that "morality is nothing other…than obedience to customs" (9), and thus is incompatible with a "free human being…[who] is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition" (9). A variation on this criticism is also apparent when he observes (*contra* Rousseau) that "Our weak unmanly, social concepts of good and evil and their tremendous ascendancy over body and soul have finally weakened all bodies and souls and snapped the self-reliant, independent, unprejudiced men, the pillars of a *strong* civilization…" (164). The view that morality poses a special threat to human *excellence* or *greatness* is one that will become more prominent in Nietzsche's later works, though it remains visible in this early book as well.

Yet the crux of the argument in *Daybreak* is directed at the problematic presuppositions of morality. As he writes in an important passage on two different ways of "denying" morality:

> "To deny morality" – this can mean, *first*: to deny that the moral motives which men *claim* have inspired their actions really have done so – it is thus the assertion that morality consists of words and is among the coarser or more subtle deceptions (especially self-deceptions) which men practise… *Then* it can mean: to deny that moral judgments are based on truths. Here it is admitted that

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> they really are motives of action, but that in this way it is *errors* which, as the basis of all moral judgment, impel men to their moral actions. This is *my* point of view: though I should be the last to deny that *in very many cases* there is some ground for suspicion that the other point of view – that is to say, the point of view of La Rochefoucauld and others who think like him – may also be justified and in any event of great general application.
>
> Thus I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their presuppositions [*die Voraussetzungen*, which might also be translated "premises"]: *not* that countless people *feel* themselves to be immoral, but there is any *true* reason so to feel. It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called…moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently* – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently*. (D, 103)

This important passage is of great value in understanding the argument of *Daybreak*, and we shall have more to say about it, below. Note now, however, the crucial analogy Nietzsche draws between his attack on "morality" and a comparable attack on alchemy. When we deny *alchemy* we don't deny that "countless people" believed themselves to be alchemists, that is, believed themselves to be engaged in the process of transforming the base metals into gold. Rather, we deny a presupposition of their undertaking: namely (to put it in modern terms) the presupposition that the application of forces to the macro-properties of substances can effect a transformation in their micro-properties (i.e. their molecular constitution). So to "deny" morality in a similar fashion is not to deny that people act for *moral* reasons or that they take *morality* seriously, but to "deny" that the reasons for which they do so are sound: the *presuppositions* of morality are as wrong-headed as the presuppositions of alchemy.

We return, below, to the crucial question of what are the "presuppositions" of morality in Nietzsche's sense. Before we do so, however, we will sketch those features of the moral philosophies of Kant and Schopenhauer against the background of which Nietzsche came to understand morality as having false presuppositions.

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Kant and Schopenhauer on morality

According to Kant and Schopenhauer, actions are praiseworthy from the viewpoint of morality only when done from a moral motive. But these philosophers disagree about the character of moral motivation and therefore about which actions have the special kind of value they both call "moral worth" (or "ethical significance," as Schopenhauer sometimes says).

Kant and Schopenhauer agree that an action is devoid of moral worth if it is motivated purely by a desire for the agent's own happiness. But Kant goes further, claiming that desiring the happiness of others "stands on the same footing as other inclinations" and cannot therefore give moral worth to actions (G 398/66).[2] His reasoning seems to be that the desire for the happiness of another cannot give an action moral worth if the desire for one's own happiness clearly does not. Inclinations and desires may deserve praise and encouragement, but never esteem, the mark of the moral.

Kant considers duty to be the only reasonable alternative to desire or inclination as the source of moral worth. To have moral worth an action must be done from the motive of duty. This means that it is done because one recognizes that one ought to perform the action and that the action is "objectively necessary in itself" regardless of one's own desires or ends (G 414/82). The action is thus motivated by the recognition of a categorical imperative.

If one recognizes an ought statement as a hypothetical imperative, in contrast, one recognizes only a conditioned necessity, the necessity of an action for the achievement of some further end. The shopkeeper recognizes that he ought not cheat his customers because they will buy from his competitors if he does. The necessity he recognizes is thus conditioned by his own end or desire: to run a successful business. In this case, the necessity of the commanded action can be escaped if he abandons the end or purpose, whereas this is not so in the case of a categorical imperative – the necessity it formulates is not dependent on any of the agent's purposes. There is one purpose Kant thinks we cannot

[2] Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysic der Sitten* is cited as "G" followed by the page number in the Academy edition and the page number in H. J. Paton's translation: *The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1958).

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abandon, for "we can assume with certainty that all *do* have [it] by natural necessity": our own happiness. Yet imperatives that affirm the practical necessity of an action as a means to the furtherance of happiness – imperatives of prudence – still count as hypothetical rather than categorical: "an action is commended not absolutely, but only as a means to a further purpose" (G 416/83). To act from the motive of duty, according to Kant, is to act out of reverence for the law: to be motivated sufficiently to perform an action by the recognition of its objective or unconditioned necessity.

Schopenhauer denies that Kant's idea of "objective necessity" adds to our understanding of morality, calling it "nothing but a cleverly concealed and very forced paraphrase of the word *ought*" (BM 67).[3] Arguing that "every *ought* derives all sense and meaning simply and solely in reference to threatened punishment or promised reward" (BM 55), he further denies that the recognition of an ought ever involves "unconditioned necessity." The Kantian notions of absolute obligation, law, and duty are derived from theology, he claims, and have no sense or content at all apart from the assumption of a God who gives the law (BM 68). For we simply can make no sense of the idea of law, and thus of how a law could confer on us duties or obligations, unless we regard obedience as promising reward and disobedience as threatening punishment. Even if we assume that God has laid down a law, Schopenhauer would refuse it moral status. Because even a divine command would acquire the status of law only by being able to promise reward and threaten punishment, it could only be a hypothetical imperative. "Obedience to it is, of course, wise or foolish according to circumstances; yet it will always be selfish, and consequently without moral value" (BM 55).

According to Schopenhauer, then, an ought statement never counts as a categorical imperative or moral judgment, but can only be what Kant would have called a "judgment of prudence." An action performed for the sake of duty, simply because one recognizes that one ought to do it, is selfish rather than morally

[3] Schopenhauer's *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik* is cited as "BM," followed by the page number in the translation by E. F. J. Payne: *On the Basis of Morality* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965). Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* is cited as "WW," followed by the volume and page number in the translation by E. F. J. Payne: *The World as Will and Representation* (New York: Dover, 1966).

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motivated. Schopenhauer thus argues against Kant within the latter's own terms. If Kant accepted Schopenhauer's motivational claim – which he in fact explicitly rejects – that "nothing can induce us to obey except *fear* of the evil consequences of *disobedience*" (BM 142), he would have to admit either that there are no morally motivated actions, or that he had characterized them incorrectly.

The latter choice seemed obvious to Schopenhauer, who believed that few "are not convinced from their own experience that a man often acts justly, simply and solely that no wrong or injustice may be done to another," and that many of us help others with no intention in our hearts other than helping those whose distress we see (BM 138–39). It is to such actions, he claims, that we attribute "real *moral worth*," and they are motivated not by what Kant called "duty," but by compassion, "the immediate *participation*, independent of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the *suffering* of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it" (BM 144).

The "ulterior considerations" Schopenhauer regards as incompatible with compassion, and thus with moral worth, are egoistic concerns, concerns for one's own well-being. Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that if an action "has as its motive an egoistic aim, it cannot have any moral worth" (BM 141). Unlike Kant, he does not infer from this that concern for another's happiness cannot give actions moral worth. From the premise that "*egoism* and the *moral* worth of an action absolutely exclude each other," he infers instead that "the moral significance of an action can only lie in its reference to others" (BM 142). He draws this conclusion by way of the claim that the will is moved only by considerations of well-being or suffering. If moral worth does not belong to actions motivated by a concern for one's own well-being or suffering, it must belong to actions motivated by a concern for the well-being and suffering of others.

How then would Schopenhauer answer Kant's implied question as to how concern for others' well-being can give an action moral worth when concern for one's own well-being does not? He could not claim that the sphere of other-regarding behavior simply is the sphere of morality, and thus that only other-regarding behavior is properly called "moral." Neither Schopenhauer nor Kant can regard the issue about moral worth that separates them to be simply a matter of what something is called. Both philosophers

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assume that moral worth is a higher kind of worth – than, say, intellectual worth, aesthetic worth, or prudential value – and Kant describes moral worth as "that pre-eminent good which we call moral" (G 401/69). Schopenhauer claims not simply that we *call* acting for another's sake "moral," but that so acting has a higher value than acting for one's own sake. To answer Kant's question he must therefore show that there is a difference between these two kinds of motives that justifies the claim that one is of a higher value than the other. Though Schopenhauer never explicitly tries to answer this question, the kind of answer provided by his theory seems clear: it would be given in terms of his conception of the thing-in-itself.

The distinction between appearances (the "phenomenal" or "sensible" world) and the thing-in-itself (the "noumenal" world) – that is, the distinction between the world as it appears to us and the world as it really is "in-itself" – plays an important role in the moral theories of both Kant and Schopenhauer. In each case, the motive claimed to give moral worth to actions is also claimed to have its source in the noumenal world.

For Kant, all inclinations and desires belong to the phenomenal world – they are the "appearances" in terms of which human actions, insofar as we encounter them in the "sensible world," the world accessible to sense observation, are explained and made intelligible. If human beings belonged solely to the world of appearances, all of their actions "would have to be taken as in complete conformity with the laws of nature governing desires and inclinations" (G 453/121).

Kant's claim that concern for the happiness of others "stands on the same footing as other inclinations" therefore means that it belongs to the world of appearances, that actions motivated by it are merely natural, that they are fully explicable in terms of our status as natural creatures, members of the phenomenal world. That this seems sufficient for Kant to dismiss it as a moral motive suggests that Schopenhauer was right to attribute to him the view he attributed to most philosophers:

> It is undeniably recognized by all nations, ages, and creeds, and even by all philosophers (with the exception of the materialists proper), that the ethical significance of human conduct is metaphysical, in other words, that it reaches beyond this phenomenal existence and touches eternity. (BM 54)

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This is why Schopenhauer rejects Kant's view of moral worth: if recognizing that one ought to perform an action is always conditioned by fear of punishment or the desire for reward, acting from duty has no metaphysical significance, and therefore no moral worth. Kant would have to agree if he agreed about the role of reward and punishment in the recognition of duty – for he accepts the same principle: whatever belongs only to the phenomenal world cannot be the source of moral worth. That is why he rejects moral theories like Schopenhauer's that locate the source of moral worth in sympathetic concern for others: he regards such concern as rooted in natural inclination, and therefore as devoid of metaphysical significance.

Acting out of reverence for the law, in contrast, does have metaphysical significance for Kant – for it involves recognizing as law the commands of the noumenal self. Although Kant denies that we can have knowledge of the thing-in-itself, he argues that we can make sense of morality only if we take human beings as they are "in-themselves" as autonomous, as legislators of universal law. To act morally is to act out of reverence for the law legislated by the noumenal self – the "true self," one is tempted to say. For Kant the noumenal source of the motive of duty bestows on actions an incomparably higher worth than could come from mere inclination (or anything else that belongs only to the phenomenal or natural world).

Schopenhauer had his own ideas regarding the thing-in-itself with which to counter Kant's suggestion that concern for others is of no more value than other inclinations. He believed that Kant had already shown that time and space do not belong to the thing-in-itself, and therefore that individuality and plurality are foreign to the "true essence of the world" (BM 207). Individuality is only the appearance in time and space of the thing-in-itself, which, in complete opposition to Kant, Schopenhauer took to be blindly striving will (the forerunner, perhaps, of Freud's id). To the extent that we fail to recognize our individuality as mere appearance, we are moved to action only by egoistic concerns. We see the world completely in terms of how it affects our own well-being. If we care about the welfare of others, this is due not to our natural inclinations, but only to the recognition in others of something that lies beyond nature, of our "own self," our "own true inner nature" (BM 209). Schopenhauer again stays within Kant's own terms: compassion, immediate concern for the welfare

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of another, possesses a higher worth than egoistic inclinations because, rather than being part of our natural equipment, it is a sign of our connection to a reality that goes beyond the phenomenal or natural world. This is basically the same claim Kant makes about the motive of duty. To have moral worth, Schopenhauer and Kant thus agree, actions must be motivated by something of higher value than egoistic concern, something that is rooted in a realm beyond the natural world. They disagree about moral worth because they hold very different views about which human motive is rooted in the noumenal world.

From *Human, All Too Human* to *Daybreak*

In *Human, All Too Human*, the work preceding *Daybreak*, Nietzsche began a long effort to free morality from the metaphysical world to which Kant and Schopenhauer had connected it. He set out to show that one need not posit the existence of such a world to explain the so-called "higher" activities – art, religion, and morality – which are often taken as signs of human participation in a higher or metaphysical realm (HA 10). He wanted to explain these "higher" things in terms of the "lower," the merely human. The book's title, he writes in *Ecce Homo*, meant: "'where you see ideal things, I see what is – human, alas, all-too-human!' – I know man better."

In this book, Nietzsche continues,

> you discover a merciless spirit that knows all the hideouts where the ideal is at home… One error after another is coolly placed on ice; the ideal is not refuted – it *freezes* to death. – Here, for example, "the genius" freezes to death; at the next corner, "the saint"; under a huge icicle, "the hero"; in the end, "faith," so-called "conviction"; "pity" also cools down considerably – and almost everywhere "the thing in itself" freezes to death. (EH III: HA 1)

The ideals Nietzsche places on ice are idealizations, beliefs that certain kinds of persons, activities, or states of mind exceed the standard of the merely human. "The saint" counts as an ideal because saints have been thought to represent "something that exceeded the human standard of goodness and wisdom" (HA 143). Nietzsche places this ideal on ice by showing it to involve an error. He isolates the characteristics regarded as elevating saints above the human standard and explains them as expressions of

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egoistic drives to which no one would attribute an ideal character. For instance, he explains their self-denial and asceticism in such terms as the lust for power and the desire to excite an exhausted nervous system (HA 135–42).

Applying the same method of "psychological observation" or "reflection on the human, all-too-human" (HA 35) throughout the book, Nietzsche explains many other idealized activities or types in terms of psychological needs that he considers egoistic and merely human. The ultimate effect of this procedure, he says, may be to lay an axe "to the root of the human 'metaphysical need'" (HA 37). Even though "there might be a metaphysical world" (HA 9), if we can explain the so-called higher aspects of human life without positing anything beyond the natural world, "the strongest interest in the purely theoretical problem of the 'thing in itself' and the 'appearance' will cease" (HA 10). If the human world can be explained without the assumption of a metaphysical world, the latter will be of no cognitive interest to us. We can say of it only that it is other than our world – an inaccessible, incomprehensible "being-other,...a thing with negative qualities" (HA 9).

In view of the importance of the noumenal world to the moral theories of Kant and Schopenhauer, we should expect Nietzsche's attack on ideals in *Human, All Too Human* to involve a rejection of both. Kant does not play much of a role, however, for, as the following passage suggests, Nietzsche had accepted his "great teacher" (GM: P5) Schopenhauer's criticism of Kant's theory.

> For there is no longer any *ought*; for morality, insofar as it was an *ought*, has been just as much annihilated by our mode of thinking as has religion. Knowledge can allow as motives only pleasure and pain, utility and injury. (HA 34)

Nietzsche presumably bases this denial of moral *oughts* on Schopenhauer's argument against Kant's categorical imperative – that a command or rule receives its force as an ought only from an egoistic concern with one's own pleasure or pain, advantage or injury. Schopenhauer's view entails that a belief in *moral* oughts depends on misunderstanding the way in which rules and commands affect behavior. If we realized that people feel obliged to obey them only because of egoistic concerns, we would not think of them as having a kind of *moral* force and thereby misinterpret them as *moral* oughts or categorical imperatives. Following out this line of argument and reflecting on the self-serving origins of

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just actions, Nietzsche writes (HA 92): "How little moral would the world appear without forgetfulness!" Because *Human, All Too Human* attempts to exhibit the egoistic concerns lying behind our feelings of being obliged to do something, Nietzsche could expect it to undermine our sense that oughts have *moral* force and lead us to agree with Schopenhauer, that obedience to them can only be judged as either "wise or foolish," according to the circumstances.

Schopenhauer had used this argument to support his own view of moral motivation and worth – that compassion, the one non-egoistic motive, rather than Kant's motive of duty, gives moral worth to actions. Nietzsche turns the same kind of argument against Schopenhauer in *Human, All Too Human*. Compassion[4] too can be explained in terms of what is egoistic, or human, all too human:

> For it conceals within itself at least two (perhaps many more) elements of personal pleasure, and is to that extent self-enjoyment: first as the pleasure of emotion, which is the kind represented by pity in tragedy, and then, when it eventuates in action, as the pleasure of gratification in the exercise of power. If, in addition to this, a suffering person is very close to us, we rid ourselves of our own suffering by performing an act of pity [or: through compassionate actions]. Apart from a few philosophers, human beings have always placed pity very low on the scale of moral feelings – and rightly so. (HA 103)

The opposition Nietzsche accepts between the moral and the egoistic should actually lead him to a more radical conclusion: that there are no moral actions. For he claims:

> No one has ever done anything that was solely for the sake of another and without a personal motive. How indeed *could* he do anything that was not related to himself, thus without an inner necessity (which simply must have its basis in a personal need)? How could the *ego* act without *ego*? (HA 133)

Nietzsche's rhetorical question combined with his claim in the same passage that the whole idea of an "unegoistic action" vanishes upon "close examination," suggests that he considers the whole idea of an unegoistic action unintelligible. That Nietzsche's

[4] In the following passage, the German word *Mitleid* has been translated as "pity," following the normal practice among translators of Nietzsche, but this is the same word translators of Schopenhauer render as "compassion."

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position is in any case a form of psychological egoism becomes even more obvious when he goes on to quote with approval Lichtenberg and La Rochefoucauld to the effect that we do not really love others – "neither father, nor mother, nor wife, nor child" – but only "the pleasant feelings they cause us" (HA 133). We do not even love others, much less act solely for their sake. As we love only the satisfaction of our own interests, we always act for our own sake. If so, and if, as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer agree, actions cannot be both moral and egoistic, there are no moral actions.

Recall that Schopenhauer views the moral significance of conduct as "metaphysical" in the sense that it "reaches beyond this phenomenal existence" and "directly touch[es] the thing-in-itself" (WW I: 422). Because egoistic motives are fully comprehensible in terms of the phenomenal world, they have no moral worth. Unegoistic motives, in contrast, spring from "the immediate knowledge of the numerical identity of the inner nature of all living things" (WW II: 609) – an identity which is completely inaccessible to empirical knowledge and is therefore not to be found in the phenomenal world. Moral worth attaches to such motives precisely because they point beyond the phenomenal world to the thing-in-itself.

Schopenhauer's assumption of the "numerical identity" of all living things is among the metaphysical assumptions Nietzsche wanted to show we could dispense with in *Human, All Too Human*. This book began his task of "translat[ing] human beings back into nature" (BG 230), and his first problem was to show that so-called "unegoistic" actions could be so translated. But Schopenhauer's world-view (unlike Kant's) had no room for a natural unegoistic action: actions done for the sake of another have moral significance, which they could not have if they were comprehensible in terms of a natural relation between individuals, which would belong only to the phenomenal world. Schopenhauer recognizes only two kinds of motivation – the egoistic motivation human beings have insofar as they act as individuals, hence as members of the phenomenal or natural world, and the motivation they acquire by seeing through the natural or phenomenal world to the metaphysical unity underlying it. Under Schopenhauer's influence, Nietzsche assumed that explaining human behavior naturalistically (i.e., non-metaphysically) meant explaining it egoistically. Accepting Schopenhauer's account of the natural or

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phenomenal world, he simply denied that it had any connection to a metaphysical world. *Human, All Too Human*'s psychological egoism amounts to a claim that we can explain human behavior without appeal to a reality lying beyond the natural or phenomenal world, combined with Schopenhauer's assumption that all motivation in the latter world is egoistic.

Looking back on *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche claimed to find in it a more important issue than the existence of unegoistic actions. This issue "was the *value* of morality."

> In particular the issue was the *value* of the unegoistic, of the instincts of compassion, self-denial, self-sacrifice, which Schopenhauer had gilded, deified, and made otherworldly until finally they alone were left for him as "values in themselves," on the basis of which he *said No* to life, also to himself. (GM: P5)

Nietzsche claims to have seen in the unegoistic instincts Schopenhauer had deified "the great danger to humanity… the will turning itself against life, the last sickness gently and melancholically announcing itself." If such a challenge to Schopenhauer's values is present in *Human, All Too Human*, however, it is well hidden. On the surface, it appears that Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's view that unegoistic actions exist, but completely agrees with him about their higher value.

Consider that the book's basic strategy for exhibiting the error involved in attributing a higher value to certain types of behavior is to explain them in egoistic terms. These explanations can seem to reveal the error involved in such judgments only if one assumes that a belief in the higher value of a type of behavior depends on interpreting it as unegoistic. Yet Nietzsche offers no reason to think that it does, and never questions why unegoistic behavior should be so highly valued. He seems simply to take for granted that the unegoistic is of high value, the egoistic of low value, and therefore that demonstrating an action's egoistic nature undermines its claim to high value. Rather than challenging Schopenhauer on the value of unegoistic actions, *Human, All Too Human* seems to argue that nothing possessing the higher value that an unegoistic action would have actually makes its appearance in the human world.

In *Daybreak*, by contrast, we can begin to see the shift in Nietzsche's strategy: he explicitly raises the question about the *value* of unegoistic actions, at the same time that he begins to

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move away from the psychological egoism of *Human, All Too Human*. Thus, while still conceding (in the spirit of *Human, All Too Human*) that egoistic actions "have hitherto been by far the most frequent actions, and will continue to be for all future time," he suggests – contrary to Kant and Schopenhauer – that we should "restore to these actions their *value*" and thus "*deprive them of their bad conscience*" (D 148). As he explains later, the *value* of "*ideal selfishness*" (as he calls it) is a matter of its role in human flourishing: "continually to watch over and care for and to keep our soul still, so that our fruitfulness shall *come to a happy fulfillment*" (D 552). And he now treats the fact that "men today feel the sympathetic, disinterested, generally useful social actions to be the *moral* actions" as a mere artifact of Christianity, "a residuum of Christian states of mind" (D 132).

Daybreak's repudiation of the thoroughgoing psychological egoism of *Human, All Too Human* is clearest in the important passage on "two ways of denying morality" (D 103), quoted earlier. As we saw, the denial of morality Nietzsche endorses in this passage differs from one "in the spirit of La Rochefoucauld" because Nietzsche admits that human beings do sometimes act from moral motives. In citing La Rochefoucauld, Nietzsche clearly alludes to the egoism of *Human, All Too Human* (see HA 133) which, by way of the equivalence between "moral" and "unegoistic," had implied the non-existence of moral motives. The passage (D 103) thus functions to separate Nietzsche's new position from his earlier one: he no longer denies the existence of morally motivated actions, but claims instead that these actions, when they occur, are based on erroneous presuppositions. In admitting that a suspicion in accord with La Rochefoucauld's way of denying morality is called for "*in very many cases*," the passage also indicates that Nietzsche continues to hold that morally motivated actions cannot be egoistic. Because he now wants to admit that people are sometimes morally motivated, he evidently must also admit that their actions can be in some sense unegoistic.

That *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* thus involve two different ways of denying morality allows us to understand why Nietzsche calls *Daybreak* the beginning of his "campaign against morality." On the topic of morality, *Daybreak* can seem very similar to its predecessor, and Nietzsche's interpreters have seen little difference between them. The claims of HA 39–40, that morality is an "error" and a "lie," sound similar to the denial of morality

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announced in D 103. Yet, as D 103 also suggests, there is a crucial difference. *Human, All Too Human* labels as "lie" and "error" not morality, but the belief that human beings act from moral motives. It directs its polemic against this belief – and, ultimately, against a world it perceived as "human, alas, all-too-human." Only when *Daybreak* admits the existence of moral motivation can Nietzsche begin his actual campaign against morality. Rather than denying that morally motivated actions exist, he now claims that the presuppositions of such actions are erroneous.

Morality's false presuppositions I
A false picture of agency

But what are these presuppositions? *Daybreak* suggests that they are of two types: first, a certain picture of human agents as free and morally responsible (a *logical* presupposition, as it were of morality and moral judgment); second, false beliefs (or superstitions) that explain the *moral* regard with which ancient practices and customs were regarded and that function as *causal* presuppositions of people's "moral" feelings in the present. We shall briefly illustrate both themes in *Daybreak*.

Recall Nietzsche's analogy between the denial of morality and alchemy (103). Nietzsche develops the same analogy several years later in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he writes that:

> morality in the traditional sense, the morality of intentions, was a prejudice, precipitate and perhaps provisional – something on the order of astrology and alchemy… [T]he decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it, while everything that is intentional, everything about it that can be seen, known, "conscious," still belongs to its surface and skin – which, like every skin, betrays something but *conceals* even more. (32)

Here Nietzsche agrees with one premise of the "morality of intentions" – the premise that "the origin of an action…allows [one] to decide its value" (*id.*) – but is denying the premise that the origin is to be found in the conscious intention: what people do is determined by *non-conscious* factors (psychological and physiological), rather than the conscious motives of which we are aware. Insofar as people assess the moral value of an action in terms of its conscious motives – as both Kant and Schopenhauer would have us do – they make moral judgments based on a false presupposition:

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the supposition that the conscious motive is the *cause* of the action.

Nietzsche makes this point several times in *Daybreak* (cf. 115, 116, 119, 129, 130). For example, he notes that,

> The primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, *how human action is brought about*... "I know what I want, what I have done, I am free and responsible for it, I hold others responsible, I can call by its name every moral possibility and every inner motion which precedes action..." – that is how everyone formerly thought, that is how almost everyone still thinks... Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be! We have expended so much labour on learning that external things are not as they appear to us to be – very well! the case is the same with the inner world! Moral actions are in reality "something other than that" – more we cannot say: and all actions are essentially unknown. (116)

But if moral judgment requires that we know how human action *is* brought about, then the impossibility of doing that means that our practice of moral judgment is predicated on an error: we believe we can assess the "morality" of our own and others' actions, but in fact we cannot, because we are ignorant as to their true causes.

Yet why, for Nietzsche, is it so difficult to understand what causes us to do what we do? In this regard, it is important to appreciate Nietzsche's picture of human agency, one that very much anticipates the picture later developed with great precision by Freud. As Nietzsche writes:

> However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him. (119)

Who we are is a "totality of drives" and what we do is a function of "their play and counterplay." But these drives are so various, so deeply seated, and their triggers (their "nutriments") so poorly understood that who we are and why we do what we do must remain largely mysterious to us. That this is Nietzsche's view is strikingly apparent a few sections earlier in his discussion of the different ways in which a person might attain "mastery" of a drive

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or instinct (e.g. a particularly strong sex drive). After reviewing six possible "methods" for conquering such a drive, he comments as follows:

> *[T]hat* one *desires* to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us: whether it be the drive to restfulness, or the fear of disgrace and other evil consequences, or love. While "we" believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another*; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the *vehemence* of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a *struggle* is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides. (109)

Whereas the conventional "moralist" believes that we freely choose our actions, that the motives for which we choose these actions are known, and that, accordingly, the moral worth of our actions can be assessed, Nietzsche suggests that this entire picture of action is a false one: we do not freely choose our action (we are mere "spectators" on the struggle between drives); we do not know the "motives" for which we act (what determines our actions are the underlying drives and the outcome of their "struggle"); and thus, insofar as moral worth depends on this (discredited) picture of action, the presuppositions of morality are false. This is not to deny that there might be good reasons to condemn those who, e.g., murder (cf. 103); Nietzsche's point is just that condemning them because they freely chose to act on the basis of an immoral motive is *not* a good reason, supposing as it does an utterly fictitious picture of human action.

Morality's false presuppositions II
The morality of custom

There is another way, though, in which the "presuppositions" of morality are errors, one somewhat more complex than the first. This also marks the new element in *Daybreak*. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche had already denied that human agents are free and morally responsible, and had taken this to undermine

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judgments of moral worth (HA 39, 107). But recall that he had also denied that anyone is ever morally motivated, and that *Daybreak*'s new "denial of morality" is predicated upon his changing his mind on this issue. He now admits that human beings are sometimes morally motivated, but insists that when they are, errors move them to their actions (D 103). The key to understanding Nietzsche's new view is to appreciate the important role he now finds for "custom" (*Sitte*) in the phenomenon of morality. Early on in *Daybreak*, he broaches this theme:

> In comparison with the mode of life of whole millennia we present-day men live in a very immoral [*unsittlich*] age: the power of custom [*Sitte*] is astonishingly enfeebled and the sense of morality [*Sittlichkeit*] so rarefied and lofty it may be described as having more or less evaporated. This is why the fundamental insights into the origins of morality [*Moral*] are so difficult for us latecomers… This is, for example, already the case with the *chief proposition*: morality [*Sittlichkeit*] is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs [*Sitten*], of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the *traditional* way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality…
>
> The free human being is immoral because in all things he *is determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition… Judged by the standards of these conditions, if an action is performed *not* because tradition commands it, but for other motives (because of its usefulness to the individual, for instance)…it is called immoral and felt to be so by the individual who performed it…
>
> What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not because it commands what is *useful* to us, but simply because it *commands*. – What distinguishes this feeling in the presence of tradition from the feeling of fear in general? It is fear in the presence of a higher intellect which here commands, of an incomprehensible, indefinite power, of something more than personal – there is *superstition* in this fear. (D 9)

Here we have an account of the origin of morality (*Moral*) inspired by the etymological connection between "*Sittlichkeit*" (morality) and "*Sitte*" (custom). This connection suggests to Nietzsche the plausible hypothesis that customs constituted the first morality, that traditional ways of acting played the same role during early human life that "rarefied and lofty" moral codes, rules, and principles play today: that is, they provided the

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criteria for moral right and wrong. But being moral, Nietzsche emphasizes, required acting from a specific motive: the motive of "obedience to tradition."

There is a striking resonance here with Kant's notion that actions possessing moral worth are done out of respect or reverence for the moral law:

> What I recognize immediately as law for me, I recognize with reverence, which means merely *subordination* of my will to a law without mediation of external influences on my senses. Immediate determination by the law and consciousness of this determination is called "*reverence*"... Reverence is properly awareness of a value that demolishes my self-love. Hence there is something which is regarded neither as an object of inclination nor as an object of fear, though it has at the same time some analogy with both... All moral *interest*, so-called, consists solely in reverence for the law. (G 401/69)

Despite a slight difference in terminology, Nietzsche's description of the most primitive form of moral motivation closely follows Kant's description of reverence. Kant's "reverence for the law" in effect becomes "obedience to tradition," while Kant's "immediate determination by" and "subordination of my will to a law without mediation" becomes obedience to "a higher authority ... not because it commands what it would be *useful* for one to do, but simply because it commands." The difference in terminology, importantly, is traceable to Schopenhauer's critique of Kant. For among Schopenhauer's many formulations of his basic objection to Kant's account of moral worth, we find the complaint that what Kant calls "reverence" [*Achtung*] is in German called "obedience" [*Gehorsam*], and the claim that only fear can induce human beings "to obey some absolute command that comes from an admittedly unknown but obviously superior authority" (BM 67, 142). In these terms Schopenhauer had already stripped Kant's reverence for the law of its metaphysical connections. That Nietzsche uses almost exactly the same terms to describe what he takes to be the earliest form of moral motivation provides overwhelming evidence that he is taking Kant's conception of morality and, as it were, *naturalizing* it, so that he can tell a story about the origin of morality *without* invoking a "noumenal" world or any other suspect metaphysical categories. Morality consists, in effect, of "categorical imperatives" – imperatives that apply regardless of the agent's particular ends – but these imperatives are originally

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found, Nietzsche thinks, in the customary practices and obedience to a "higher authority" that constitute a tradition.[5]

But why does Nietzsche claim that the presuppositions of the morality of custom are false? On his picture, an imperative commanded by "tradition" has "categorical" or "moral" force only for those persons who have a suitably reverent or submissive attitude toward the tradition. The question then is: what sustains such an attitude? In D 9, Nietzsche suggests it is a certain sort of superstitious "fear" – not the fear of specific punishment that Schopenhauer imagines to lie at the root of all imperatives, but perhaps something more like the "irresistible fear" that Freud claims maintains both primitive taboos and the obsessional prohibitions of neurotics: "No external threat of punishment is required, for there is an internal certainty, a moral conviction, that any violation will lead to intolerable disaster." If the individual is able to articulate anything about this disaster, Freud adds, it is at most "the undefined feeling that some particular person in his environment will be injured as a result of the violation."[6] In D 9, Nietzsche similarly remarks that in a morality of custom, "punishment for breaches of custom will fall before all on the community: that supernatural punishment whose forms of expression and limitations are so hard to comprehend and are explored with so much superstitious fear."

Importantly, Nietzsche continues in the very next passage (D 10) by observing that:

> In the same measure as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality [*Sittlichkeit*] decreases: for each time one has understood the necessary effects and has learned how to segregate them from all the accidental effects and incidental consequences (*post hoc*), one has destroyed a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundation of customs – the real world is much smaller than the imaginary – and each time

[5] Notice that this naturalization of Kant leads Nietzsche to part company with Schopenhauer's critique of Kant. For Schopenhauer, as we saw earlier, claimed that the real motive for obedience to an imperative was always egoistic, e.g., fear of punishment. Yet in the "morality of custom" (as described in D 9), moral behavior involves obedience to custom; it is precisely the *egoist*, from this perspective, who is *immoral*, who acts not out of "reverence" for the tradition but based on considerations of "usefulness to the individual." So Nietzsche's naturalized version of Kant's reverence for the law is *not* an egoistic motive, contrary to Schopenhauer.

[6] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, James Strachey, tr. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1950), pp. 26–27.

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