

# Leo Strauss

## *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*

A course offered in 1971–1972

St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland

Edited and with an introduction by Mark Blitz

With assistance from Jay Michael Hoffpauir

With the generous support of Douglas Mayer

Mark Blitz is Fletcher Jones Professor of Political Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College. He is author of several books on political philosophy, including *Heidegger's Being and Time and the Possibility of Political Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 1981) and *Plato's Political Philosophy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), and many articles, including "Nietzsche and Political Science: The Problem of Politics," "Heidegger's Nietzsche (Part I)," "Heidegger's Nietzsche (Part II)," "Strauss's Laws, Government Practice and the School of Strauss," and "Leo Strauss's Understanding of Modernity."

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## ***Editor's Introduction***

### Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*

Mark Blitz

Leo Strauss offered this seminar on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* at St John's College in Annapolis Maryland. It began on October 6, 1971 and concluded on May 24, 1972. Strauss had given a course on Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1959 at the University of Chicago, and a course on Nietzsche in 1967 at the University of Chicago, with three sessions on *Zarathustra*, nine on *Beyond Good and Evil* and four on the *Genealogy of Morals*. The present seminar covers each of the nine books of *Beyond Good and Evil*, and begins with a short discussion of material from *Zarathustra* and includes occasional references to the *Use and Abuse of History*, *The Gay Science*, and other works. There are no tapes for large portions of the seminar: discussions of some or almost all of *Beyond's* chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 were not recorded. The present transcription, however, does contain a significant amount of newly transcribed material which has been added to the original transcription, which has itself been clarified in several places.

This seminar does not depart markedly from the discussions of *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1967 or from Strauss's essay *Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*, first published in 1973 in *Interpretation* (*Interpretation* 3, nos. 2 and 3 [1973]) and reprinted in *Studies in Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1983). The three presentations differ, of course, and some of what we see in this transcript supplements or further clarifies the essay, perhaps especially the important, but compressed, discussions with which it concludes. Some of the present discussions, moreover, are not reprised in the article, at least not directly. Of special concern to students of political science in this regard is Strauss's analysis of the degree of Nietzsche's responsibility for Hitler and Mussolini. "Nietzsche produced the climate in which Fascism and Hitlerism could emerge. One must not be squeamish about admitting this dubious paternity. One must emphasize it. Every fool can see and has seen that Nietzsche abhorred the things for which Hitler in particular stood and to which he owed his success" (session 1). "I made this quite clear at the beginning of the course when I said that there is some connection, tenuous but not negligible, between Nietzsche and the violent, passionate, anti-democratic movement of the twentieth century. There is no doubt about that. Nietzsche did not mean it in the way people like Hitler and Mussolini meant it, but through his negations, he prepares it. No doubt about that" (session 8).

The seminar is also marked by lively and probing discussions between Strauss and St John's tutors and students. At least some sessions were attended by Strauss's friend Jacob Klein, who was for years St John's dean. Strauss also makes evident the importance of Martin Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, especially its first (German) volume: "[T]here is one absolutely outstanding book on Nietzsche, and that is the first volume of Heidegger's book entitled *Nietzsche*, and Heidegger's unrivaled philosophic passion and thoroughness

are eminently helpful if one wants to penetrate more deeply in to Nietzsche's thought" (session 2). He also mentions and then criticizes Karl Jaspers (sessions 1, 6). He does not, however, explore in detail these or other secondary or contemporary works. He shares with Heidegger the view that will to power and eternal return are central in Nietzsche's understanding, although he barely touches on Heidegger's claim that will to power is Nietzsche's understanding of the constitution, character, essence, or whatness of beings, and the eternal return of their how, their that, their existence, or their way to be.

The seminar is not a direct confrontation with Heidegger, of course, but is Strauss's attempt to understand Nietzsche directly. Unlike Heidegger, who concentrates on particular sections of *Zarathustra* and on material that Nietzsche left unpublished which his sister gathered topically in a volume she called *The Will to Power* (notes that have been redistributed chronologically in the current German edition edited by Colli and Montinari), Strauss works through and comments on one book, here, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Also unlike Heidegger, whose understanding of Nietzsche ultimately is oriented within, although it perhaps expands, Heidegger's own standpoint, Strauss is concerned primarily to understand Nietzsche as he understands himself. He characteristically attempts to find Nietzsche's full coherence, or to make him as thoughtful as he can, or to put him on high ground. Nietzsche, after all, "is the most comprehensive and the most profound questioner at least in the last six generations. He reminds us of Socrates even if and precisely if he questions Socrates" (session 1). This effort requires or permits Strauss to glance at Plato, Spinoza, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Freud.

Strauss's Nietzsche belongs to and is, indeed, a culminating point in the philosophic emphasis on production that we see beginning in Locke or even Machiavelli, and that we recognize clearly in Kant, and in the emphasis on history, following Hegel. Nonetheless, Strauss, unlike Heidegger, does not stress how Nietzsche's discussion of will to power is the final step in uncovering the being or possibilities of will that Kant first brings forward. Rather, Strauss is especially concerned with the difficulties involved in Nietzsche's assertion that will to power is true, or that it is the fundamental fact, while also suggesting that all such assertions are (merely) interpretations, and with his view that the truth that no species are fixed and that all is becoming is deadly, while also indicating that this deadly truth, summarized as "God is dead," need not be deadly for those who are genuinely creative. "What then shall be done? Suppression of the deadly truth is impossible. One can state Nietzsche's answer in a more general way and better provisionally as follows. One must transform these deadly truths into life-giving truths, into truths which make possible the highest life that ever was and ever will be" (session 1). But "if he is to be taken seriously," Nietzsche also "must show . . . the courage or bravery of conscience which admits openly the problematic nature of his own assertions." This is why his reasoning is hypothetical, but perhaps not "undogmatic in spite of its hypothetical character" (session 6).

Strauss's own concern with the problem of nature, or nature and history, also allows him to highlight how nature is another of Nietzsche's central although often overlooked themes. Strauss's more natural Nietzsche, moreover, also differs notably from the kinder, gentler Nietzsche that some academics have recently purported to discover. Strauss does

not shy from Nietzsche's discussions of cruelty. Nietzsche believes that understanding his deadly truth can be edifying, but only for a few, who are not prone to idealizing. (Cf. the concluding sentence of *Thoughts on Machiavelli*.)

*Beyond Good and Evil* strikes Strauss as Nietzsche's most beautiful book, something he also says in 1967, and in the essay. He does not discuss precisely what he means, although he does contrast this beauty with the polemical *Genealogy of Morals*, and connects its attraction for him to its distance from what is ugly. Perhaps we find the book's beauty in its reflection of the high and free standpoint from which it is written. Strauss suggests that everything in it is considered from the standpoint of philosophy: the clue to this is *Beyond's* subtitle: prelude to a philosophy of the future. Nietzsche presents it as preparatory to *Zarathustra*; we may say that it is the most visibly comprehensive of Nietzsche's mature books.

Strauss recounts in the seminar the familiar division of Nietzsche's works into three periods, but he describes or explains the division as others do not. Nietzsche was trained as a classicist but precisely as a classical educator opposed the spirit of his times, an opposition also "inspired" by his admiration for Schopenhauer and Wagner. "But this combination of classicism and Schopenhauer–Wagner [which characterized the first stage] was a very shaky affair and Nietzsche broke with that" (session 1). Nietzsche's break with romanticism initiated his second stage, characterized by the unmasking and undermining that we find in works such as *Human All Too Human*. "But finally the light came . . . and that means the beginning of the third stage" with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

After briefly discussing sections of *Zarathustra*, Strauss turns to *Beyond Good and Evil*. He characteristically discusses the book's title and subtitle, and considers its structure or plan. "What is central is that although "the term 'philosopher' occurs only in the heading of the first section and nowhere else . . . that is deceptive. The whole book is the philosopher" (session 1). As with the essay and the 1967 seminar, however, Strauss does not arrive at, or does not share, an understanding that accounts for the precise placement of each of Nietzsche's longer and shorter sections and epigrams, and especially the epigrams in chapter 4. (Perhaps we cannot precisely replicate the order of the work if, as Nietzsche suggests, there are things, perhaps even the most important things, that are personal and not simply general about it.)

Strauss concludes a discussion of aphorisms 34 and 35 by uncovering their obscure connection: "so that shows how lucid the order is, and I think the same is true in all other cases though I can't claim to have discerned it clearly in all cases, especially in chapter 4" (session 11). In any event, the aphorisms are not placed randomly, and the fit of some of them is clear. Strauss makes this especially visible in his discussion of the third chapter, on religion. More generally, the key to the book's structure, according to Strauss, is the fourth chapter, *Epigrams and Interludes*, which divide 1-3 from 5-9. The first three, on philosophy and religion, concern what is usually thought to be directed to what is higher than man or transcends us; 5 through 9 concern the moral and political, that is, what is more ordinarily human. But 5 through 9, Strauss also suggests, concern nature: chapter 5 is *The Natural History of Morality*. "This is the central chapter of the book and

is the only one whose heading refers to nature. Question: Could nature be the theme of this chapter or even of the whole rest of the book?” (session 10) Perhaps one through three concern primarily the highest or most spiritual expressions of will to power, and five through nine nature as it can be vivified or spiritualized, and will to power naturalized.

Also characteristically, Strauss discusses Nietzsche’s mode of writing. “Nietzsche is never boring. He is always interesting, exciting, thrilling, glittering, breathtaking. He possesses a kind of brilliance and tempo which I believe was unknown in former times” (session 1). But “in this writing,” although “there are strong radical assertions,” “they are surrounded and qualified all the time by ‘perhaps’ and ‘it seems’” (session 2). Indeed, the question of text and interpretation itself becomes a theme, more visibly in Strauss’s seminar than in his essay. “Forgive me as an old philologist,” Nietzsche says in section 22, “who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but ‘nature’s conformity to law,’ of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though—why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad ‘philology.’ It is no matter of fact, no ‘text,’ but rather only a naively humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning, with which you make abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul!” “There are no moral phenomena at all,” Nietzsche suggests in section 108, “but only a moral interpretation of phenomena—.” Strauss does not discuss modes of literary interpretation, of course, but explores the more straightforward and deeper question: Is Nietzsche’s own basic principle, what Strauss calls the “fundamental fact” of will to power, merely one interpretation among others, or is it an underlying truth, fact, or text? Is everything meaningful that we call “natural” merely an interpretation, with “nature,” only a meaningless or even destructive hodgepodge? Strauss discusses this question in terms of Nietzsche’s statements about “nature,” and “truth” with and without quotations, man and woman, and animate and inanimate, among others. But he does not discuss systematically the link between truth and women suggested by the opening phrase of Nietzsche’s preface, “supposing truth is a woman . . .”

Strauss also discusses this question in terms of will. Indeed, Strauss explores Nietzsche’s discussion of will (section 19) and will to power more fully in this seminar than he does in the essay. He clarifies the unity of feeling, thinking, and affect in will, how there may be knowledge or consciousness although not full consciousness, and “above all even if all three are fully conscious, they may be driven by something of which they are unaware” (session 7). The natural is perhaps a jumble to be perceived, but for Nietzsche it is differently perceived or sensed by different species. What in fact is given (for man), Nietzsche “supposes,” are needs, urges, drives, and passions. From these come what “our understanding forms, dogs, cats, and so on” (session 6). So for Nietzsche, “historical physio–psychology” “ought to be the fundamental science” (session 4). “Nietzsche says something else: that psychology must, will, *again* become a way to the fundamental problems. Psychology should again be recognized as mistress of the sciences” (session 4). Any order or interest is produced by man, but not according to rational law as, say, Kant understands it, but through “creative” will. Strauss emphasizes that what Nietzsche calls the world that concerns us is produced by us rather than found by us; this is the

world of what Locke called secondary qualities (such as colors), or indeed of “tertiary” qualities, the good or sacred cow, say, and not merely the brown one. Nietzsche is now aware of or (self-) conscious of our process of producing the worlds of concern, and its source in will, and the results of will and our historical acquisition of talents and abilities. “So all gifts are acquired, not strictly speaking given. And that ultimately (if I understand this [Nietzsche’s discussion of Michelangelo and Raphael in aphorism 540 of *Dawn of Morning*] correctly) all [means that] everything that is must be understood in terms of its genesis, and this genesis must be ultimately understood in terms of production. And to use the extreme formula which we find in Locke, nature furnishes only the almost worthless materials—everything which is of any value acquires that value through human activity, through human acquisition” (session 12). The central issue is whether these tertiary qualities—good, pleasant, noble, sacred—indeed all belong to the history or life history of groups and individuals, or, rather, whether some are natural and others conventional: “History or *physis* seems to be the fundamental alternative, and we must try to find out . . . how Nietzsche stands in regard to that alternative: nature, history” (session 6).

Despite Nietzsche’s focus on will to power and creative production, he cannot do without nature in some sense, or fail to recognize the distinction between high and low or strong and weak wills; the responsibility of the strong demands their affirmation that all things will eternally return, not merely attractive things. “It is the will to power which organizes the sense data that form an intelligible whole, to say nothing of the moral phenomenon of self-overcoming, transcending oneself, which is, of course, always implied by Nietzsche” (session 7).

“But the peculiarly Nietzschean difficulty is this: the subjugation of nature can be achieved or even expected only from men of a certain nature, so complete subjugation of nature cannot be expected. You need men of a certain nature to subjugate nature. We have come across this ambiguity of nature before, especially in aphorism 188—you remember where nature is always used in quotation marks, except at the last mention where the quotation marks are dropped. I take [that] to mean that nature is problematic but one cannot do without it. We must see what this implies” (session 12).

Whether Nietzsche can successfully overcome the difficulties involved in a “personal,” creative, willful and historical philosophy that is also meant to suggest views of strength, rule and concern (or meaning) that are not (simply) arbitrary is another matter. Still, by supposing that all things, inanimate as well as animate, can be understood as will to power, Nietzsche is seeking to combat the reduction of the living to the nonliving, or material. Will is in fact not or not only purposeful, however, and its heart is not intention: perhaps, as Nietzsche suggests, what is unintended is more revealing than what we intend. Nietzsche “is concerned with a formula which is all comprehensive because otherwise the world, the whole, would disintegrate into two parts which have nothing in common” (session 7).

Strauss discusses but does not emphasize Nietzsche’s concern with nihilism and the last man, or the content of the good vs. bad that is beyond good and evil. His emphasis,

rather, is on Nietzsche's perspective of the philosopher of the future, and on his understanding of religion. The philosopher of the future is the complete or "complementary" man in whom the rest of existence is justified, and *Beyond Good and Evil's* various discussions are, as we said, written from the standpoint of a prelude to this philosophy. Strauss understands *Beyond's* second chapter, *The Free Spirit* (or, as he translates, the free mind), to present elements of the future philosopher, and not (as the first chapter does) primarily to address previous philosophers and what Nietzsche believes to be their prejudices. Even Kant and Hegel only codified but did not create values, which is the philosopher of the future's distinctive task: the philosopher of the future differs from previous philosophers. Because *Beyond Good and Evil* is a prelude to a philosophy of the future, however, "it is not meant to prepare the true philosophy, but a new kind of philosophy." But "by this very fact," it "is meant to be a specimen of the philosophy of the future" (session 9). Although the free mind, of whom Nietzsche is a or the example (session 8) is free from the prejudices of the philosophers of the past, however, it is not evident that

"free minds [are] the same as the philosophers of the future. That's a hard question. Nietzsche says they are the precursors of the philosophers of the future in aphorism 44. Do the free minds belong to the epoch between the philosophy of the past and the philosophy of the future? Do they possess a freedom, an openness not possible under the philosophy of the past nor [possible] under the philosophy of the future? I believe that question goes to the root of what Nietzsche is doing. But we cannot answer this" (session 9).

Strauss's discussion of religion first clarifies the title of the chapter: Nietzsche calls it *The Religious Essence* (or religious essencing, or "doings") rather than "The Essence of Religion" because the essence of religion assumes "that the most important thing in the variety of religions is something common," but for Nietzsche the differences among "the various religions are much more important." He then makes the plan of the chapter clear. "This chapter has a very clear plan, and I wonder in retrospect whether the preceding chapters also do not have such a clear plan, only I was unable to find it. Or it may be that this is a peculiarity of this chapter. In the first two chapters, it seemed that the connection between preceding and following aphorisms was much more associative than based on a plan. The plan . . . is very simple. First, in number 45, the introduction. Then there follows numbers 46 to 52, religion hereunto, which is subdivided as follows: Numbers 46 to 48, Christianity; number 49, Greek religion; numbers 50 to 51, Christianity; and number 52, the Old Testament. And then a new section begins in 53 to 57, the religion of the future; 58 to 60, the nobility of religion; 61 to 62, religion as viewed by the philosopher or religion in relation to philosophy" (session 8). Strauss clarifies Nietzsche's view of the significance of the Jews as the ones who posited the holiness of God, something alien to the Greeks, with their gratitude for their gods, and also to Catholicism's view of their saints. "Christianity is the transvaluation of all values of antiquity" and "is therefore the negative model for Nietzsche, who also wishes to bring about the transvaluation of values" (session 8). Indeed, "it appears that religion is, in a way, the most important subject of this work. This doesn't mean that Nietzsche is a religious man" (session 9). "For the true philosopher, all religion . . . of the past or of the

future can only be a means for his work of breeding and educating the human race” (session 10). In particular, asceticism and puritanism are almost indispensable means for education and ennobling the race which wishes to become master over its origin from the rabble and gutter” (session 10).

The discussion of the fourth chapter, *Epigrams and Interludes*, centers on an exploration of the eight-seventh aphorism: “*Tethered heart, free spirit[mind]*.— If one tethers one’s heart severely and imprisons it, one can give one’s spirit many liberties: I have said that once before. But one does not believe me, unless one already knows it—.” Strauss believes this epigram to be “absolutely crucial” [185], a shorthand version of a thought that is also basic in the important section 188. “[Nietzsche] wants a free mind, otherwise he would be an obscurantist, but there is a price that has to be paid for that, and that is a bound heart . . . The freedom of the mind—we have no right to that by nature. That must be acquired and it is acquired by the opposite—by unfreedom, by obedience” (session 10).

In the fifth chapter, *The Natural History of Morality*, Nietzsche indicates that “an empirical study of the various moralities is possible” (session 11). But as Strauss had shown in his discussion of religion, Nietzsche does not believe that such a study could be successful for religion, for it would require a breadth and depth beyond mere scholarship. In Strauss’s overall discussion of the chapter, he brings out as few do the difference between herd morality and slave morality, for herd morality is connected to the good of the herd, or the common good, and need not have as its substance the content of slave morality. At the same time, he clarifies Nietzsche’s understanding of our contemporary movement from punishment of miscreants to the attempt to rehabilitate them.

“The common good was understood . . . as a good of a particular society or tribe, and it demanded therefore hostility to the tribe’s external and internal enemies and in particular to criminals . . . But this has completely changed in contemporary Europe. When the herd morality draws its ultimate consequences, as it does now, it takes the sides of the very criminals and becomes afraid of inflicting punishment. It is satisfied with making the criminal harmless, which is something very different from disarming the criminal [and] from inflicting punishment” (session 11).

In general, however, “Nietzsche loathed punitiveness and thought it distorts our whole moral perspective if we are tainted by this way of looking at things. My feeling is different. I like punishment—I mean not that I’m to be punished, of course, but that others are punished” (session 9).

Strauss counterposes the atheism of the right that one might identify with Nietzsche with the communist atheism of the left, and clarifies Marx and Engels’s understanding of history and freedom. He also indicates the seriousness of Nietzsche’s projections of a united Europe organized around Germany and France—*Beyond Good and Evil*, he argues, is especially directed to Germany—and explains without prejudice Nietzsche’s remarks about race. As we have seen, Strauss believes that Nietzsche would have

abhorred what Hitler stood for, but his intemperate talk and views are indeed connected to the fascists.

Above all, Strauss indicates how Nietzsche recognizes or seems to recognize that the gods must in some sense return. “So we have discussed hitherto the sole passage of the first two chapters dealing with religion, which make clear that the whole book is in a way a vindication of God” (session 9). For, can there be a world that concerns us that is not oriented to the gods? But such a world for Nietzsche would still be a production of human will, life, and history. It would not take its bearings from what Nietzsche believes to be the Platonic delusions or prejudices that he sees as his chief rival. It is hardly obvious, to say the least, that Nietzsche has successfully disposed of or overcome Socrates’s and Plato’s discussion of a soul oriented not by will but by *eros*, not by creative production but by pure observing or understanding, and not by what is beyond good and evil but by what is naturally good.

Still, we can see the height of Nietzsche’s arguments by considering his discussion of the noble in *Beyond Good and Evil*’s final chapter. Strauss emphasizes the connection of nobility (“*Vornehmheit*”) to birth and origin, so that it calls to mind aristocratic or patrician qualities. He does not go as far in this direction in the seminar as he does in the closing paragraph of the essay. For there he finds in Nietzsche a display or discussion of “the philosophy of the future as reflected in the medium of conduct, of life; thus reflected the philosophy of the future reveals itself as the philosophy of the future” (*Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, 191). This conduct and its virtues remind us more of a solitary, compassionate god whose nobility is unique, exclusive, and limited in the degree to which it can be shared, than of a just and moderate thinker, at once common and unique. Strauss almost closes the essay with a reference to nobility in a section of *Beyond Good and Evil* (session 10) whose importance he emphasized in the seminar, and closes it by writing (in German) “the noble nature replaces the divine nature.” “The nature of the individual,” he says near the end of the seminar,

“the individual nature—not evident and universally valid insights—is, it seems, the ground of all worthwhile understanding or knowledge. So that seems to be the pure chaos. Yet there is an order of rank of the natures and at the top of this hierarchy is the complementary man [the philosopher of the future]. His supremacy is shown by the fact that he solves the highest and most difficult problem. And we must identify that problem if we want to see Nietzsche’s way out of the intellectual chaos” (session 14).

One might say that Strauss explores the degree to which Nietzsche attempts to combine Athens and Jerusalem by taking what is high in Plato and translating it into a historical, or personal, nobility, nature and god. In any event, both Plato and Nietzsche agree that “limitation is essential for excellence”: “The realm of necessity is *the* indispensable condition of human greatness . . .” (session 8, session 7).

## The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on Natural Right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Professor Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Reim Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then the administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website:

<https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript, which read: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the

lecturer.” In 2008, Strauss’s heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed Joseph Cropsey as Strauss’s literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss’s thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University’s Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker, staff in the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss’s work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss’s original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss’s impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief  
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor

August 2014

### **Editorial Headnote**

This transcript is based upon existing audio files of the course and the original transcript. The course had fourteen sessions, out of which only one, session 13, was not recorded. The transcript includes (i) passages that were not derived from the remastered audiotapes but from the original transcription, and (ii) passages that were not part of the original transcription but newly transcribed from the remastered audiofiles. These passages are indicated on the relevant pages. In the portions taken from the original transcript, where

the transcriber indicated “inaudible,” we have rendered that with ellipses enclosed in brackets, thus: [. . .].

When texts were read aloud in class, in many cases the tape recorder was paused and resumed when the reader was finished. We have filled in the missing portion of text, presenting the words as they appear in the editions of the texts assigned for the course. Original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

The texts by Nietzsche assigned for the course were: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954); *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1989). (The class obviously used an earlier printing of *Beyond Good and Evil*; the 1989 edition is however one that is now readily available.)

This transcript was edited by Mark Blitz, with the assistance of Jay Michael Hoffpauir and Gayle McKeen. The audiofiles were remastered by Craig Harding of September Audio. The identity of the typist of the original transcript is unknown.

For general information about the history of the transcription project and the editing guidelines, see the general note to the transcripts above.

## **The Transcript**

## Session 1: October 6, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** Now we must say a few words as to why we should study Nietzsche. Let me say in a very general way that he is the most comprehensive and the most profound questioner at least in the last six generations. He reminds us of Socrates, even if and precisely if he questions Socrates. Before I try to explain that, let me first consider the surface, while never forgetting that it is only the surface. Now the surface is the political, the political situation in which Nietzsche lived. The great watershed was the French Revolution, and the French Revolution led to the formation of two parties in all of Europe, the conservatives and the liberals, who can easily be distinguished (at least they could easily be distinguished) because the conservatives stood for throne and altar, and the liberals stood for democracy, or something approaching democracy, and religion as a strictly private affair. But liberalism was already outflanked by the extreme revolutionary left, the socialist, communist, anarchist, and atheist left. This was a position which we may call political atheism.

Now Nietzsche opposed both the moderate and the extreme left, but he saw that conservatism had no future, that its fighting was a rear guard action, and conservatism was being eroded evermore. The consequence of this was that Nietzsche pointed to something which we may call the revolutionary right, an atheism of the right. Nietzsche is then *the* antagonist of Marx, whom he did not know at all, as far as I know. Nietzsche produced the climate in which Fascism and Hitlerism could emerge. One must not be squeamish about admitting this dubious paternity. One must emphasize it. Every fool can see and has seen that Nietzsche abhorred the things for which Hitler in particular stood and to which he owed his success. Some liberals have gone so far as to claim Nietzsche for liberalism. Was Nietzsche not the intellectual ancestor of that great liberal, Sigmund Freud? This partial truth must not be permitted to obscure the more massive and the more superficial fact which I have tried to point out.

Now the difficulty, if I have not pointed to the difficulty by this remark about the surface, can be stated more simply as follows. Nietzsche's as it were final judgment on Plato—I quote: "Plato is boring," unquote. [Laughter] Nietzsche is never boring. He is always interesting, exciting, thrilling, glittering, breathtaking. He possesses a kind of brilliance and temper which I believe was unknown in former times. I seem to discern it in writers as different in rank and quality as Diderot, Heine, Macaulay, and Taine—what one could call with a somewhat nasty expression "high class journalism." Nietzsche surely bewilders us by the wealth of his thought and vision. He so to speak never said anything which he did not also contradict; and there is a book written on Nietzsche by a very famous man, Karl Jaspers, in which it is shown that it is impossible to speak of any Nietzschean teaching because Nietzsche had contradicted everything he had said.<sup>i</sup> Nietzsche's thought is deliberately unsystematic.

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<sup>i</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. C. F. Wallraff and S. J. Schmitz (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965).

Where shall we begin? Now primary orientation is supplied by the well-attested fact that there are three stages or periods in Nietzsche's thought and writing. First, Nietzsche was by training and education a classical scholar. Classical scholarship was at that time in Germany, as well as in other countries, the core of higher education. Higher education was understood as the formation of character and mind through the classics. Therefore the classical scholars were the educated—were supposed to be the educated. Accepting this view, Nietzsche opposed the spirit of the time. One of his earlier writings is called *Thoughts Out of Season*. But Nietzsche observed that that spirit of the time which he opposed was effective precisely within classical scholarship itself. Classical scholarship was undergoing a transformation of the study of *the* classic culture into a branch of anthropology. The model was being transformed into a mere object of exciting research.

Now Nietzsche's opposition to the spirit of the times was based not only on the classics, and this indicates the first difficulty. It was inspired also by the philosopher Schopenhauer and the musician or composer, Wagner. Nietzsche's adherence [to] or admiration of these men was from the very beginning accompanied by considerable modifications and mental reservations. But this combination of classicism and Schopenhauer–Wagner was a very shaky affair, and Nietzsche broke with that. He broke with all “quote romanticism,” and that characterizes the second stage of Nietzsche's work. The first document of that is *Human All-Too-Human*, which is characteristically dedicated to Voltaire. It is sufficient to say about this second stage the following thing. Nietzsche is a psychologist—not an experimental psychologist, of course. What he is doing is unmasking, undermining. He<sup>1</sup> compared himself in that stage to a mole working underground, without any light in sight. But finally the light came, the great light and inspiration; and that means the beginning of the third stage, the document *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The *Zarathustra* was followed by writings which were meant to prepare the understanding of the *Zarathustra*, among which there is first of all *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and a series of pamphlet-like publications. *Beyond Good and Evil* is in my opinion his most beautiful work. But according to Nietzsche the *Zarathustra* is only the vestibule to his main work which he never wrote, which he surely never finished, and which is accessible in a way in the posthumously edited work, *Will to Power*.

I have spoken of Nietzsche's questioning. What is the core of this questioning? The chief preoccupation of his contemporaries was epistemological. Epistemology is the science which answers or tries to answer the question, What is science? Nietzsche was also concerned with this question, but much more with the question, Why science? The question “Why science?” had always been answered by philosophers and men of science, if in different ways, but always to the effect that there is a satisfactory answer: that science has a sufficient why; simply, that science is good. It is true that there have always been people who questioned the goodness of science, almost above all some radical theologians: in the first place, the author of the second chapter of *Genesis*. Through all the centuries there raged a conflict between knowledge and faith. Knowledge in the wider sense, including skepticism; faith in the widest sense including also rational faith.

Nietzsche questions both knowledge and faith. We must see what it is that he opposes to both knowledge and faith.

Knowledge and faith both assert each in its way that the truth, known or believed, will make us free, will make us good, will make us truly alive. Nietzsche denies this. The truth is deadly. I read to you a passage from Nietzsche's second *Consideration Out of Season*, on *The Use And Abuse of History*. I quote:

“If the doctrines of sovereign becoming of the fluidity of all concepts, types and species, of the lack of any cardinal difference between man and beast, doctrines which I regard as true but deadly, if these doctrines will be broadcast among the people for one more generation, with the fanaticism of conversion which is now customary, then one ought not to be surprised if the people perishes from the egoistically small and miserable, from ossification and selfishness. In the first place, disintegrating and ceasing to be a people, the people will then perhaps be replaced by systems of individual egoisms, by fraternization for the purpose of rapacious exploitation of the non-brothers and similar creations of utilitarian vulgarity.”<sup>ii</sup> End of the quotation.

These doctrines to which he refers are doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the sovereignty of becoming; that is to say, of the subordination of being to becoming. They deny that there are stable, fixed, unshakeable differences between the species, and in particular between man and the brutes. They have a ruinous effect, yet they are true. They have that ruinous effect through becoming vulgarized and popularized. Nietzsche does not consider the possibility that the ruinous effect might be prevented by keeping secret the doctrines in question. It was an obvious impossibility. What then shall be done? Suppression of the deadly truth is impossible. One can state Nietzsche's answer in a more general way and better provisionally as follows. One must transform these deadly truths into life-giving truths, into truth[s] which make possible the highest life that ever was and ever will be. Now we must see<sup>2</sup> how Nietzsche believed he could achieve that by studying him and especially *Beyond Good and Evil*, which I hope we can read as a whole.

Now I would like to illustrate Nietzsche's point by reading a few selected passages from the *Zarathustra*. But let us make a pause now and see whether there is any point with which you would like to take issue. Well, then let us turn and read a few pages from the *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche has found a very striking formula for the deadly truth, and that is, quote, “God is dead.” What does that mean? If you will look at the translation on page 198, the second paragraph towards the end of the first part—in this edition, page 191, paragraph 2. The very end of the first part. The section is called *Of the Gift-Giving Virtue*.

**Reader:**

“Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live”—<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thoughts out of Season: The Use and Abuse of History; Schopenhauer as Educator* (vol. 2), trans. A. Collins (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2007).

<sup>iii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1.22, “On the Gift-Giving Virtues,” 3, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Penguin, 1954), 191.

**LS:** Let us stop here. So the deadly truth leads to the life-giving truth, what this translator calls the overman. No one can blame him of course, for not translating it by “superman,” after what happened to Superman in the comic strips. But it is nevertheless important that in German it is *Übermensch*, superman. The noun “superman” is very rare; I know only a passage in Goethe’s *Faust* where it occurs prior to Nietzsche. But the adjective is quite common: *Übermenschlich*, superhuman. Superhuman. Now the overman is a super human being who is still a human being. What that means cannot be said easily. We [can] understand it better following Nietzsche himself, who at least in *Zarathustra* tried to explain what the *Übermensch* is, but failed in that and therefore explained to the people the alternative to the *Übermensch*. And that is in page 128.

**Reader:**

When Zarathustra had spoken these words he beheld the people again and was silent. “There they stand,” he said to his heart; “there they laugh.” They do not understand me; I am not the mouth for these ears. Must one smash their ears before they learn to listen with their eyes? Must one clatter like kettledrums and preachers of repentance? Or do they believe only the stammerer?

“They have something of which they are proud. What do they call that which is to them proud? Education they call it—”

**LS:** The present-day translation would be “culture.”

**Reader:**

“Culture they call it—”

**LS:** No, no, “culture” is the literal translation of the German, but at present they use it.

**Reader:**

“it distinguishes them from goatherds. That is why they do not like to hear the word ‘contempt’ applied to them. Let me then address their pride. Let me speak to them of what is most contemptible: but that is the *last man*.”

And thus spoke Zarathustra to the people: “The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whirl!

“I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

“Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.”

“What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star? Thus asks the last man, and he blinks.

“The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

“‘We have invented happiness,’ say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, but one needs warmth. One still loves one’s neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth.

“Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully. A fool, whoever still stumbles over stones or human beings! A little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams. And much poison in the end, for an agreeable death.

“One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.

“No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.

“‘Formerly, all the world was mad,’ say the most refined, and they blink.

“One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there is no end of derision. One still quarrels, but one is soon reconciled—else it might spoil the digestion.

“One has one’s little pleasure for the day and one’s little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

“‘We have invented happiness,’ say the last men, and they blink.”<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. Thank you. <sup>3</sup>I believe you can recognize certain contemporary phenomena in what Nietzsche says, but in some respects Nietzsche was perhaps too sanguine. For example, when he says everyone who feels differently goes voluntarily into the lunatic asylum. Now he doesn’t—he goes only to a psychoanalyst. [Laughter] And some other differences. Also he did not mention them here, the terrible alternatives which have come in the twentieth century. The last man as described or indicated here, that is *the* alternative to the superman. One can begin to understand what Nietzsche means by this superman by contrasting that “X” with the last man. Why is the last man *the* alternative? Because all other possibilities have disappeared with the death of God. But it might be helpful to see how Nietzsche looked at intermediate possibilities which he did no longer regard as possibilities. That is interesting also for some other reasons. The passage I have in mind<sup>4</sup> is on page 170 in your edition.

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<sup>iv</sup> Zarathustra’s Prologue, 5, *Portable Nietzsche*, 128-30.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** “One Thousand and *Einen Zielen.*” *One Thousand and One Night* is the title of what is called in English *The Arabian Nights*, and it is used in the singular. *One Thousand and One Night*, not *One Thousand and One Nights*, and accordingly Nietzsche says here “A Thousand and One Goal” and not “Thousand and One Goals.” I believe he translates “goals”? Ya?

**Student:** “Goals,” right.

**LS:** All right, read now.

**Reader:**

Zarathustra saw many lands and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and evil of many peoples. And Zarathustra found no greater power on earth than good and evil.

No people could live without first esteeming; but if they want to preserve themselves, then they must not esteem as the neighbor esteems. Much that was good to one people was scorn and infamy to another: thus I found it. Much I found called evil here, and decked out with purple honors there. Never did one neighbor understand the other: ever was his soul amazed at the neighbor’s delusion and wickedness.

A tablet of the good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their will to power.

Praiseworthy is whatever seems difficult to a people; whatever seems indispensable and difficult is called good; and whatever liberates even out of the deepest need, the rarest, the most difficult—that they call holy.

Whatever makes them rule and triumph and shine, to the awe and envy of their neighbors, that is to them the high, the first, the measure, the meaning of all things.

Verily, my brother, once you have recognized the need and land and sky and neighbor of a people, you may also guess the law of their overcomings, and why they climb to their hope on this ladder.

“You shall always be the first and excel all others: your jealous soul shall love no one, unless it be the friend”—that made the soul of the Greek quiver: thus he walked the path of his greatness.

“To speak the truth and to handle bow and arrow well”—that seemed both dear and difficult to the people who gave me my name—the name which is both dear and difficult to me.

“To honor father and mother and to follow their will to the root of one’s soul”—this was the tablet of overcoming that another people hung up over themselves and became powerful and eternal thereby.

“To practice loyalty and, for the sake of loyalty, to risk honor and blood even for evil and dangerous things”—with this teaching another people conquered themselves; and through this self-conquest they became pregnant and heavy with great hopes.

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself “man,” which means: the esteemer.

To esteem is to create: hear this, you creators! Esteeming itself is of all esteemed things the most estimable treasure. Through esteeming alone is there value: and without esteeming, the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear this, you creators!

Change of values—that is a change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates.

First, peoples were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily, the individual himself is still the most recent creation.

Once peoples hung a tablet of the good over themselves. Love which would rule and love which would obey have together created such tablets.

The delight in the herd is more ancient than the delight in the ego; and as long as the good conscience is identified with the herd, only the bad conscience says: I.

Verily, the clever ego, the loveless ego that desires its own profit in the profit of the many—that is not the origin of the herd, but its going under.

Good and evil have always been created by lovers and creators. The fire of love glows in the names of all the virtues, and the fire of wrath.

Zarathustra saw many lands and many peoples. No greater power did Zarathustra find on earth than the works of the lovers: “good” and “evil” are their names.

Verily, a monster is the power of this praising and censuring. Tell me, who will conquer it, O brothers? Tell me, who will throw a yoke over the thousand necks of this beast?

A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal.

But tell me, my brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal—is humanity itself not still lacking too?

Thus spoke Zarathustra.<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** I believe you had no difficulty in recognizing the four peoples to whom he alludes, or did you . . . He mentions only one by name, but the three others are rather clear, I think. Well, to make sure: the Greeks, the Persians, the Jews, and the Germans. And every culture, as they say now, is a national culture. Nations are the fundamental phenomenon. Individuals are a very late creation. But perhaps it is [because of] the very fact that the individuals as individuals have come into being that it is no longer possible to leave it at a national culture. One must seek a universal culture. A goal for mankind. But were there not goals for mankind prior to Nietzsche, prior to *Zarathustra*? Why does Nietzsche deny that, and therefore deny that there is already a humankind? Well?

**Student:** . . . the individual is the constantly being made anew, and so as long as the individual is doing something, they cannot be . . .

**LS:** But why not the human race? The human race consisting of individuals, of course. But what are the alternatives? Do you know of any universal goal which is not the goal of Nietzsche or *Zarathustra*?

**Another Student:** Salvation.

**LS:** Sure, and also on a lower level the communists. But this is tacitly excluded by Nietzsche, because these rules are unaware of what he calls the death of God. That is not here explicitly stated, but it is clear. So when Nietzsche uses the word “values” here and in many of his other writings—and he makes his term popular so that it is now used by such exact sciences as sociology, psychology, political science, and so on, as you know, who have deepened the understanding and are deepening it all the time. But the term was not coined by Nietzsche, nor does it stem, as some people seem to think, from economics, but it came from academic German philosophy after the great German period and it probably was used because people needed a term covering the good, the true, and the beautiful. So morality would be only the good, and not the true and the beautiful, and all things which are beyond the world of “quote facts unquote.” That, I believe, is the reason why this term emerged around 1840. And through Nietzsche that term conquered the world.

Now let me use a more old-fashioned term, “ideals,” a term which Nietzsche abhorred. “Ideals.” Now what are ideals? What did he suggest in the passage which we had read about ideals?

**Student:** That they are convention.

**LS:** No, no, no, no. That is—the key word which occurs here and throughout *Zarathustra* is “creation,” and though this term is of course much older than Nietzsche, I still believe that its present-day deluge is connected with Nietzsche. I mean, you know that if a four-year-old child in a kindergarten is requested to say something about his holidays, that is

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<sup>v</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 15, “On the Thousand and One Goals,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 170-72.

called creative writing, I think. So Nietzsche did change that. Ideals are creations, not conventions. But what is the creating being?

**Student:** A lover.

**LS:** Yes, that is what he says. But love is—what kind of a thing is love?

**Same Student:** Something that annihilates.

**LS:** No. Well, to some extent, yes, but that is not I believe the first thing of which one would think when hearing of love. [Laughter] Ya? Well, it was traditionally called a passion, an emotion. Nietzsche uses the word “will.” Ideals are creations of the will. And what we would have to consider is this. I have said before that Nietzsche opposes both knowledge and faith. What is the X in the name of which he opposes both knowledge and faith? One could say with some justice that X is will. Is this the case? Is this true? There is one passage which we might read which would help us here. We turn to page 137.

**Reader:**

Of the three metamorphoses of the spirit I tell you: how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child.

There is much that is difficult for the spirit, the strong reverent spirit that would bear much: but the difficult and the most difficult are what its strength demands.

What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and exult in my strength? Is it not humbling oneself to wound one’s haughtiness? Letting one’s folly shine to mock one’s wisdom?

Or is it this: parting from our cause when it triumphs? Climbing high mountains to tempt the tempter?

Or is it this: feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and, for the sake of truth, suffering hunger in one’s soul?

Or is it this: being sick and sending home the comforters and making friends with the deaf, who never hear what you want?

Or is it this: stepping into filthy waters when they are the waters of truth, and not repulsing cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: loving those who despise us and offering a hand to the ghost that would frighten us?

All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon itself: like the camel that, burdened, speeds into the desert, thus the spirit speeds into its desert.

In the loneliest desert, however, the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks out his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon.

Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? “Thou shalt” is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, “I will.” “Thou shalt” lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden “thou shalt.”

Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: “All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more ‘I will.’” Thus speaks the dragon.

My brothers, why is there a need in the spirit for the lion? Why is not the beast of burden, which renounces and is reverent, enough?

To create new values—that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation—that is within the power of the lion. The creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred “No” even to duty—for that, my brothers, the lion is needed. To assume the right to new values—that is the most terrifying assumption for a reverent spirit that would bear much. Verily, to him it is preying, and a matter for a beast of prey. He once loved “thou shalt” as most sacred: now he must find illusion and caprice even in the most sacred, that freedom from his love may become his prey: the lion is needed for such prey.

But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred “Yes.” For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred “Yes” is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.

Of three metamorphoses of the spirit I have told you: how the spirit became a camel; and the camel, a lion, and the lion, finally, a child.<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** <sup>vii</sup>Well, is it true then that will is the fundamental phenomenon which Nietzsche opposes to knowledge and faith? I believe a simple answer is not possible. Of course it is will. Even in the case of the child only saying yes—and in this stage, the mind will know its will. It is will, but the mere fact that there is a distinction between the lion with its “I will” and the child with its “I am” indicates that the answer “the will” would be too simple. There are three more passages which I believe we should discuss. But there is the mind, the term which he uses in German, “*geist*.” There is one part, one speech of *Zarathustra* in the title of which “the mind” or “the spirit” occurs, and that is “The Spirit

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<sup>vi</sup> *Zarathustra*, 1. 1, “On the Three Metamorphoses,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 137-39.

<sup>vii</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

of Gravity,” as the translator translates that, and that is on page 303, bottom. But I would translate it “The Spirit of Heaviness,” “*Der Geiste Schwere*.”

**Reader:**

My tongue is of the people: I speak too crudely and heartily for Angora rabbits. And my speech sounds even stranger to all ink-fish and pen-hacks.

My hand is a fool’s hand: beware, all tables and walls and whatever else still offers room for foolish frill or scribbling skill.

My foot is a cloven foot; with it I trample and trot over sticks and stones, crisscross, and I am happy as the devil while running so fast.

My stomach—is it an eagle’s stomach? For it likes lamb the best of all. Certainly it is the stomach of some bird. Nourished on innocent things and on little, ready and impatient to fly, to fly off—that happens to be my way: how could there not be something of the bird’s way in that? And above all, I am an enemy of the spirit of gravity, that is the bird’s way—and verily, a sworn enemy, archenemy, primordial enemy. Oh, where has not my enmity flown and misflown in the past?

Of that I could well sing a song—and *will* sing it, although I am alone in an empty house and must sing it to my own ears. There are other singers, of course, whose throats are made mellow, whose hands are made talkative, whose eyes are made expressive, whose hearts are awakened, only by a packed house. But I am not like those.<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** It is too long to read now. Let us keep this<sup>5</sup> in mind: the spirit of heaviness. <sup>6</sup>There is another spirit which never occurs in a title, but of which Nietzsche speaks much more frequently than of the spirit of heaviness, and that he does in a variety of passages. He calls that other spirit the spirit of revenge. The spirit of revenge and the spirit of heaviness: they are not identical but they are inseparable from one another, and if one does not understand their connection, one will not understand Nietzsche, I believe. Let us turn to page 249 in the translation. In German it is “*Von Der Erlösung*.”

**Reader:**

When Zarathustra crossed over the great bridge one day the cripples and beggars surrounded him, and a hunchback spoke to him thus: “Behold, Zarathustra. The people too learn from you and come to believe in your doctrine; but before they will believe you entirely one thing is still needed: you must first persuade us cripples. Now here you have a fine selection and, verily, an opportunity with more than one handle. You can heal the blind and make the lame walk; and from him who has too much behind him you could perhaps take away a little. That, I think, would be the right way to make the cripples believe in Zarathustra.”

But Zarathustra replied thus to the man who had spoken: “When one takes away the hump from the hunchback one takes away his spirit—thus teach the people. And when

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<sup>viii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 3. 11, “On the Spirit of Gravity,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 303-04.

one restores his eyes to the blind man he sees too many wicked things on earth, and he will curse whoever healed him. But whoever makes the lame walk does him the greatest harm: for when he can walk his vices run away with him—thus teach the people about cripples. And why should Zarathustra not learn from the people when the people learn from Zarathustra?

“But this is what matters least to me since I have been among men: to see that this one lacks an eye and that one an ear and a third a leg, while there are others who have lost their tongues or their noses or their heads. I see, and have seen, what is worse, and many things so vile that I do not want to speak of everything; and concerning some things I do not even like to be silent: for there are human beings who lack everything, except one thing of which they have too much—human beings who are nothing but a big eye or a big mouth or a big belly or anything at all that is big. Inverse cripples I call them.

“And when I came out of my solitude and crossed this bridge for the first time I did not trust my eyes and looked and looked again, and said at last, ‘An ear! An ear as big as a man!’ I looked still more closely—and indeed, underneath the ear something was moving, something pitifully small and wretched and slender. And, no doubt of it, the tremendous ear was attached to a small, thin stalk—but this stalk was a human being! If one used a magnifying glass one could even recognize a tiny envious face; also, that a bloated little soul was dangling from the stalk. The people, however, told me that this great ear was not only a human being, but a great one, a genius. But I never believed the people when they spoke of great men; and I maintained my belief that it was an inverse cripple who had too little of everything and too much of one thing.”

When Zarathustra had spoken thus to the hunchback and to those whose mouthpiece and advocate the hunchback was, he turned to his disciples in profound dismay and said: “Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings.<sup>ix</sup>

“The now and the past on earth—alas, my friends, that is what *I* find most unendurable; and that I should not know how to live if I were not also a seer of that which must come. A seer, a willer, a creator, a future himself and a bridge to the future—and alas, also, as it were, a cripple at this bridge: all this is Zarathustra.

“And you too have often asked yourselves, ‘Who is Zarathustra to us? What shall we call him?’ And, like myself, you replied to yourselves with questions. Is he a promiser? or a fulfiller? A conqueror? or an inheritor? An autumn? or a plowshare? A physician? or one who has recovered? Is he a poet? or truthful? A liberator? or a tamer? good? or evil?

“I walk among men as among the fragments of the future—that future which I envisage. And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is

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<sup>ix</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents?”<sup>x</sup>

**LS:** Of “accident,” of “chance.”

**Reader:** And redeemer of accident?

**LS:** Ya, “chance,” “redeemer of chance.”

**Reader:** Of chance.

“To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’—that alone should I call redemption. Will—that is the nature of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? ‘It was’—that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy.

“Willing liberates; what means does the will devise for himself to get rid of his melancholy and to mock his dungeon? Alas, every prisoner becomes a fool; and the imprisoned will redeems himself foolishly. That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath; ‘that which was’ is the name of the stone he cannot move. And so he moves stones out of wrath and displeasure, and he wreaks revenge on whatever does not feel wrath and displeasure as he does. Thus the will, the liberator, took to hurting; and on all who can suffer he wreaks revenge for his inability to go backwards. This, indeed this alone, is what *revenge* is: the will’s ill will against time and its ‘it was.’

“Verily, a great folly dwells in our will; and it has become a curse for everything human that this folly has acquired spirit.

“*The spirit of revenge*, my friends, has so far been the subject of man’s best reflection; and where there was suffering, one always wanted punishment too.

“For ‘punishment’ is what revenge calls itself; with a hypocritical lie it creates a good conscience for itself.

“Because there is suffering in those who will, inasmuch as they cannot will backwards, willing itself and all life were supposed to be—a punishment. And now cloud upon cloud rolled over the spirit, until eventually madness preached, ‘Everything passes away; therefore everything deserves to pass away. And this too is justice, this law of time, that it must devour its children.’ Thus preached madness.

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<sup>x</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 20, “On Redemption,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 249-51.

“‘Things are ordered morally according to justice and punishment. Alas, where is redemption from the flux of things and from the punishment called existence?’ Thus preached madness.

“‘Can there be redemption if there is eternal justice? Alas, the stone *It was* cannot be moved: all punishments must be eternal too.’ Thus preached madness.

“‘No deed can be annihilated: how could it be undone by punishment? This, this is what is eternal, in the punishment called existence, that existence must eternally become deed and guilt again. Unless the will should at last redeem himself, and willing should become not willing.’ But, my brothers, you know this fable of madness.

“‘I led you away from these fables when I taught you, ‘The will is a creator.’ All ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful chance<sup>xi</sup>—until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I willed it.’ Until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.’

“‘But has the will yet spoken thus? And when will that happen? Has the will been unharnessed yet from his own folly? Has the will yet become his own redeemer and joy-bringer? Has he unlearned the spirit of revenge and all gnashing of teeth? And who taught him reconciliation with time and something higher than any reconciliation? For that will which is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation; but how shall this be brought about? Who could teach him also to will backwards?’”<sup>xii</sup>

**LS:** Let us stop here. That is sufficient. Now I will try to explain that. By “the spirit of revenge” Nietzsche means a very great variety of phenomena, and to some of them he alludes in this speech. In his other writings he <sup>7</sup>[uses] a French word, *ressentiment*, which in Nietzsche does not merely mean resentment but rather the reaction of those who are disadvantaged by nature and/or law against the privileged. And that leads in a deeper stratum to a denial of the superiority of the goodness of the advantages in question, [to a] denigration of those qualities and the longing for the humiliation of these people in this life and in the next. It leads also to what he calls the theology of hangmen: punitiveness, as expressing itself not only in criminal justice but in the doctrines of divine justice. But as he says in this passage which we have read, all these are superficial phenomena of the spirit of revenge. The fundamental thing of the spirit of revenge is this: it is a revolt against fate, against the past, against time. The spirit of revenge therefore leads to the escape from time, from the perishable and temporal to the imperishable and eternal.

And this is linked up with what he says in the passage which we have not read, because it is too long but which you could read, about the spirit of heaviness, the spirit of heaviness that shows itself particularly in science: the need for certainty, for apodicticity. The spirit of revenge and the spirit of heaviness together, that is Nietzsche’s interpretation of the core of our philosophic or scientific tradition. Nietzsche questions the quest for the firm and eternal things<sup>8</sup>, that they would be deadly. They are deadening.

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<sup>xi</sup> In original: “accident”

<sup>xii</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2. 20, “On Redemption,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 249-53.

There is another passage (we cannot read so much here) that is in your edition, page 233 and following. Let us only identify it: “Of Immaculate Conception,” where he confronts sun and moon, creativity and mere contemplation. “The Immaculate Conception,” in German: “Immaculate Knowledge.” Immaculate knowledge, because it is immaculate, opposed to life. What Nietzsche questions here and elsewhere is precisely the traditional notion that there is such a thing as contemplation, *theoria*, and that *theoria* is good, and even the best, *theoria* being directed toward the eternal and unchangeable. The eternal and unchangeable, the beingly being, the *ontos on*, as Plato calls it: being in opposition to becoming. But the true and deadly doctrine is that of the sovereignty of becoming. According to a traditional view which Nietzsche accepts, *the* philosopher of being is Parmenides and *the* philosopher of becoming is Heraclitus. Yet Nietzsche also questions Heraclitus, the philosopher of becoming. He has a simple formula for that: All philosophers, he says, after having mentioned Heraclitus, lack historical sense, the sense for history.

Let me read you a passage from one of his earlier writings, *Human All-Too-Human*.<sup>xiii</sup> Here in the first aphorism he opposes to the metaphysical philosophy the historical philosophy, which in his opinion “cannot be separated from natural science unquote.” In the beginning of the second aphorism he says, “the congenital error of the philosophers, all philosophers, have the common error that they begin from present-day men and believe they can reach their goal through an analysis of present-day man.” That reads almost as<sup>9</sup> [if it were] borrowed from Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. The philosophers who have examined the foundation of society have all of them felt the necessity to go back to the state of nature, but not one of them has arrived there. The philosophers spoke of the savage, “*l’homme sauvage*,” and [yet] they painted civil man—the man of society, present-day man.

So Nietzsche’s concern with history is by no means peculiar to him, as you see. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, philosophy has become aware of history in a way in which it was not aware of it before. The very term “philosophy of history” was coined in 1750, rather late. This novel alliance of philosophy and history reached its peak in Hegel. But Hegel’s philosophy, while fully aware of the creative acts, the acts of the will which made man what he is, Hegel’s philosophy is in spite of that contemplative. It as it were registers or systematizes those creative acts: it is not in itself creative, and it doesn’t wish to be. In the words of Marx: in Hegel the philosopher enters *post festum*, after the festival, after the whole play is over.

Now Nietzsche is in opposition to that. Philosophy must *prepare* the creative acts—nay, it must be itself the creative act *par excellence*. In other words, after the emergence of the historical sense, philosophy can retain its contemplative character only if history is completed, if there is no future. And that is what Hegel fundamentally assumed, but as common sense says, and as Nietzsche says with common sense, history is unfinished, unfinishable. And moreover it is all comprehensive; there are no coasts to which one can escape from the ocean of history. History is all-comprehensive. Nothing is transhistorical.

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<sup>xiii</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All-Too-Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

There are no eternal truths of any kind, as Hegel says, and of course also Marx and many others.

So this in a way of a very general introduction, and we should now turn to the book we plan to read, *Beyond Good and Evil*.<sup>xiv</sup> But again, I would like to find out whether there are any points which should be raised. Yes?

**Student:** Is the knowledge which the spirit of revenge gives birth to—that is, the eternal or the absolutes—deadly in the same way as that which the spirit of gravity gives birth to, that of modern science?

**LS:** That is not only modern science, it is the spirit of science altogether. The two things belong together. When you say the firm and eternal things, you indicate both aspects of the same phenomenon.

**Same Student:** On the speech concerning the last man, you said that Christianity had prepared the groundwork to create a certain tension in human souls—

**LS:** That is complicated. He also says that Christianity is Platonism for the people, which would be just the opposite. That needs a long story, needs a longer discussion.

Now perhaps we can at least begin with the very beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*, and that is of course the title: *Beyond Good and Evil*. What does that mean? Nietzsche has called himself in other writings an immoralist. “Beyond” does not necessarily mean immoralist, but transmoral. But what Nietzsche was compelled to make clear is that *Beyond Good and Evil* doesn’t mean beyond common decency. Of course Nietzsche was a very decent man. Yet what is the status of common decency? How far can common decency guide us? Does common decency entitle us, for example, to distinguish responsibly between decent and indecent wars? People say usually moral or immoral wars, but one can also use less pretentious terms. Or when you think of the problem raised by Dostoyevsky’s Raskolnikov: Is Raskolnikov an indecent man? He is surely up to his act of murder beyond good and evil, but can you call him indecent? <sup>10</sup>I suppose we all use this expression from time to time: “Here’s a fellow whom I would not touch with a ten-foot pole”—an intelligible expression, and that is what Nietzsche meant by common decency. He has [other words]<sup>11</sup> for that, [one] a high word and [the other] a pedestrian word. The high word is “purity” and the pedestrian word is “cleanliness.” These were for Nietzsche indispensable conditions, but Nietzsche also knew that some people whom one would not touch with a ten-foot pole sometimes can make discoveries, especially in the seamy side of the human soul, which one must gratefully accept. What was his example? A French writer of the eighteenth century, Galiani.<sup>xv12</sup>

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<sup>xiv</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1989).

<sup>xv</sup> In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche first discusses Abbé Ferdinand Galiani in part 2, aphorism 26.

Now the next point, after we have seen the title, is to look at the subtitle. The subtitle is “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.” Richard Wagner had spoken of the music of the future. Nietzsche speaks of *a* philosophy of the future. The future was implied in many passages which we have read today in the *Zarathustra*; for example, in the passage where he says, “Does mankind already have a goal?”—where it is implied that it is for the sake of the future to find such a goal or to create such a goal.

Now then the next is of course a table of contents, and you will see that the term “philosopher” occurs only in the heading of the first section and nowhere else. But that is deceptive: the whole book deals with the philosopher. Yes. And then we come of course to the preface, and perhaps we begin with that. It is a very long sentence with which he begins, but let me translate the very beginning: “Assuming that truth is a woman.” A strange beginning for philosophy. What is the justification? Well, it is not clear in English, but it is very clear in other languages, like German—and like Latin, French and so on—that the word “*Wahrheit*” is of the feminine gender. So you have a not-too-bad argument for assuming the truth is female. But there is more to that than this grammatical reason. Yes?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** But not as truth.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** But not as truth. Think only of the last chapter. But there is a well-known woman who represented the truth in ancient mythology.

**Another Student:** Athena?

**LS:** No, not truth. The Sphinx. Think of Oedipus’s wisdom. Nietzsche refers to that in another work. So the assumption that truth is a woman is not entirely unfounded; we have two good reasons for that. Now whether they are sufficient remains to be seen. There is also<sup>13</sup> the remark of Machiavelli that *fortuna* is a woman, but I don’t believe that Nietzsche thought of that. Now let us read the whole sentence with which we began.

**Reader:**

Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women?

**LS:** One should translate “females,” because the word “*Weibe*” has a slightly derogatory meaning which “females”<sup>14</sup> [doesn’t].

**Reader:**

That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart?<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** Nietzsche describes here what he calls elsewhere the “spirit of heaviness,” the dogmatists went like elephants into china shops; and that was a very elusive woman, and you can imagine what happened to that.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** You mean Theodote? Yes, sure. But Socrates was not a dogmatist as Nietzsche understands that. If you take—sure. Yes?

**Reader:**

What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won—and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. *If* it is left standing at all! For there are scoffers who claim that it has fallen, that all dogmatism lies on the ground—even more, that all dogmatism is dying.

Speaking seriously, there are good reasons why all philosophical dogmatizing, however solemn and definitive its airs used to be, may nevertheless have been no more than a noble childishness and tyronism. And perhaps the time is at hand when it will be comprehended again and again *how little* used to be sufficient to furnish the cornerstone for such sublime and unconditional philosophers' edifices as the dogmatists have built so far— (*BGE*, Preface)

**LS:** And so on. Let us stop here. That was of course in no way striking in 1887 or when Nietzsche published this work, to attack philosophical dogmatism. That was almost prevalent. It was prevalent, one can say, since the time of Kant especially. But from Nietzsche's point of view Kant is also a dogmatic philosopher, and this shows itself according to Nietzsche in what he says about morality, where he accepts dogmatically, naively, the moral consciousness. So Nietzsche understands dogmatism in a much broader sense than Kant understood it. Dogmatism as Nietzsche means it implies that one possesses the truth, or at least the most important or the most valuable truth. Yet the truth is elusive, like that woman of whom he spoke at the very beginning. Elsewhere he says we are the first generation which no longer believes that it possesses the truth. That is what he means by the end of dogmatism. And then he develops that theme further, tracing dogmatism to its classic originator, Plato. But we have to postpone this for next meeting.

Next time we will begin to read the first chapter and see how far we go.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “He”; deleted “himself.”

<sup>2</sup> Moved “we must see”; deleted “that.”

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<sup>xvi</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Vintage Books, 1966), preface, 2.

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- <sup>3</sup> Deleted “In retrospect one could say.”
- <sup>4</sup> Deleted “and that.”
- <sup>5</sup> Deleted “only.”
- <sup>6</sup> Deleted “and.”
- <sup>7</sup> Deleted “calls that with.”
- <sup>8</sup> Deleted “This, the firm and eternal things.”
- <sup>9</sup> Deleted “taken over, as.”
- <sup>10</sup> Deleted “On the other hand it makes sense and.”
- <sup>11</sup> Changed from “There is another word”
- <sup>12</sup> Deleted “Galiani.”
- <sup>13</sup> Deleted “what Nietzsche hardly thought.”
- <sup>14</sup> Deleted “has.”

## Session 2: October 20, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —only a small part, but when one gets older, one gets a certain notion also of books which one has not read, because one holds that the river cannot rise higher than the source and some other simple principles. To conclude this short remark, there is one absolutely outstanding book on Nietzsche, and that is the first volume of Heidegger's book entitled *Nietzsche*, and<sup>1</sup> Heidegger's unrivaled philosophic passion and thoroughness are eminently helpful if one wants to penetrate more deeply into Nietzsche's thought.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us return to the very beginning, to the subtitle: "Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future." In a way the title reminds us of the title of a famous Kantian work, *Prolegomena to Every Future Metaphysics Which Can Present Itself as a Science*. Nietzsche does not say "to every philosophy of the future," [but] "to a philosophy of the future." What that means will become clear while we go. It is clear it will be a philosophy of the future. The philosophy of the past is finished, as quite a few people have said in the nineteenth century. Some have drawn the conclusion that philosophy is finished—especially Marx, [for whom there is] concern with the future but surely no longer a philosophy of the future, whatever it is that takes the place of philosophy in Marx's thought.

Now we began to read last time the preface, which begins with that statement I think flattering to the female sex, comparing truth to a woman, and we have discussed that. Nietzsche goes on to say that all<sup>2</sup> dogmatic philosophic teaching has lost its credibility. Well, in a way that had been said by Kant, of course, but from Nietzsche's point of view Kant is also a dogmatic philosopher. Dogmatism as Nietzsche understands it implies that one possesses the truth, however limited that truth may be. Yet the truth is elusive, like a woman, as we have heard.

Now we may continue after that in the preface where he refers to the Vedanta teaching in Asia and Platonism in Europe. Do you have that? Let us begin here.

### **Reader:**<sup>ii</sup>

Let us not be ungrateful to it, although it must certainly be conceded that the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far was a dogmatist's error—namely, Plato's invention of pure spirit and the good as such. (Preface, 3)

**LS:** Ya. Now let us stop here for one moment. Nietzsche here identifies the most important of the men he opposes—that's Plato; and what he questions is the core of Plato's teaching, the pure mind and the good in itself. The good in itself is a simple formulation which includes all the ideas: in the language of Nietzsche, all absolute or eternal values. This is the most profound mistake. Now what Nietzsche will put in its

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<sup>i</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ed. David Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979-1987).

<sup>ii</sup> The reader identifies the page number of the passage.

place, or why this Platonic view is such a fundamental error, that he will explain in the first chapter.

**Reader:**

But now that it is overcome, now that Europe is breathing freely again after this nightmare and at least can enjoy a healthier—sleep, we, *whose task is wakefulness itself*, are the heirs of all that strength which has been fostered by the fight against this error. To be sure, it meant standing truth on her head and denying *perspective*, the basic condition of all life, when one spoke of spirit and the good as Plato did.

**LS:** “Perspectivik” would be a more literal translation.<sup>iii</sup> Life is as such *perspectivik*, and thinking is *perspectivik* and not “quote absolute” as it would be from Plato’s point of view. Yes?

**Reader:**

Indeed, as a physician one might ask: “How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contract such a disease? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all? Could Socrates have been the corrupter of youth after all? And did he deserve his hemlock?”

But the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for “the people,” the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia—for Christianity is Platonism for “the people”—has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals.

**LS:** One thing. This statement which is set here in parentheses is naturally crucial. Christianity is Platonism for the people. Christianity does not offer a problem different from that of Plato; it is a modification of Platonism. Therefore Nietzsche can, in this work at any rate, regard Plato, Platonism as *the* position which he attacks.

**Reader:**

To be sure, European man experiences this tension as need and distress; twice already attempts have been made in the grand style to unbend the bow—once by means of Jesuitism, the second time by means of the democratic enlightenment which, with the aid of freedom of the press and newspaper-reading, might indeed bring it about that the spirit would no longer experience itself so easily as a “need.” (The Germans have invented gunpowder—all due respect for that!—but then they made up for that: they invented the press.) But we who are neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, we *good Europeans* and free, *very* free spirits—we still feel it, the whole need of the spirit and the whole tension of its bow. And perhaps also the arrow, the task, and—who knows?—the goal— (*BGE*, preface, 3)

**LS:** This little joke about powder, [that] the Germans have invented the powder. One says in German of someone who can’t set the Thames on fire: He has not invented powder, gunpowder. And this is implied. But he refers to two great events which in

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<sup>iii</sup> Strauss retranslates “perspective” to “perspectivik” from the line just read.

modern times were made to prevent a radical deepening of human thought: Jesuitism in the seventeenth century and the democratic enlightenment in the eighteenth and nineteenth. But there are two men—in each case one man—who opposed<sup>3</sup> these reactionary things. In the case of Jesuitism, it was Pascal; in the case of the democratic enlightenment, it is Nietzsche. Pascal and Nietzsche belong somehow together according to Nietzsche's own opinion, and if this seems to contradict what he said about Christianity before, well, we have to get accustomed to quite a few contradictions, and which will only lead us to more careful thinking.

So I would like to make only one general remark on the basis of the preface, which we have read. You see here already the way in which Nietzsche proceeds, at least in this writing: there are strong radical assertions, but they are surrounded and qualified all the time by “perhapses” and “it seemses.” Plato is *the* antagonist, the most powerful irritant, and yet Nietzsche more than any other modern philosopher reminds of Plato or Socrates—the distinction is very difficult to make: questioning and awakening rather than teaching a certainty.<sup>4</sup> In *Beyond Good and Evil*, and especially in the first chapter to which we shall turn now, Nietzsche writes with as much art and artfulness as Plato. This is somewhat concealed by the fact that he speaks in all of his writings, with the exception of the *Zarathustra*, always in his own name, which Plato never does except in the *Letters*. There is one obvious difference regarding [their] artfulness: Plato is always concerned with the preservation of respectable opinion of respectable men, while Nietzsche is not at all concerned with that. Perhaps he had to shout from the rooftops because only in this way could a serious and profound thinker find a hearing in his time.

So we leave it at these remarks about the preface and turn now to the first chapter with the title of “The Prejudices of the Philosophers,” the prejudices of the men who claim to be free from prejudices, who claim to be the enemies of prejudice. Yes? Let us read slowly the first aphorism.

**Reader:**

The will to truth which will still tempt us to many a venture, that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with respect—what questions has this will to truth not laid before us!

**LS:** So Nietzsche himself is motivated by that will to truth. Yes?

**Reader:**

What strange, wicked, questionable questions! That is a long story even now—and yet it seems as if it had scarcely begun. Is it any wonder that we should finally become suspicious, lose patience, and turn away impatiently?

**LS:** No, “turn around.”

**Reader:**

And turn around impatiently. (*BGE*, 1)

**LS:** He turns the will to truth around, turns it against itself. What does this mean?

**Student:** The will to untruth.

**LS:** Yes, but let us first look at what Nietzsche said.

**Reader:**

that we should finally learn from this Sphinx to ask questions, too? *Who* is it really that puts questions to us here? *What* in us really wants “truth”?

Indeed we came to a long halt at the question about the cause of this will—until we finally came to a complete stop before a still more basic question. We asked about the *value* of this will. Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? even ignorance?

The problem of the value of truth came before us—or was it we who came before the problem? Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx? It is a rendezvous, it seems, of questions and question marks.

And though it scarcely seems credible, it finally almost seems to us as if the problem had never even been put so far—as if we were the first to see it, fix it with our eyes, and *risk* it. For it does involve a risk, and perhaps there is none that is greater. (*BGE*, 1)

**LS:** So the novel question which Nietzsche<sup>5</sup> claims to raise concerns the cause of the will to truth, and more radically, the value of that will and the value of truth itself. And there is another question implied:<sup>6</sup> Are we posing that question, or is that question imposed on us? Nietzsche claims that this question isn’t entirely a novel question. This cannot be literally true. If you remember Plato, the will to truth is inseparable from the passionate longing for happiness, for bliss, for a lasting possession of it. And the simply lasting can be found only in *the* truth, in the unchangeable, eternal truth. Now Nietzsche’s novel question presupposes the rejection of the Platonic answer and is only for this reason novel. There is another point when we think of Plato: the Platonic answer implies the eternal ideas, the perishable things; it implies the opposition of the imperishable and the perishable. And that explains the subject of the second aphorism. Will you read it?

**Reader:**

“How *could* anything originate out of its opposite? for example, truth out of error? or the will to truth out of the will to deception? or selfless deeds out of selfishness? or the pure and sunlike gaze of the sage out of lust? Such origins are impossible; whoever dreams of them is a fool, indeed worse; the things of the highest value must have another, *peculiar* origin—they cannot be derived from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world, from this turmoil of delusion and lust. Rather from the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the ‘thing-in-itself’—there must be their basis, and nowhere else.”

This way of judging constitutes the typical prejudgment and prejudice which give away the metaphysicians of all ages; this kind of valuation looms in the background of all their

logical procedures; it is on account of this “faith” that they trouble themselves about “knowledge”—

**LS:** “About their knowledge.”

**Reader:**

about their knowledge, about something that is finally baptized solemnly as “the truth.” The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*.

**LS:** In the “oppositeness of values.”

**Reader:**

The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is the faith in the oppositeness of values. It has not even occurred to the most cautious among them that one might have a doubt right here at the threshold where it was surely most necessary—even if they vowed to themselves, “*de omnibus dubitandum*.” (BGE, 2)

**LS:** Do you know what that means?

**Student:** I would doubt everything.

**LS:** Do you know who said that?

**Same Student:** Descartes.

**LS:** Sure. Yes?

**Reader:**

For one may doubt, first, whether there are any opposites at all, and secondly whether these popular valuations and opposite values on which the metaphysicians put their seal, are not perhaps merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives, perhaps even from some nook, perhaps from below, frog perspectives, as it were, to borrow an expression painters use. For all the value that the true, the truthful, the selfless may deserve, it would still be possible that a higher and more fundamental value for life might have to be ascribed to deception, selfishness, and lust. It might even be possible that what constitutes the value of these good and revered things is precisely that they are insidiously related, tied to, and involved with these wicked, seemingly opposite things—maybe even one with them in essence. Maybe!

But who has the will to concern himself with such dangerous maybes? For that, one really has to wait for the advent of a new species of philosophers, such as have somehow another and converse taste and propensity from those we have known so far—philosophers of the dangerous “maybe” in every sense.

And in all seriousness: I see such new philosophers coming up. (BGE, 2)

**LS:** So why Nietzsche turns to the opposition of values from the preceding paragraph is clear: Plato is the arch-metaphysician. Metaphysics is not knowledge, as it claims to be, but faith, belief. And the basic faith of the metaphysician is<sup>7</sup> in the opposition of values—in the opposition, for instance, of truth and selflessness as valuable, and appearance and egoism as worthless and bad. But are not appearance, illusion, and egoism perhaps of higher value to life than their opposites? Furthermore, do not the reputedly high things—truth, selflessness—owe their value to their essential identity with the reputedly low things? Perhaps, Nietzsche says. Now what is your reaction to what we have read, to these first aphorisms?

**Student:** Is Nietzsche posing a problem in such a way that it would need to be answered with him creating preludes to a philosophy of the future, or is he making the first stab at a philosophy of the future?

**LS:** Well, it has obviously a connection with the philosophy of the future, as you see from the end of this paragraph. He calls philosophers of the future “philosophers of dangerous perhapses.” Ya? “Dangerous perhapses.” That does not mean that they are skeptics, skeptics in the sense that they simply say, “I know that we cannot know,” this simplistic view of skepticism. But they surely no longer make assertions in the way in which philosophers traditionally made assertions. I do not know whether that answers your question.

**Same Student:** It would seem that Nietzsche sees a problem in the way that philosophy is carried on and that . . . leaving it as a problem for others to solve, not saying that it is insoluble, but . . .

**LS:** Yes, somehow philosophy in the traditional sense has lost its credibility. That was not the work of Nietzsche. [But] there was this thing which still exists, more in our time perhaps than in Nietzsche’s time, called science, which had acquired all the respectability and authority which philosophy enjoyed in the past. And the opposition to metaphysics was very common in Nietzsche’s time, and to dogmatic philosophy [was] surely very common. But Nietzsche believes he must take this much more seriously than the common enemies of metaphysics and dogmatists do. They all are still concerned with the truth; the scientists too. They regard truth as valuable and illusion as valueless or bad. This they share with Plato. But is this a premise which is self-evident, that truth is more valuable than illusion? This is a question which he raises here. Yes?

**Another Student:** He seems to be saying that illusion may have a greater value for life than truth. I think that’s the way he put it. But maybe the first question that a Socratic would ask would be: What kind of life? That is, Nietzsche seems to without qualification give a primary place to life.

**LS:** Ya, that could seem so. That could seem so, but I think while we go on you will see that he makes a distinction. Even the highest life is still life, human life, is it not? And something which is destructive of life, debilitating life as life, is questionable.

**Same Student:** Would Nietzsche be saying that illusion is more valuable even for the highest kind of life?

**LS:** In a way, yes.

**Same Student:** Ah.

**LS:** Yes. But there is another point which is very obvious and therefore despised by many people as unworthy of such consideration, but I believe we should at least mention it. When Nietzsche says<sup>8</sup> there is an essential identity of truth and illusion, then he says this is the truth, doesn't he? It's very simple. We ordinarily speak of truth here, illusion there, and now Nietzsche says these two seeming opposites are essentially identical. That is the truth. And does he not get into some troubles?

**Same Student:** I think so. I think that anyone who said that would get into some trouble.

**LS:** Ya, I believe so. So we must see whether Nietzsche took care of that difficulty or not. But hitherto he has not done that. Yes?

**Another Student:** The Socratics thought that the life searching for truth was actually not life at all, but death. So maybe Nietzsche—<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** Socrates says that it is dying, but he also says that this is *the* life, and that if you take this so simply, that this dying is the way to the true life, Socrates is as much concerned with life as Nietzsche is; that's not the point. But the relation of life and truth, that is the question. Perhaps I can help you when I quote to you a statement of Nietzsche from another writing, that it was his intention—I quote from memory—that it was his intention always to look at science from the point of view of art, and at art from the point of view of life. That is to say, not to take science and art as absolutes, as things given and not to be questioned;<sup>9</sup> they are to be questioned with a view to life. What does science or truth, what does art do for life? Life is the ultimate consideration. The Socratic question, by the way, is how to live. Ya? How to live.

**Student:** In the later dialogue? In the *Sophist*?

**LS:** Well, in the *Gorgias*, where he presents himself in opposition to Callicles, which is a very massive contrast. And there,<sup>10</sup> he says, that's a question which he answers in a radically different way: how one ought to live. Yes?

**Another Student:** You said earlier that Nietzsche seemed to be falling into a trap of his own by making an identity between truth and illusion. I find where he says it might even be possible that what constitutes the value of these good and perverse things is precisely that they are mysteriously related . . . looking at seemingly opposite things . . . yet another “perhaps.”

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<sup>iv</sup> A student raises a question which Strauss does not understand or cannot hear; the reader here offers a paraphrase.

**LS:** Well, Nietzsche doesn't decide the question, he raises the question. But he says that without having considered these maybe one cannot claim to have settled the issue. That one cannot do under any circumstances.

**Same Student:** He is clearly raising a question how is it possible to fall into a trap that he is saying other people have fallen into.

**LS:** We can always be trapped. Plato also speaks of the trap into which we may fall, a trap set to us by the lovers. So that is not the greatest danger, but one must be cautious. What is required is to be very bold, as Nietzsche is, and at the same time—as he also is—very cautious. There is no other recipe for that. But Nietzsche has only opened up the question, and we must see to what he leads. These seemingly separate aphorisms, as they are called, are linked with one another, although the link is not made explicit. Perhaps the next aphorism will be of some help. Yes?

**Reader:**

After having looked long enough between the philosopher's lines and fingers, I say to myself: by far the greater part of conscious thinking must still be included among instinctive activities, and that goes even for philosophical thinking. We have to relearn here, as one has had to relearn about heredity and what is "innate." As the act of birth deserves no consideration in the whole process and procedure of heredity, so "being conscious" is not in any decisive sense the *opposite* of what is instinctive: most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts.

Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life.

**LS:** "Specific kind of life."

**Reader:**

For example, that the definite should be worth more than the indefinite, and mere appearance worth less than "truth"—such estimates might be, in spite of their regulative importance for *us*, nevertheless mere foreground estimates, a certain kind of *niaiserie* which may be necessary for the preservation of just such beings as we are. Supposing, that is, that not just man is the "measure of things"— (*BGE*, 3)

**LS:** Now previously Nietzsche had only questioned or stated paradoxes. Now he begins with proofs, or at least people sense the result of his observations as you see from the beginning of this paragraph.

But first, regarding the cause of the will to truth, or of thinking: that cause, he says, is largely instinctive. Physiological postulates [are] required for the preservation of a certain kind of life. And second, regarding the value of the will to truth, which is already implied in the first point: "truth," in quotation marks, may be of subordinate value to man's

preservation. We need some determinedness and fixity and so on, however dubious that may be in the life of deep observation. That truth would be of higher value only—the truth of fixity and so—only if one dogmatically assumed that man is the measure of all things. Perhaps man is the measure of all things, but not in the way indicated. So if man is the measure of all things, the way in which things appear to normal human beings is *the* truth. <sup>11</sup>Otherwise it is *merely* relative to one species of animals and therefore not the truth. This you must have heard quite often, this view. Yes?

**Student:** The nature of the word “must”: men needs a truth for their own preservation. If men *must* have it, how can men say, even assume or even bring up the subject that it isn’t there or that it might not be there?

**LS:** In the first place, Nietzsche uses “truth” in quotation marks toward the end of this paragraph. But apart from that, for example, if you assume that man cannot live without assuming a Euclidean space, then this Euclidean space is absolutely necessary for human life. But it doesn’t make it the true space, does it? I mean, for example, a god would not understand things in Euclidean terms.

**Same Student:** Is that an example of a physiological demand?

**LS:** Ya, that would be one example.

**Another Student:** Would physiological mean . . .

**LS:** Ya. In other words, he does not mean physiology in the narrower sense of the term. Yes?

**Another Student:** I can’t see it not as absurdity for a man to raise the question.

**LS:** Ya, but is it not very important to raise it—and, by the way, it was raised before Nietzsche, the question: Are the things as they appear to us insofar as we are normal human beings, are these *the* things, or is this a specific distortion due to the human physiology? Is it not necessary to face this question? Yes?

**Same Student:** Well, if it is, then we can ask the question that it is not innate for men to necessarily believe that what men see is actually what is.

**LS:** Ya, but what can you do? By what can you replace this view of things? And would this not in its turn be in danger of being called for by the physiological requirements of man?

**Another Student:** Are these the physiological requirements for a certain type of life . . .

**LS:** A certain species of life, one could even say; say, the human species.

**Same Student:** Well, I saw a certain type of a certain type of human life.

**LS:** That could be. I think here it is more natural to think of the human species, as appears from the rest of that paragraph. But you wanted to say something.

**Another Student:** . . . the word instinct?

**LS:** That view was in very common use at that time and is not . . . self-preservation, which . . . sex for instance. People can be driven by such instincts without being aware of it. Instinct is here used in opposition<sup>12</sup> to conscious thinking, and the main point which Nietzsche here makes is this: the philosophers who claim to be free from such despicable things as instinct, at least to the extent to which they think, they are the worst sinners, because in their apparent freedom from instinctive promptings they are guided by instincts. Let us go on.

**Reader:**

The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include the synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live—that renouncing false judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life. To recognize untruth as a condition of life—that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil. (*BGE*, 4)

**LS:** We have already heard from another writing of Nietzsche that truth is deadly, and therefore to abandon a certain kind of false fundamental premise is deadly. Here again [there] is no proof, only an assertion. Untruth may be a condition of life. The truth is deadly. What claims to be the will to uncover the truth—the absolute truth, the truth not in the service of the preservation of the species—is in fact in the service of life. It is an instinctive desire for proving what is believed in in advance.

Is there any point you would raise? You must interrupt.

**Reader:**

What provokes one to look at all philosophers half suspiciously, half mockingly, is not that one discovers again and again how innocent they are—how often and how easily they make mistakes and go astray; in short, their childishness and childlikeness—but that they are not honest enough in their work, although they all make a lot of virtuous noise when the problem of truthfulness is touched even remotely. They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic (as opposed to the mystics of every rank, who are more honest and doltish—and talk of “inspiration”); while at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of “inspiration”—most often a desire of the heart that has been

filtered and made abstract—that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact. They are all advocates who resent that name, and for the most part even wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize “truths”—and *very* far from having the courage of the conscience that admits this, precisely this, to itself; very far from having the good taste of the courage which also lets this be known, whether to warn an enemy or friend, or, from exuberance, to mock itself.

The equally stiff and decorous Tartuffery of the old Kant as he lures us on the dialectical bypaths that lead to his “categorical imperative”—really lead astray and seduce—this spectacle makes us smile, as we are fastidious and find it quite amusing to watch closely the subtle tricks of old moralists and preachers of morals. Or consider the hocus-pocus—(*BGE*, 5)<sup>v13</sup>

**LS:** Now the most important point which we have perhaps not emphasized in reading is at the very beginning. He speaks here in this paragraph of *all* philosophers. Now he turns it around. All philosophers have the will to truth, a claim to be guided by the will to truth. They are guided by something else; that is to say, they are not intellectually honest, and Nietzsche’s new philosophy, philosophy of the future, claims to be more intellectually honest than the philosophy of the past. Here occur for the first time names of famous philosophers in the text of *Beyond Good and Evil*: Kant and Spinoza, who had at that time, I believe, the greatest names in continental Europe. Very different people, but guilty of the same lack of intellectual probity. Yes?

**Student:** . . . How is he free from what he criticizes? . . . How does he get himself out of the same bag, the same closure?

**LS:** Perhaps the consciousness makes a difference. Perhaps one cannot get out of that. In other words—if I may use [an]<sup>14</sup> almost obscene expression but [one] which is now in quite common use—if all philosophy is personal—ya? Personal—and the philosophers of the past denied that and that philosophy is impersonal; then if this is so, then a man like Nietzsche, whose philosophy is avowedly personal, is by this very fact more honest and more truthful. Does it not make sense? I mean, whether this is possible or not, a personal philosophy, is an entirely different question, but we first [must] try to find out what Nietzsche can possibly mean with these strong, powerfully expressed, beautifully expressed but yet enigmatic sentences. Yes?

**Another Student:** I didn’t understand something about that. He says while at bottom it is “an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of inspiration.” Well, maybe we could accept that, that it’s a kind of inspiration, it’s a kind of hunch, and yet still say that it’s impersonal.

**LS:** Ya, a desire of the heart. Ya, that is important.

**Same Student:** But it’s impersonal, it could come to anyone, and if it came to them it would not be a consequence of their physiology.

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<sup>v</sup> The tape was changed at this point.

**LS:** Well, then perhaps you read the last aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Read it now.

**Reader:**

Alas, what are you after all, my written and painted thoughts! It was not long ago that you were still so colorful, young, and malicious, full of thorns and secret spices—you made me sneeze and laugh—and now? You have already taken off your novelty, and some of you are ready, I fear, to become truths—

**LS:** This time without quotation marks.<sup>vi</sup>

**Reader:**

they already look so immortal, so pathetically decent, so dull! And has it ever been different? What things do we copy, writing and painting, we mandarins with Chinese brushes, we immortalizers of things that *can* be written—what are the only things we are able to paint? Alas, always only what is on the verge of withering and losing its fragrance! Alas, always only storms that are passing, exhausted, and feelings that are autumnal and yellow! Alas, always only birds that grew weary of flying and flew astray and now can be caught by hand—by *our* hand! We immortalize what cannot live and fly much longer—only weary and mellow things! And it is only your *afternoon*, you, my written and painted thoughts, for which I alone have colors, many colors perhaps, many motley caresses and fifty yellows and browns and greens and reds: but nobody will guess from that how you looked in your morning, you sudden sparks and wonders of my solitude, you my old beloved—*wicked* thoughts! (*BGE*, 296)

**LS:** So they are Nietzsche’s thoughts. To use again this overworked [word], “personal,” the thoughts of Nietzsche himself, *ipsissimus*. How this can be of any interest to any other human being, that is the question. Again, as Nietzsche put it when he speaks of the influence of his long illness on his thought and of his recovery—well, an objection of the reader: Of what concern is it to us that Mr. Nietzsche recovered? Then we can say with the same right: Of what concern is it that Mr. Nietzsche had this or that thought? But as is not only shown by the impact Nietzsche had and has, I believe you all will see when we go on that it does concern us, and how this is compatible with that emphatically Nietzschean character of Nietzsche’s thought. Then perhaps we will reach some clarity about that later. Yes?

**Student:** In the English translation, the first sentence of paragraph five, there is the word . . . <sup>vii</sup>

**LS:** “Innocent,” sure.

**Student:** . . .

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<sup>vi</sup> Strauss draws attention to the absence of quotation marks around “truth.”

<sup>vii</sup> There is a largely inaudible exchange with a student.

**LS:** But he says in German “*unschuldig*.”

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Oh, I see that he<sup>viii</sup> doesn’t go honestly enough.<sup>15</sup> There is what in Germany is called “intellect,” “*redlichkeit*,” “intellectual probity.” That would be expressed, I believe, in idiomatic British English by “candor.” I have sometimes found references to the intellectual probity of the English philosophers and what was meant was, in the language, say, of Hume, “candor.” That is not such a grave error. One should translate it correctly, by all means, but it is not misleading.

Now in the next paragraph he speaks again of *all* philosophers or of every great philosophy. Yes?

**Reader:**

Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown.

Indeed, if one would explain how the abstrusest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about, it is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?

**LS:** It is only fair to say that this canon of interpretation must be applied to Nietzsche himself. Go on.

**Reader:**

Accordingly, I do not believe that a “drive to knowledge” is the father of philosophy; but rather that another drive has, here as elsewhere, employed understanding (and misunderstanding) as a mere instrument. But anyone who considers the basic drives of man to see to what extent they may have been at play just here as *inspiring* spirits (or demons and kobolds) will find that all of them have done philosophy at some time—and that every single one of them would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive wants to be master—and it attempts to philosophize in *that spirit*.

**LS:** As such, as in its desire to be master.

**Reader:**

To be sure: among scholars who are really scientific men, things may be different—“better,” if you like—there you may really find something like a drive for knowledge, some small, independent clockwork that, once well wound, works on vigorously *without* any essential participation from all the other drives of the scholar. The real “interests” of the scholar therefore lie usually somewhere else—say, in his family, or in making money,

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<sup>viii</sup> The translator.

or in politics. Indeed, it is almost a matter of total indifference whether his little machine is placed at this or that spot in science, and whether the “promising” young worker turns himself into a good philologist or an expert on fungi or a chemist: it does not *characterize* him that he becomes this or that. In the philosopher, conversely, there is nothing whatever that is impersonal; and above all, his morality bears decided and decisive witness to *who he is*—that is, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other. (*BGE*, 6)

**LS:** Yes. You see at the beginning he spoke of every great philosophy in order to exclude the small philosophies of the people “who do philosophy,” [as they] are called in the British Isles,<sup>16</sup> because they would of course belong to that kind of men whom he discusses toward the end, the scientists or scholars.<sup>17</sup> The German term *gelehrter*, like the French *savant*, includes both scholars and scientists; so the translation therefore would be difficult, but say the “specialists.” The people who do philosophy are as much specialists as, say, the students of fungi or whatever he mentions here. That is not philosophy, and therefore, whatever may be<sup>18</sup> true of them, that does not affect the fate of philosophy and therefore this distinction.

**Student:** There are no “perhapses” in this.

**LS:** No, no, he gradually becomes—he proves things to some extent. Number 7.

**Reader:**

How malicious philosophers can be! I know of nothing more venomous than the joke Epicurus permitted himself against Plato and the Platonists; he called them *Dionysiokolakes*. That means literally—and this is the foreground meaning—“flatterers of Dionysius,” in other words, tyrant’s baggage and lickspittles; but in addition to this he also wants to say, “they are all *actors*, there is nothing genuine about them” (for *Dionysokolax* was a popular name for an actor).

**LS:** And Flatterer of Dionysus, and not of Dionysius, the tyrant in Sicily, yes?

**Reader:**

And the latter is really the malice that Epicurus aimed at Plato: he was peeved by the grandiose manner, the *mise en scène* at which Plato and his disciples were so expert—at which Epicurus was not an expert—he, that old schoolmaster from Samos, who sat, hidden away, in his little garden at Athens and wrote three hundred books—who knows? perhaps from rage and ambition against Plato?

It took a hundred years until Greece found out who this garden god, Epicurus, had been.—Did they find out?— (*BGE*, 7)

**LS:** So these are then the first ancient philosophers who are mentioned, Plato and Epicurus, the antipodes. Plato, the master of *mise en scène* and the great artist, and Epicurus, who lacked that gift completely, but [who] is as much a man who produces himself, if not with that glamour of Plato. Is this not what he means by his question

marks regarding Epicurus? Is Plato's debunker, Epicurus, better than Plato? Do they not all deserve to be debunked? And that has been done in the meantime by innumerable writers, this debunking, but Nietzsche is not concerned with the debunking as such but [rather] with the consequence to be drawn from it. Must not philosophy be radically redefined? Yes. And now he gives a simple statement of this view of philosophy.

**Reader:**

There is a point in every philosophy when the philosopher's "conviction"—

**LS:** "Conviction" in quotation marks.

**Reader:**

appears on the stage—or to use the language of an ancient Mystery:

*Adventavit asinus,  
Pulcher et fortissimus. (BGE, 8)*

**LS:** "There arrived a donkey beautiful and very strong, that is, conviction and a donkey." But the joke requires some understanding of German, or obviously of the German interpretation of donkey's brayings. In German one hears the donkey bray "ee-yah," and that is almost "ja," the German word for "yes." So in every philosophy there is a very powerful *affirmation*, [an] affirmation which is as reasonable as that beautiful and very strong donkey. But we cannot have anything better except that we can do it knowingly, and perhaps that is all the difference in the world. Yes?

**Reader:**

"According to nature" you want to *live*? O you noble Stoics, what deceptive words these are! (BGE, 9)

**LS:** So he had spoken first of Plato and Epicurus, and he turns now to the other famous ancient school, the Stoics. Aristotle is not mentioned. I do not believe that this is in any way intentional, but Aristotle doesn't exist for Nietzsche. [Laughter] Yes?

**Reader:**

Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without purposes and consideration, without mercy and justice, fertile and desolate and uncertain at the same time; imagine indifference itself as a power—how *could* you live according to this indifference? Living—is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature? Is not living—estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different? And supposing your imperative "live according to nature" meant at bottom as much as "live according to life"—how could you *not* do that? Why make a principle of what you yourselves are and must be?

In truth, the matter is altogether different: while you pretend rapturously to read the canon of your law in nature, you want something opposite, you strange actors and self-

deceivers! Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature—even on nature—and incorporate them in her —

**LS:** More precisely, and I believe it is of some importance to be precise at this point, “your pride wishes to prescribe to nature, even to nature, your morality and your ideal.” “Prescribe” is the key word.

**Reader:**

you demand that she should be nature “according to the Stoa,” and you would like all existence to exist only after your own image—as an immense eternal glorification and generalization of Stoicism. For all your love of truth, you have forced yourselves so long, so persistently, so rigidly-hypnotically to see nature the wrong way, namely Stoically, that you are no longer able to see her differently. And some abysmal arrogance finally still inspires you with the insane hope that *because* you know how to tyrannize yourselves—Stoicism is self-tyranny—nature, too, lets herself be tyrannized: is not the Stoic—a *piece* of nature?

But this is an ancient, eternal story: what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the “creation of the world,” to the *causa prima*. (BGE, 9)

**LS:** The most spiritual will to power. Will to power is a key term of Nietzsche. We will find this later on. And <sup>19</sup>the will to power determines all philosophy—but in a variation, the most spiritual [will]. Now in German that is “*geistig*,” the meaning of which is between the English “spiritual” and “intellectual.” If we say “spiritual,” we must not forget that it does not have to be more than intellectual. That is effective in this most spiritual power. The question is, of course, what distinguishes this most spiritual will to power from the common forms of the will to power. The Stoics prescribed to nature an ideal. There was someone prior to Nietzsche who said that the human understanding prescribes nature its laws. You surely have heard of that. That was Kant, and Nietzsche presupposes that. He radicalizes that. All philosophy is prescribing, but prescribing not merely laws of nature but prescribing ideals, and only on the basis of such prescribing can everything else take place. And therefore<sup>20</sup> if the ideals are prescribed and that is the most important and the most fundamental phenomenon, then of course one cannot speak here of truth. The highest would then not be the will to truth but the will to establish an ideal, an act of the will to power. And the will to truth could have only a subordinate function.

Generally, one can say about Nietzsche’s discussions about the will to truth, here and also elsewhere, there was formerly the notion, which Nietzsche knows of course and of which he makes use, according to which truth is the adequation of the intellect to the thing: the view of knowledge—which was called then by its opponents the understanding of knowing as copying, reproducing what is already there. Over against that Nietzsche has

another notion of truth; namely, creation, creative. And there is a connection between that notion of the creative truth and the Kantian philosophy.

Now this is all Nietzsche has to say in the first chapter about ancient philosophy, about Plato, Epicurus, Stoics. Then in aphorism 10 he turns to modern philosophy until the end of this chapter. Is there any point you would—

**Student:** He asks here the question, is not the Stoic a piece of nature? I get the feeling that such question is very fundamental. If the Stoic were asked that question, he might either say no, or he would say, “If I answered yes, I would be more deceptive than telling what I believe,” because it seems that the ancient understanding of man is somehow going to separate him from nature because he has certain faculties which aren’t found in nature.

**LS:** The word which Nietzsche underlines here is piece, piece of the mind. Part of nature.

**Same Student:** Then the answer would have to be in a certain sense yes, and in a certain sense no.

**LS:** Ya, but if nature is what Nietzsche says it is, namely, something terrible and uncertain, and so on, and indifference itself, as he said at the beginning of this paragraph, then this would also be true of the Stoics, would it not, and hence of the Stoic philosophy?

**Same Student:** I don’t understand. If nature is characterized as indifference itself, how could the Stoic be a piece of nature when he is the one who is not indifferent—he’s very much—

**LS:** But does he not say one should live according to nature? And must one not look at this demand without necessarily accepting the Stoic interpretation of nature? Nietzsche wants to show that this is an absurd demand of the Stoics. You cannot live according to nature, and he says if you mean according to life, which is possible, that is empty because you do that anyway.

**Same Student:** But if nature is understood the way the Stoic would have us understand nature, then for the Stoic to say that he wants to live according to nature would place his life in a very sort of shallow sphere.

**LS:** At any rate, there is one point which we must consider. At the very beginning, when he speaks of the difference between nature and life, and at the beginning of paragraph 9, then nature and life are two very different things, but they have one thing in common. Perhaps you read this again, the beginning. “Imagine a being as nature.” Right at the beginning. The second sentence of 9.

**Reader:**

Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without purposes and consideration, without mercy and justice, fertile and desolate and uncertain at the same time— (*BGE*, 9)

**LS:** No, no. I do not know. In my German text it is “terrible,” not “fertile.” Has anyone another German edition?<sup>ix</sup>

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** *Fruchtbar*. Oh ya, Ya, that would be better. Then the translation is correct. Thank you. Yes?

**Reader:**

Fertile and desolate and uncertain at the same time; imagine indifference itself as a power—how *could* you live according to this indifference?

**LS:** In other words, one cannot live as nature or according to nature. Yes, but the alternative.

**Reader:**

Living—is that not precisely wanting to be other than this nature? Is not living—estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different? (*BGE*, 9)

**LS:** So nature and life are two very different things. But they have one thing in common, which is not emphasized here, but—

**Student:** Wastefulness?

**LS:** No, he doesn’t say that. There is only one [thing] which is common to both.

**Another Student:** Life is part of nature.

**LS:** That is not discussed here. Both are unjust. Both are unjust. And that is the refutation of Stoicism, because they want to live according to nature and this means for them to live justly. The distinction between nature and life which is here made by Nietzsche is entirely provisional and must not be pressed and I believe serves only the purpose for bringing out this injustice.

I think it is not practical to begin the next aphorism which deals with the philosophy contemporary with Nietzsche. Now do you have any point you would like to raise? Yes?

**Student:** Could you clarify to some extent what alternatives are open to Nietzsche in the face of the paradox you mentioned in the beginning concerning truthfulness; for example,

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<sup>ix</sup> Strauss questions the use of “fruitful” or “fertile” in the last sentence read and suggests that his text reads “terrible,” but seems satisfied with the use of “fertile” after another (inaudible) student offers the German from another edition.

if we question the value of truth, what sort of answer can we give to that question, can we give a true answer?

**LS:** That is a great difficulty, and that goes in a way throughout the whole work, but especially through the first chapter. To anticipate what we are going to read next time, the fundamental phenomenon according to Nietzsche is what he calls the will to power. Now the will to power is according to him a *fact*. But he also says the doctrine of the will to power, the assertion of will to power, is an *interpretation* of facts which is not more true than other interpretations but superior from other points of view. So interpretation or fact: that is the difficulty with which Nietzsche confronts you in this first chapter. Can you ever go beyond interpretation? Can you ever go beyond that? I mean not an interpretation of books; that is a derivative thing for Nietzsche.

**Same Student:** But wouldn't you have to have a certain interpretation already going into a certain book . . . You have to decide how one interpretation is better than another interpretation.

**LS:** Well, there are various possibilities. There are some interpretations of life which are unbearable for fastidious people, to use an expression that we use, while they are perfectly bearable for nonfastidious people. Ya? And the fastidious ones are more credible to him, and perhaps also to us, than the nonfastidious people. There is no refutation of the others; and in addition, if there were, Nietzsche would despise that. He would despise that, to refute [it]. He presents it and says, as it were: Listen, if you have ears and if you understand, then live differently than you lived before. That's all he would do. There is no attempt to lead people in the way in which Socrates leads. Yes?

**Another Student:** It seems you said in paragraph three and four that the truth may have some relation or may be measured by the extent to which something promotes life or preserves life.

**LS:** Ya.

**Same Student:** But then in another passage, he said that truth is deadly.

**LS:** But the question is whether truth always has the same meaning, whether Nietzsche does not understand truth sometimes with quotation marks—whether he uses the quotation marks or not; and then he means by truth what everyone traditionally understands by truth, or sometimes he means truth in a different sense.

**Same Student:** Would that other sense be related to an attachment to truth?

**LS:** It has to do surely with the relation to life. The relation to life. Because what I called the fastidious people, that is only one aspect of the people superior from the point of view of life. Only one aspect, but a non-negligible one.

Well, we will meet again next Wednesday.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “that is.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “philosophic dogmatic or.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “opposes.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “a certainty.”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “raised.”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “this is.”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “that.”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “how does he say?”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “and.”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “he says.”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “but.”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “to consciousness.”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “[The remaining portion is unrecorded].”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “a very.”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “Yes but on the other hand, I must say, there is a certain—I understand that.”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “the people who”; moved “are called in the British Isles.”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “that is.”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “the case.”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “that is.”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “if this is so.”

### Session 3: October 27, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —last meeting I read to you a passage out of Nietzsche's *Second Meditation Out of Season* in which he spoke of deadly truth, meaning by that especially the sovereignty of becoming and the nonfixity of the species. "Deadly truth," that is a key word for Nietzsche. The strongest expression, the most comprehensive expression, which he found for this thought is the well-known sentence, "God is dead." One can also state it less shockingly, perhaps: Life is wholly meaningless.

Now what Nietzsche has been trying to do through his work is to accept these deadly truths and transform them by the very fact of acceptance into life-giving truth. Now we must see how this works out in detail in reading this book,<sup>1</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*. Here in the preface he has said that according to Plato the pure mind perceives the good in itself; or to rephrase it, in language coming somewhat closer to Nietzsche's own: the pure mind perceives the eternal values. Nietzsche opposes to this the following view: the impure mind creates perishable values. Impure doesn't mean lewd, but means instinct-dominated or something like it, as we have seen last time. So this opposition meets us right at the beginning of this work. But Nietzsche speaks here rather of truth than of values. It is only another way of saying<sup>2</sup> that when Nietzsche speaks of values he does not understand values in contradistinction to facts, as is now very common in social science and I believe also in logic. As far as I know, this distinction [between] value and fact is post-Nietzsche and owes its existence to an attempt to make Nietzsche academically more bearable. I have never studied this very closely, but someone who did and who was in a position to know, Arnold Brecht, and who knew the discussions in Germany around 1900, traced the distinction between facts and values to a German professor of philosophy called Georg Simmel, [who]<sup>3</sup> was one of the first German professors of philosophy who had been affected by Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup> So Nietzsche, to repeat, does not make this distinction. He speaks of the truth.

Now both Plato's and Nietzsche's statements, which I beg to repeat: Plato, the pure mind perceives the eternal values; Nietzsche, the impure mind creates perishable values. Both Plato's and Nietzsche's statements claim to be true in the same sense of truth; namely, both claim to state what they perceive, what they perceive to be as it is. Both reproduce in their speech, in their thinking, what is. Both copy what is. But they differ radically as to what the truth is. This is obviously not sufficient, for if it were, Nietzsche would claim—which he does not—that his pure mind perceives "quote that the impure mind creates perishable values" and that there cannot be eternal values. How Nietzsche knows these things or perceives them, that is a long question, but surely not by virtue of the pure mind, whose existence he denies.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Brecht, *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

Now Nietzsche raises the question of the cause of the will to truth and of the value of the will to truth but asserts that untruth is more valuable than truth, namely, more valuable for life, for truth is deadly. Yet he claims that this assertion, “quote untruth is more valuable to life than truth, unquote” is true. This truth, the most fundamental truth, is obviously useful to life: not deadly. So it seems that Nietzsche cannot escape from the clutches of Plato. In the language of another philosopher, Hegel, philosophy must guard itself against the wish to be edifying. What Hegel implies is [that] philosophy is necessarily edifying in itself. And that is also what Plato and in his way even Nietzsche mean.

Now we have read last time up to aphorism 9. In aphorisms 7 and 9 he discussed ancient philosophers: Plato, Epicurus, Stoics, with the characteristic omission of Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> Then in the next aphorism, number 10, to which we return now, he turns to modern philosophy, and he will not return to ancient philosophers, at least not in the first chapter. But first, is there any point you would like to discuss regarding these very general things I brought up? Please.

**Student:** Could you say something about what “edifying” means?

**LS:** Well, in vulgar language, “constructive.” It is only a different Latin word. “Edify” means building up a house, constructing. Is this a bit clearer? But you know also the common meaning of edifying: comforting.

**Same Student:** And which is . . .

**LS:** It means all of that. But not on every level. I mean, certain sacrifices may have to be brought, and considerable sacrifices, in order to come into the enjoyment of the edification given by philosophers. But in the last resort, this . . .

**Another Student:** Can the assertion that truth is deadly be adequately understood by a noncreative person?

**LS:** Ya, sure. Cannot everyone understand what it means, I mean especially if he is guided by a few pages of Nietzsche, that God is dead. This proposition seems to be intelligible. Many people use it today, and many people even regard it as true. Many people would say, “Thank God that God is dead.” But what Nietzsche tries to show is that it is a terrible truth, a deadly truth. And yet [with] this deadly truth, the creative people would be those<sup>5</sup> who do not suffer a kind of paralysis from seeing that truth. Ya? We ordinary people are paralyzed by it, but those whom Nietzsche calls the creative ones would be led to a much greater effort than they would have been capable of without that deadly truth: first of all, to see the truth of the deadly truth, and second, to see that deadliness, that does not require a creative act. That leads to simple nihilism. That is also a Nietzschean expression. But to get out of that nihilism, that requires a creative act.

So then we will turn to aphorism 10, which you will be good to read.

**Reader:**

The eagerness and subtlety—I might even say, shrewdness—with which the problem of “the real and apparent world” is today attacked all over Europe makes one think and wonder; and anyone who hears nothing in the background except a “will to truth,” certainly does not have the best of ears. In rare and isolated instances it may really be the case that such a will to truth, some extravagant and adventurous courage, a metaphysician’s ambition to hold a hopeless position, may participate and ultimately prefer even a handful of “certainty” to a whole cartload of beautiful possibilities— (*BGE*, 10)

**LS:** He puts “certainty” in quotation marks.

**Reader:**

there may actually be puritanical fanatics of conscience who prefer even a certain nothing to an uncertain something to lie down on—and die.

**LS:** The connection with this is clear. The question of the real and apparent world is only another form for the question of the true world or the world of illusion. Truth and untruth. And the point which Nietzsche makes, as you see here, and which he will make throughout this chapter is that these apparently purely theoretical, logical, epistemological discussions are as much prompted by urges, by needs, by passions, as any other assertions. Yes?

**Reader:**

But this is nihilism and the sign of a despairing, mortally weary soul—however courageous the gestures of such a virtue may look.

It seems, however, to be otherwise with stronger and livelier thinkers who are still eager for life. When they side *against* appearance, and speak of “perspective”—

**LS:** He uses the adjective, the word “*perspectivik*.”

**Reader:**

and speak of “*perspectivik*” with a new arrogance; when they rank the credibility of their own bodies about as low as the credibility of the visual evidence that the “earth stands still,” and thus, apparently in good humor, let their securest possession go (for in what does one at present believe more firmly than in one’s body?)—who knows if they are not trying at bottom to win back something that was formerly an even *securer* possession, something of the ancient domain of the faith of former times— (*BGE*, 10)

**LS:** He uses a stronger word—not “domain,” the ancient, one could almost say *latifundia*, “landed estate.” It is a deliberate allusion to the great social change which had taken place in Europe.

**Reader:**

perhaps the “immortal soul,” perhaps “the old God,” in short, ideas by which one could live better, that is to say, more vigorously and cheerfully than by “modern ideas”? There is *mistrust* of these modern ideas in this attitude, a disbelief in all that has been constructed yesterday and today; there is perhaps some slight admixture of satiety and scorn, unable to endure any longer the *bric-a-brac* of concepts of the most diverse origin, which is the form in which so-called positivism offers itself on the market today; a disgust of the more fastidious taste at the village-fair motley and patchiness of all these reality-philosophasters in whom there is nothing new or genuine, except this motley. In this, it seems to me, we should agree with these skeptical anti-realists and knowledge microscopists of today: their instinct, which repels them from *modern* reality, is unrefuted—what do their retrograde bypaths concern us! The main thing about them is *not* that they wish to go “back,” but that they wish to get—*away*. A little *more* strength, flight, courage, and artistic power, and they would want to *rise*—not return! (*BGE*, 10)

**LS:** Let us stop here. I cannot easily identify these philosophers of whom he speaks. Apparently they were very fashionable in Nietzsche’s time. This was not the positivism of Comte, obviously, but I do not know. I believe there was <sup>6</sup>a man called Dühring, who was also attacked by Marx, who called himself a reality philosopher, but I do not know.<sup>ii</sup> Perhaps Kaufmann says something to instruct us—does he say anything? No. That is not terribly important. But the main point which Nietzsche makes is this: All these things, these people who are the opponents of these now fashionable philosophers are driven by an instinct—and by a sound instinct in Nietzsche’s point of view<sup>7</sup>—[a] distrust of “quote the modern ideas.” But they are not strong enough: they return too early to the premodern ideas which were much more respectable than the modern ideas, ideas like the immortal soul, ideas like the old or ancient god. The way in which Nietzsche describes these respectable men among his contemporaries reminds in a very general way of Kant, and therefore it is not too surprising that he turns in the<sup>8</sup> next aphorism to Kant. Is there—yes?

**Student:** . . . Are these modern ideas and values responsible for not being able to return to the old values?

**LS:** You mean like this deadly truth? But still, self-satisfaction, congratulating oneself on our progress and not seeing the terrible deadly character of these victorious ideas, that is something to be deplored. Does it not make sense? Nietzsche also does not believe that one can return to the ancient ideas. But nevertheless, that some enact revolt against the modern ideas reveals a higher instinct than the instinctless satisfaction with the modern ideas.

**Same Student:** . . . Ancient ideas . . . truth is always deadly.

**LS:** Yes, sure.

**Same Student:** . . .

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<sup>ii</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (1878).

**LS:** What you're driving at, if I understand you correctly, [is that] here we have a vulgar truth victorious over a noble untruth. Is that what you mean? Yes, but the fact that the recollection of a once reigning noble untruth which makes us dissatisfied with the now reigning vulgar truth may lead us perhaps to a future noble truth. The book is called "The First to the Philosophers of the Future." Ya?

**Same Student:** Aphorism 20 seems to allude to a recurring story, a revolving orbit of philosophies, and I think ideas and truth . . .

**LS:** I suggest that we discuss it when we come to that. Yes?

**Another Student:** I think I have an idea about whom he might be talking about. He talks about the microscopists, and he talks about their motley and their retrograde bypass. It makes me think of Humboldt and maybe Darwin. Especially the reference—

**LS:** But these are very different people.

**Same Student:** Well, the way they went about their work is in a certain sense—

**LS:** No, he doesn't mean that. The contemporary equivalent I believe would be something like the nihilistic philosophers.

**Same Student:** You don't think he's referring to those who made man an animal?

**LS:** No, no, not here. He says the men who put knowledge under the microscope<sup>9</sup>, the microscopic analysts of knowledge. Really, that is—

**Same Student:** Why does he talk about the patchiness and the motley? Isn't that something that Darwin is always criticized for?

**LS:** That is Nietzsche's allusion to the link between this kind of "quote philosophy unquote" and the barbaric taste of the second half of the nineteenth century. You know, neo-Gothic—

**Same Student:** Oh, I see.

**Another Student:** One question I would like to ask. He mentions . . . and he puts that in quotation marks in 9.

**LS:** The credibility of what seems to the eyes.

**Same Student:** What I want to know, Nietzsche seems to believe that . . .

**LS:** Ya, sure. I have no doubt. But he says that is very little. We are now asked to doubt many more certainties of common sense, ya? The credibility of our body altogether; and

he will do that in the sequel. Did you think that Nietzsche wanted to restore the pre-Copernican world?

**Same Student:** No, I am suspicious that . . . he does assume that something . . .

**LS:** But you know that when he speaks of that and gives a summary analysis of the modern time, he has this formula: the man, the earth, runs from the center into X. I think he mentions Copernicus there. He knows that this is an implication of the modern, an indispensable premise of modern ideas, but [it is] not an object of congratulation but rather of apprehensive and bold reflection. Ya?

**Same Student:** Yes.

**LS:** I believe so, yes. So let us turn to 11, where he goes to the root of this.

**Reader:**

It seems to me that today attempts are made everywhere to divert attention from the actual influence Kant exerted on German philosophy, and especially to ignore prudently the value he set upon himself. Kant was first and foremost proud of his table of categories; with that in his hand he said: “This is the most difficult thing that could ever be undertaken on behalf of metaphysics.”

Let us only understand this “could be”! He was proud of having *discovered* a new faculty in man, the faculty for synthetic judgments, *a priori*. Suppose he deceived himself in this matter; the development and rapid flourishing of German philosophy depended nevertheless on his pride, and on the eager rivalry of the younger generation to discover, if possible, something still prouder—at all events “new faculties”!

But let us reflect; it is high time to do so. “How are synthetic judgments *a priori possible*?” Kant asked himself—and what really is his answer? “*By virtue of a faculty*”—but unfortunately not in five words, but so circumstantially, venerably, and with such a display of German profundity and curlicues that people simply failed to note the comical *niaiserie allemande* involved in such an answer. (*BGE*, 11)

**LS:** It is not certain that this does not represent Nietzsche’s understanding of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. He owed<sup>10</sup> his knowledge of Kant primarily to Schopenhauer, who was not a very profound interpreter of Kant. So it is not impossible that this is Nietzsche’s serious opinion, but you will see that this is burrowed up in a broader reflection in the sequel. Yes?

**Reader:**

People were actually beside themselves with delight over this new faculty, and the jubilation reached its climax when Kant further discovered a moral faculty in man—for at that time the Germans were still moral and not yet addicted to *Realpolitik*.

The honeymoon of German philosophy arrived. All the young theologians of the Tübingen seminary went into the bushes—all looking for “faculties.” And what did they not find—in that innocent, rich, and still youthful period of the German spirit, to which romanticism, the malignant fairy, piped and sang, when one could not yet distinguish between “finding” and “inventing”! Above all, a faculty for the “suprasensible”.<sup>iii</sup> Schelling christened it intellectual intuition, and thus gratified the most heartfelt cravings of the Germans, whose cravings were at bottom pious. One can do no greater wrong to the whole of this exuberant and enthusiastic movement, which was really youthfulness, however boldly it disguised itself in hoary and senile concepts, than to take it seriously, or worse, to treat it with moral indignation. Enough, one grew older and the dream vanished. A time came when people scratched their heads, and they still scratch them today. One had been dreaming, and first and foremost—old Kant. “By virtue of a faculty”—he had said— (*BGE*, 11)

**LS:** In German that is still more primary, though: *Vermöge eines Vermögens*. It is impossible to render into English, but “a faculty of a faculty.”

**Reader:**

or at least meant. But is that—an answer?

**LS:** You see, here he retracts the rather inadequate interpretation of Kant he had given in the beginning of this paragraph, or at least meant, but . . .

**Reader:**

An explanation? Or is it not rather merely a repetition of the question? How does opium induce sleep? “By virtue of a faculty,” namely the *virtus dormitiva*, replies the doctor in Molière,

*Quia est in eo virtus dormitiva,  
Cujus est natura sensus assoupire.*<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** “Because opiate has in itself power to make men sleep, and whose nature it is to appease the senses.” And the latter is not Latin at all but a French word, superficially Latinized. I do not know whether you have read *La malade imaginaire*, where that occurs, but it is an attack on the medicine of the Sorbonne—and not only the medicine of the Sorbonne—and a document of the new scientific spirit to that extent. And this joke has—<sup>v</sup>

**Reader:**

But such replies belong in comedy, and it is high time to replace the Kantian question, “How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?” by another question, “Why is belief in such judgments *necessary*?”—and to comprehend that such judgments must be *believed* to be true, for the sake of the preservation of creatures like ourselves; though they might,

<sup>iii</sup> In original: “surprasensible”

<sup>iv</sup> Strauss reads the Latin at the student’s request.

<sup>v</sup> The tape was changed at this point.

of course, be *false* judgments for all that! Or to speak more clearly and coarsely: synthetic judgments *a priori* should not “be possible” at all; we have no right to them; in our mouths they are nothing but false judgments. Only, of course, the belief in their truth is necessary, as a foreground belief and visual evidence belonging to the perspective optics of life.

Finally, to call to mind the enormous influence that “German philosophy”—I hope you understand its right to quotation marks—has exercised throughout the whole of Europe, there is no doubt that a certain *virtus dormitiva* had a share in it: it was a delight to the noble idlers, the virtuous, the mystics, artists, three-quarter Christians, and political obscurantists of all nations, to find, thanks to German philosophy, an antidote to the still predominant sensualism which overflowed from the last century into this, in short—“*sensus assoupire*.” (*BGE*, 11)

**LS:** Yes, so it is all that Nietzsche has to say about Kant, that is not the whole story. But we can perhaps say that in Molière’s verses and in Nietzsche’s use of them, Aristotle, who had been disregarded, takes his revenge. So there is an irony beyond Nietzsche’s argument. That is clear. It is also interesting to see that it ends here; the paragraph ends with a certain vindication of sensualism, which superficially contradicts what Nietzsche had said in aphorism 10, where he spoke so disparagingly about the contemporary belief in the body and therefore of course in the senses. So that is a bit more complicated, as one sees by putting these two passages together.

Now the connection between these two aphorisms and the next one is this, that Nietzsche continues to question materialism and sensualism, but while having questioned the reactionary way out of the Germans and especially of Kant. Now let us read the next paragraph, which is—

**Reader:**<sup>vi</sup>

As for materialistic atomism, it is one of the best refuted theories there are, and in Europe perhaps no one in the learned world is now so unscholarly as to attach serious significance to it, except for convenient household use (as an abbreviation of the means of expression)—thanks chiefly to the Dalmatian Boscovich: he and the Pole Copernicus have been the greatest and most successful opponents of visual evidence so far. For while Copernicus has persuaded us to believe, contrary to all the sense, that the earth does *not* stand fast, Boscovich has taught us to abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that “stood fast”—the belief in the “substance,” in “matter,” in the earth-residuum and particle-atom: it is the greatest triumph over the sense that has been gained on earth so far.

One must, however, go still further, and also declare war, relentless war unto death, against the “atomistic need” which still leads a dangerous afterlife in places where no one suspects it, just like the more celebrated “metaphysical need”: one must also, first of all, give the finishing stroke to that other and more calamitous atomism which Christianity

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<sup>vi</sup> There is a break in the tape at this point. The missing portion of aphorism 12 has been supplied from the text.

has taught best and longest, the *soul atomism*. Let it be permitted to designate by this expression the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*: this belief ought to be expelled from science! Between ourselves, it is not at all necessary to get rid of “the soul” at the same time, and thus to renounce one of the most ancient and venerable hypotheses—as happens frequently to clumsy naturalists who can hardly touch on “the soul” without immediately losing it. But the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as “mortal soul,” and “soul as subjective multiplicity,” and “soul as social structure of the drives and affects,” want henceforth to have citizens’ rights in science. When the *new* psychologist puts an end to the superstitions which have so far flourished with almost tropical luxuriance around the idea of the soul, he practically exiles himself into a new desert and a new suspicion—it is possible that the older psychologists had a merrier and more comfortable time of it; eventually, however, he finds that precisely thereby he also condemns himself to *invention*—and—who knows?—perhaps to discovery. (*BGE*, 12)

**LS:** In German that is a pun: *erfinden finden*. We must keep in mind this distinction between invention and discovery, because later on there will be some big question mark behind that distinction. But the main point is this. On the one hand, we have Plato’s pure mind. The traditional opposite to that traditional schema was what was called sensualism or materialism, meaning the truth is perceived by the senses.<sup>11</sup> Both are rejected by Nietzsche. In the name of what? <sup>12</sup>He speaks, and he had done this before, of the soul as the social structure of urges and affects. The urges and affects—they are the fundamental phenomenon in the light of which one must understand such dubious things as Plato’s pure mind or the sense perception as understood, say, by Locke or Hume.

**Student:** As I remember, in Lucretius, when the walls of the world were broken down it was the atoms that helped to do it; and it seems here that this man wants to get rid of the atoms too. So it seems that the atoms have a different effect in Lucretius than they do in Nietzsche.

**LS:** Nietzsche didn’t mind the atoms in the Lucretian sense.

**Same Student:** But he could make his point just as well by seeking them and going in the direction that Lucretius went. If he wants the soul to be—

**LS:** Then the soul is . . . there are special soul atoms in Lucretius.

**Same Student:** Yes, he could use the same thing that he is doing here. He could make the soul a kind of—he talks about the soul as a kind of social structure of drives and . . .

**LS:** . . . certain compounds of atoms, but the fundamental reality are atoms, and Nietzsche says: No, the fundamental reality are the passions and urges.

**Same Student:** . . .<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> The sound is very muffled for a few minutes.

**LS:** As it is to Plato.

**Same Student:** Why?

**LS:** That we are trying to understand, but it has something to do with the urges and passions as *the* fundamental reality, which thesis opposes both Plato and Lucretius-Epicurus. Yes, and it would be very hard to say whether Nietzsche has not perhaps some slighter inclination toward Plato or rather to[ward] Epicurus. It is very hard, but I think it is an uninteresting question. Nietzsche argues on an entirely different plane. He believes that the whole plane on which Plato and Epicurus fought out their battle has been discredited; or differently stated, that this was based on a common assumption which is wrong, namely, that there is a truth in itself, as he has said.

**Same Student:** Well, then I guess I would have the same—the same sort of suspicion would arise with me now that arose in Mr. Klein before: How does he know that there are no atoms?

**LS:** He referred to Boscovich.<sup>viii</sup> . . . You have probably heard of Boscovich. And in the meantime other things have happened to atoms, as I have read in the daily papers.<sup>ix</sup> So there [are] no longer these atoms as Epicurus thought of, [they] are no longer defensible on the basis of *science*. Nietzsche uses here the word science. Whether he does [that] a bit with his tongue in his cheek or not is hard to say. But that is no longer scientifically defensible.

**Same Student:** Then Nietzsche knows two things, that the earth does not stand still, and that there are no atoms.

**LS:** <sup>13</sup>You can also state it differently. Nietzsche can no longer be certain that the earth is the center, and he can no longer be certain that the ultimate reality is the body. How is that?

**Same Student:** He sounds pretty certain.

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<sup>viii</sup> Nietzsche refers to Boscovich in aphorism 12 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Roger Joseph Boscovich (1711-1787) was a mathematician and astronomer and a member of the Jesuit Order. The author of a short biography of Boscovich, Branislav Petroniević, describes him as a “philosopher, astronomer, physicist, mathematician, historian, engineer, architect, and poet.” “Life of Roger Joseph Boscovich,” in Roger Joseph Boscovich, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966). In his natural philosophy, Boscovich stated that “[t]here is absolutely no argument that can be brought forward to prove that matter has continuous extension, & that it is not rather made up of perfectly indivisible points separated from one another by a definite interval; nor is there any reason apart from prejudice in favor of continuous extension in preference to composition from points that are perfectly indivisible, non-extended, & forming no extended continuum of any sort.” Art. 164, *Theory of Natural Philosophy*.

<sup>ix</sup> It is possible Strauss is referring to the discovery of the quark.

**LS:** Well, we know that this happens all the time, that he speaks partly in a very assertoric manner, and then in a very hesitating manner, and we must balance that. And through this bold, cautious speaking, there emerges then a suggestion—a suggestion. Whether Nietzsche believes in that distinction, that is a question. We will come to that. But we must proceed step by step. So at any rate, we cannot take refuge from Plato in Epicurus or Lucretius, as little as in Kant. This is what Nietzsche has suggested.

Now he turns to another possibility which comes somewhat closer to what he is inclined to propose: not physics, of which he had spoken, but physiology. That is the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength—life itself is *will to power*— (BGE, 13)

**LS:** Now this is “dash–life itself is Will to Power–dash.” It is as it were smuggled in, stated in parentheses, which can mean it goes without saying, or if you are so simple just to believe it when I say it: will. Yes?

**Reader:**

self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*.

In short, here as everywhere else, let us beware of *superfluous* teleological principles!—one of which is the instinct of self-preservation (we owe it to Spinoza’s inconsistency). Thus method, which must be essentially economy of principles, demands it. (BGE, 13)

**LS:** What does he mean when he says, “here, as everywhere, beware of superfluous teleological principles?” Are there perhaps teleological principles which are not superfluous? Or is it of the essence of teleological principles to be superfluous? It is hard to decide. As for the assertion—that is a point which I think goes to the root of what Nietzsche is driving at: the instinct of self-preservation which had played such a very great role and which was sometimes called in the nineteenth century the will to life, will to survival. This is for Nietzsche something which exists, but [it is] lower in rank than the will to power, and one can understand the instinct of self-preservation only in the light of the will to power. What are the reasons enabling or entitling Nietzsche to assert that life is will to power are not stated here. We have to see or try to find out for ourselves why life can be thought to be will to power. Do we have any evidence leading us to an understanding of this strange assertion?

**Student:** Perhaps in Hobbes. The principle of self-preservation which led people to make the covenant with each other to form a commonwealth was not the final end, as far as I remember, in the *Leviathan*, but that each man in a sense wished himself to have this power, right?

**LS:** Surely, but Hobbes was not the first; and surely not Spinoza, as Nietzsche claims here, was not the first. That was an old story going back to antiquity, the desire for self-preservation. Why he brings in Spinoza, I do not know. Perhaps because Spinoza was so famous because of his attack on teleology, and that Spinoza, although he was so reasonable in his general rejection of teleology, should have accepted the desire for self-preservation as the principle, i.e., as the teleological principle, that is an inconsistency of Spinoza. That could be. Why is the desire for self-preservation teleological? That is not quite clear.

**Student:** Is he trying to make a break here with Locke in particular, when he talks about self-preservation as one possible understanding of man, but the other one being the discharge of strength, which seems to go beyond self-preservation, to declare that the state of nature *must* be the state of war.

**LS:** Well, there is no state of nature here.

**Same Student:** No, but that's the way he—

**LS:** Sure, in a way that is also directed against Locke, that is quite true. But I don't know whether this would . . . Now as for the reasons which Nietzsche could have had for making this suggestion, [that] life itself is will to power: do we have any clue in this book hitherto as to why this assertion makes sense? Yes?

**Student:** When he was talking about Epicurus, the idea that perhaps these philosophers were merely—one philosopher might live his life, a whole life searching for truth to stand out and above the other philosophers . . . seems to have in mind that it's a will to show power, power over.

**LS:** But that would at most prove that philosophers are dominated by this will to power, but would not prove that life itself is will to power. But still, what he says about the philosophers is very pertinent. He says of philosophy, it is the most spiritual or intellectual form of the will to power. Yes?

**Student:** I don't see how he gets to will. It seems to me that in denying the faculty of *a priori* synthetic judgments he is replacing the principle of how they are possible with the question of why men want to believe that. He moves the issue to the question of life, but I don't see how that is a question of will.

**LS:** If you remember the critique of the Stoa in aphorism 9, then he says that the Stoics prescribe their ideal to nature—you remember that? And that reminds of a famous formula of Kant: The understanding prescribes to nature its laws. Now if in trying to understand understanding we come ultimately back to prescribing, but without assuming *laws*, as there are in the case of Kant, which determine this prescribing—then we come to something like imposing one's stamp on things. Will to power. Furthermore, one could also think of this: Nietzsche is very much concerned with history, as we will see. The most fashionable doctrine at that time, and I believe even today, is that of history as a

progressive movement and that meant on the higher levels that in each preceding stage there are defects, contradictions which force man beyond that stage. Therefore the historical process as a whole is a rational process. But let us assume the historical process is *not* a rational process, as Nietzsche assumes. Then he must have a nonrational X in man which forces him to go beyond, to overcome a stage he has reached regardless of whether there were contradictions or not in the preceding stage. We do not have enough material for answering that question. But we must keep it in mind, precisely because Nietzsche leaves it here only as assertion.

The cardinal urge is—life itself is will to power. Now what does this mean? What does it mean? All life, of course, not only human life. <sup>14</sup>And what about the body, which is not a will, it's not soul? And he takes up this question of physics as distinguished from physiology again in the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that physics, too, is only an interpretation and exegesis of the world (to suit us, if I may say so!) and *not* a world-explanation; but insofar as it is based on belief in the senses, it is regarded as more, and for a long time to come must be regarded as more—namely, as an explanation. Eyes and fingers speak in its favor, visual evidence and palpableness do, too: this strikes an age with fundamentally plebeian tastes as fascinating, persuasive, and *convincing*—after all, it follows instinctively the canon of truth of eternally popular sensualism. What is clear, what is “explained”? Only that which can be seen and felt—

**LS:** “Touched.” <sup>15</sup>

**Reader:**

only what can be seen and touched—every problem has to be pursued to that point. Conversely, the charm of the Platonic way of thinking, which was a *noble* way of thinking, consisted precisely in *resistance* to obvious sense-evidence—perhaps among men who enjoyed even stronger and more demanding senses than our contemporaries, but who knew how to find a higher triumph in remaining masters of their senses—and this by means of pale, cold, gray concept nets which they threw over the motley whirl of the senses—the mob of the senses, as Plato said. In this overcoming of the world, and interpreting of the world in the manner of Plato, there was an *enjoyment* different from that which the physicists of today offer us—and also the Darwinists and anti-teleologists among the workers in physiology—

**LS:** “Among the physiological workers.” In other words, they are just cogs in the big machine.

**Reader:**

with their principle of the “smallest possible force” and the greatest possible stupidity. “Where man cannot find anything to see or to grasp, he has no further business”—that is certainly an imperative different from the Platonic one, but it may be the right imperative

for a tough, industrious race of machinists and bridge-builders of the future, who have nothing but *rough* work to do. (*BGE*, 14)

**LS:** So physics is only one interpretation of the world among many. In the meantime that [view] has become quite popular without shaking the authority of physics nevertheless. Nietzsche's point is [that] the objectivity of physics is based on a fundamental subjectivity, on a fundamental preference, what he calls the plebeian preference. A plebeian *imperative*, just as there was a patrician imperative behind Plato. And the general assertion of course of Nietzsche is that behind all worldviews, philosophies, or sciences, there are *imperatives* which determine them. That's only another way of saying that the will to power expresses itself and is the driving thing behind the theoretical structures.

The word which he uses here of Plato, that was a "noble" way of thinking: Does Kauffman translate it as "noble"?

**Reader:** Yes.

**LS:** Well, we will come to that later. The key word for Nietzsche in German is *vornehm*, and he will devote<sup>16</sup> the whole ninth chapter to the question, What is *vornehm*?<sup>17</sup> I don't believe it can be translated [into] English because two German words, *edel* and *vornehm*, are both translated by "noble." But in German there is a great difference. *Vornehm* has much more of the social origin than *edel*. A noble action is possible, so to speak, for every human being. But what is *vornehm*, we will come to that when we have come to chapter 9. Yes?

**Student:** . . . Is that what Nietzsche intends to supply to men, or are they not ready for it?

**LS:** Oh, they are. People were ready for it, and Nietzsche in a way accepted it. I mean not in the way in which Spengler, a man who has learned very much from Nietzsche,<sup>18</sup> [said] at the time of the First World War, who said, Make it an unqualified imperative, you know, technology and war and administration; these are the only respectable things which still remain to do, and only unserious people will devote themselves to things called art and so on.<sup>x</sup> You know? No, Nietzsche did not regard this as sufficient. He said it may very well be the right imperative for this age, but this age is not the last age. Yes?

**Another Student:** I am interested in the questioning of the senses and its relationship to will to power.<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** Oh, that will come very soon; you [will] get it straight from Nietzsche's mouth. I do not have to explain that.

**Another Student:** . . . or is that irony?

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<sup>x</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>xi</sup> This is a different student's paraphrase of the question, which Strauss could not hear and hence asked for clarification.

**LS:** No, I think he meant that. I believe he meant that, that this is now dawning in very, very few people.

**Same Student:** Was Boscovich one of those people?

**LS:** No, Boscovich was a man of the eighteenth century, and he [Nietzsche] speaks of the nineteenth. I do not know who he means. Nietzsche had a certain knowledge of the theoretical discussions going on among scientists. Someone made a count in the very small library which he always kept with him, and there were I believe fifty popular scientific books and thirty classics, so great was his interest in them. But he was of course not trained in them, but perhaps this enabled him to see further. So we shall try with Nietzsche's help to answer your question, ya? The next aphorism. Yes?

**Reader:**

To study physiology with a clear conscience, one must insist that the sense organs are *not* phenomena in the sense of idealistic philosophy—

**LS:** That means of course either Burke or Kant; it has nothing to do with Plato. Yes?

**Reader:**

as such they could not be causes! Sensualism, therefore, at least as a regulative hypothesis, if not as a heuristic principle.

What? And others even say that the external world is the work of our organs? But then our body, as a part of this external world, would be the work of our organs! But then our organs themselves would be—the work of our organs! It seems to me that this is a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, assuming that the concept of a *causa sui* is something fundamentally absurd. Consequently, the external world is *not* the work of our organs—? (*BGE*, 15)

**LS:** Question mark. So the external world is not the work of our organs. The beginning reads like a rehabilitation of the senses, as it was meant. There is a world without us which is at any rate not the work of our sense organs. But of what, if it must be understood as the work of something? And I believe the answer can be anticipated: of the will to power. But what is that will? What is will? How do we know it? How do we know phenomena like will, phenomena usually called mental phenomena? [This is] the subject to which he turns in the next aphorism. Now do you get a notion now of Nietzsche's answer to your question?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Fine, now let us see. Yes?

**Reader:**

There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are “immediate certainties”; for example, “I think,” or as the superstition of Schopenhauer put it, “I will”; as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as “the thing in itself,” without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object. But that “immediate certainty,” as well as “absolute knowledge” and the “thing in itself,” involve a *contradictio in adjecto*, I shall repeat a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words!

Let the people suppose that knowledge means knowing things entirely; the philosopher must say to himself: When I analyze the process that is expressed in the sentence, “I think,” I find a whole series of daring assertions that would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove; for example, that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an “ego,” and, finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is. For if I had not already decided within myself what it is, by what standard could I determine whether that which is just happening is not perhaps “willing” or “feeling”? In short, the assertion “I think” assumes that I *compare* my state at the present moment with other states of myself which I know, in order to determine what it is; on account of this retrospective connection with further “knowledge,” it has, at any rate, no immediate certainty for me.

In place of the “immediate certainty” in which the people may believe in the case at hand, the philosopher thus finds a series of metaphysical questions presented to him, truly searching questions of the intellect—

**LS:** “Truly conscious questions of the intellect.”

**Reader:**

truly conscious questions of the intellect; to wit: “From where do I get the concept of thinking? Why do I believe in cause and effect? What gives me the right to speak of an ego, and even of an ego as cause, and finally of an ego as the cause of thought?” Whoever ventures to answer these metaphysical questions at once by an appeal to a sort of *intuitive* perception, like the person who says, “I think, and know that this, at least, is true, actual, and certain”—will encounter a smile and two question marks from a philosopher nowadays.

**LS:** There are very few philosophers of this kind in Nietzsche’s day who have this reaction. That was a compliment, an undeserved compliment to his contemporaries. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Sir,” the philosopher will perhaps give him to understand, “it is improbable that you are not mistaken; but why insist on the truth?”— (*BGE*, 16)

**LS:** So that is another attack on the simplistic quest for truth. You notice that Nietzsche speaks here of metaphysical questioning, of metaphysics in a nonpejorative sense. So we

have to go back to metaphysics, but of course in Nietzsche's view not to any traditional metaphysics.

**Student:** Who are these philosophers?

**LS:** Oh, when you of think of Descartes—

**Same Student:** But he was not really in Nietzsche's day.

**LS:** Why not? There were many Cartesians who live on and up to the present day.

**Same Student:** But who was alive in Nietzsche's time who specifically might deserve this compliment?

**LS:** Well, he mentions Schopenhauer, who said the will is the most well-known thing of the world. Everyone knows the will. I think that many of the [then-]contemporary professors of philosophy are completely forgotten. It is a sheer accident if someone who is not a historian of philosophy of the nineteenth century reads them. Since I am not a student of that part of the history of philosophy, I am in no position to answer that. Perhaps someone else knows that. I do not know what famous physicists like Helmholtz<sup>xii</sup> or so, [were up to], who played a certain role in the discussion.

But the key point is that there is no immediate certainty. All knowledge is *mediated*, as the philosophers prior to Nietzsche . . . So this way out is excluded. Just as there are no pure sensations, there are no pure perceptions of mental phenomena. Knowledge never seizes the object pure and naked, never. And since this is [what is] meant by the common understanding of truth, that knowledge of the truth seizes the object of thinking pure and naked, Nietzsche can speak of the quest for truth only in an ironical manner, as he does here at the end of this aphorism. All knowledge, what we call knowledge, presupposes answers to metaphysical questions, meaning questions which are not physical or physiological. And somehow Nietzsche believes to guide metaphysics in a new and promising way by his suggestion that—<sup>xiii</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "here, in."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "it."

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "that."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "and."

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "who do not become."

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "also."

<sup>7</sup> Moved "sound"; deleted "instinct."

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "in the next paragraph."

<sup>9</sup> Moved "knowledge."

<sup>10</sup> Moved "primarily."

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<sup>xii</sup> Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894).

<sup>xiii</sup> The tape recording ends at this point.

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- <sup>11</sup> Deleted “only the body and bodily organs are.”
- <sup>12</sup> Deleted “he indicates”; moved “and he had done this before.”
- <sup>13</sup> Deleted “But the point is.”
- <sup>14</sup> Deleted “We must see how we can find that.”
- <sup>15</sup> Deleted Strauss’ repetition of “touched.”
- <sup>16</sup> Deleted “the ninth chapter.”
- <sup>17</sup> Deleted “in English.”
- <sup>18</sup> Deleted “who.”

#### Session 4: November 3, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** First, Nietzsche's two enigmatic theses: first, truth is deadly; and second, truth is human creation. The difficulty is this. Truth is deadly: this is itself true. Is this truth also deadly? Is it not rather life-giving because it emancipates us from the power of the deadly truth? And second, truth is a human creation: this proposition is itself a truth. But is this truth also a human creation?<sup>1</sup> Apart from that, how did Nietzsche know that the truth is deadly and that it is a human creation? We can perhaps say that he had learned from Kant that it is the human understanding which prescribes nature its laws, that the order of the world originates in the human understanding. What is given is only the chaos of sensations. But for Kant it was certain that there is *the* order established by the human understanding, say, the order revealed by Newtonian physics. For Nietzsche, however, that physics, any physics, is only one interpretation out of indefinitely many. The given—the world in itself, the thing in itself, nature—is wholly chaotic, meaningless. The world in itself is wholly meaningless. Hence the truth is deadly. The world for us is meaningful by virtue of our creation. Truth is human creation.

The difficulty here, apart from others, is this. There are indefinitely or infinitely many interpretations of the world, infinitely many worldviews. How to distinguish among them? How do you distinguish superior ones from inferior ones? Are there any objective criteria, that is to say criteria not dependent on human creation? We have not yet seen any answer to this question.

Now in chapter 1, with which we are still concerned, Nietzsche suggests his view, as I have tried to summarize it, through an induction from philosophy and science, that is to say from the pursuits which claim to be concerned solely with the truth. Now he finds that all philosophers—and the same is true of science—assert more than they know. Where does that more come from? Where could it come from? Now here the way was paved for Nietzsche by Descartes perhaps more than by anybody else. In his chapter on error, Descartes explains that all error stems from the fact that we assert more than we know, and this is due to the fact that our will extends further than our understanding. So the more which philosophers and others assert in all cases<sup>2</sup> stems from the will. And Nietzsche accepts that, with an important addition: that this will is will to power. And he describes it very drastically by comparing the conviction, that will-determined conviction as a beautiful and very strong donkey, an animal notorious (wrongly, probably) for its lack of intelligence and at the same time [it is] extremely stubborn. That is effective in all philosophy and in all science as far as the foundations are concerned.

So this much to remind you of what we discussed last time. Now is there any point you would like to take up? Well, why do you smile?

**Student:** There isn't any reason for my smiling.

**LS:** I thought your smile means there are so infinitely many things to take up that you wouldn't know where [to begin]. Now then we will continue. Nietzsche had turned a little bit earlier, after he had spoken of physics and physiology, to what we can call psychology, and [he had] spoken of the fallacies which philosophers commit in this respect. He continues that in aphorism 17.

**Reader:**

With regard to the superstitions of logicians, I shall never tire of emphasizing a small terse fact, which these superstitious minds hate to concede—

**LS:** “These superstitious” means the logicians.

**Reader:**

namely, that a thought comes when “it” wishes, and not when “I” wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts of the case to say that the subject “I” is the condition of the predicate “think.” *It* thinks; but that this “it” is precisely the famous old “ego” is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an “immediate certainty.”

**LS:** One second. You know that distinction between the id and the ego which has in the meantime conquered the globe<sup>3</sup>—as far as I can see it stems from here, and there is something much deeper than the ego, than the consciousness. And that is what Nietzsche means by the will to power or by that stubborn beast in us which he compared to the donkey. Yes?

**Reader:**

After all, one has even gone too far with this “it thinks”—even the “it” contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself.” (*BGE*, 17)

**LS:** Yes. So the process of [the] event itself is one thing, and the interpretation is another. It seems that wherever we turn we do not come beyond interpretation, and yet it is necessary to make a distinction between the interpretation and the event itself, the thing itself. What the basis for that distinction is is not immediately clear. However Nietzsche may have arrived at that distinction, and assuming that the distinction is not itself an interpretation, what does this imply? Perhaps it will become clearer while we go on. Yes?

**Reader:**

One infers here according to the grammatical habit: “Thinking is an activity; every activity requires an agent; consequently—”<sup>i</sup>

It was pretty much according to the same schema that the older atomism sought, besides the operating “power,” that lump of matter in which it resides and out of which it operates—the atom. More rigorous minds, however, learned at last to get along without this “earth-residuum,” and perhaps some day we shall accustom ourselves, including the logicians, to get along without the little “it” (which is all that is left of the honest little old ego). (*BGE*, 17)

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<sup>i</sup> There is a gap in the tape; part of the passage has been supplied from the text.

**LS:** Yes, and what shall we do then? Is there anything which can take the place of that “it,” or is what we arrive at something which we must assert but which can in no way be grasped, which can in no way be said? That’s still dark.

**Student:** I’m just wondering whether we seek after something that’s doing the action, even in the deeper sense, we’re still making the same mistake that Nietzsche accuses us of making here.

**LS:** In other words, whether the very distinction between the happening itself and the interpretation is justified, whether one must not admit radically that everything we say or we think is interpretation? Is this what you mean?

**Same Student:** No, I thought you were implying that our problem was to find out in the deepest sense what was performing an action. That is, what was behind an action, the agent of the action. I’m sure that we were told not to do that.

**LS:** Yes, sure. Nietzsche goes further than that, I believe. He will take this up later and say that any notion of cause and effect is mere interpretation. And hitherto we are in no way near how Nietzsche is getting out of the difficulty.

**Another Student:** Because the truth is deadly, that the consequence of the understanding of the fact that when men see, they merely interpret, would lead one to wonder whether there really is such a thing. How could it be deadly if there is no such thing?

**LS:** But in one way or another, he would have to speak of truth.

**Same Student:** But then he must not be saying what he thinks, here in 17.

**LS:** Ya, well, what he is doing all the time, although never alone, is to show the untenable character of what philosophy has been asserting hitherto. And therefore he argues from their premises to a considerable extent.

**Same Student:** Would that be “truth” in quotation marks is deadly?

**LS:** You could say that, yes. But on the other hand, you are confronted with the fact that by saying what he said about nature in aphorism 9: that it is wholly chaotic, and that is reality, and all order, all beauty, all value, is merely our addition to it. *Merely* our addition to it: “merely” is a decisive point. What is a convenient way out of Nietzsche’s predicament? Is it merely one into which he came because of some strange inclination toward paradoxes, toward extremes? Or is there not something there which is absolutely necessary? Think of a more general point to which I referred: the understanding prescribes nature its laws. Ya? That is all right, but if the understanding is not *the* understanding, if the place of understanding is taken by *understandings*—say, according to a difference of cultures, to take a convenient expression—what then? Say if there is a Hindu truth, a Chinese truth, a Western truth, and so on and so on, what will you do? Will

you then say, “Well, of course these are all ‘caves,’ in Platonic language; we must get out of them and come to the light of the sun”? But that was of course Plato, but does this not require something like the pure mind, with the pure mind not affected by cultural differences and other differences?

**Same Student:** On that level, what you’re saying can be understood, it seems, but it gets more difficult when we’re posed with the problem of mathematical figures, in particular the problem of Lobachevsky<sup>ii</sup> as opposed to Euclid.

**LS:** Nietzsche was not a student, surely not a profound student, of these things. But he gave his answer already: This is one interpretation among many. And even if you take all possible geometries, then he would raise the question regarding all possible geometries.

**Same Student:** But this is somewhat wrong if you propose another geometry, because if a youngest other geometry came along, then now the study of geometry must become empirical. That is, now instead of simply making postulates we look to nature to find out what is the way of space.

**LS:** But does empirical study not also presuppose assumptions which are not empirical?

**Same Student:** Yeah, but it would not allow man to prescribe to nature its laws. One would only be able to make those assumptions, and know that they were assumptions, so the Kantian position would be changed.

**LS:** Ya, but I do not believe that it affects fundamental things, because <sup>4</sup>you speak now instead of laws of assumptions or hypotheses, and by assumptions and hypotheses you *point* to what is not assumptions and what is not hypotheses, and leave this open and think you don’t have to worry about it. But Nietzsche worries about it. So perhaps we continue, because what he said here about thinking is only preparatory to what he is going to say about the will, and that is after all his main subject. Now the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

It is certainly not the least charm of a theory that it is refutable; it is precisely thereby that it attracts the subtler minds. It seems that the hundred-times-refuted theory of a “free will” owes its persistence to this charm alone; again and again someone comes along who feels he is strong enough to refute it. (*BGE*, 18)

**LS:** Yes. Now what does this seemingly frivolous remark mean? Theories are attractive *qua* refutable, *qua* unproved. Ya? I suppose a refutable doctrine is untrue.

**Student:** It is hard to tell in this if that is true.

**LS:** But I think that is what Nietzsche means. But these refutable doctrines provide the pleasure, and say the dubious pleasure, of attracting our will to truth. Of attracting our

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<sup>ii</sup> Nikola Lobachevsky (1792-1856), Russian mathematician who developed non-Euclidean geometry.

will; therefore, as he says at the end, someone feels he is strong enough to refute it. That is the transition to the problem of the will. Now we come to the section explicitly devoted to the will, 19. Yes?

**Reader:**

Philosophers are accustomed to speak of the will as if it were the best-known thing in the world; indeed, Schopenhauer has given us to understand that the will alone is really known to us, absolutely and completely known, without subtraction or addition. But again and again it seems to me that in this case, too, Schopenhauer only did what philosophers are in the habit of doing—he adopted a *popular prejudice* and exaggerated it. Willing seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unit only as a word—and it is precisely in this one word that the popular prejudice lurks, which has defeated the always inadequate caution of philosophers. So let us for once be more cautious, let us be “unphilosophical”—

**LS:** That is very important. The philosophers are not cautious. They all assert more than they know. So Nietzsche does not want to assert more than he knows and to that extent he is concerned with truth in the old-fashioned sense of the word. How this jibes with th[e] view that truth is human creation, we do not yet have the slightest suggestion.

**Reader:**

let us say that in all willing there is, first, a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the state “*away from which*,” the sensation of the state “*towards which*,” the sensation of this “*from*” and “*towards*” themselves, and then also an accompanying muscular sensation, which, even without our putting into motion “arms and legs,” begins its action by force of habit, as soon as we “will” anything.

Therefore, just as sensations—

**LS:** No, no, “feelings.”

**Reader:**

Therefore, just as feelings (and indeed many kind of feelings<sup>iii</sup>) are to be recognized as ingredients of the will, so, secondly, should thinking also: in every act of the will there is a ruling thought—let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the “willing,” as if any will would then remain over!

Third, the will is not only a complex of sensation and thinking— (*BGE*, 19)

**LS:** No, “feeling and thinking.”

**Reader:**

of feeling and thinking, but it is above all an *affect*, and specifically the affect of the command. That which is termed “freedom of the will” is essentially the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey: “I am free, ‘he’ must obey”—this

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<sup>iii</sup> In original: “sensations”

consciousness is inherent in every will; and equally so the straining of the attention, the straight look that fixes itself exclusively on one aim, the unconditional evaluation that “this and nothing else is necessary now,” the inward certainty that obedience will be rendered—and whatever else belongs to the position of the commander. A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience.

But now let us notice what is strangest about the will—this manifold thing for which the people have only one word: inasmuch as in the given circumstances we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties, and as the obeying party we know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are accustomed to disregard this duality, and to deceive ourselves about it by means of the synthetic concept “I,” a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself, has become attached to the act of willing—to such a degree that who wills believes sincerely that willing *suffices* for action. Since in the great majority of cases there has been exercise of the will only when the effect of the command—that is, obedience; that is, the action—was to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the feeling, as if there were a *necessity of effect*. In short, he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are somehow one; he ascribes the success, the carrying out of the willing, to the will itself, and thereby enjoys an increase of the sensation of power which accompanies all success.

“Freedom of the will”—that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order—who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them. In this way the person exercising volition adds the feelings of delight of his successful executive instruments, the useful “under-wills” or under-souls—indeed, our body is but a social structure composed of many souls—to his feelings of delight as commander. *L’effet c’est moi*: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth; namely, the governing class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth. In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of many “souls.” Hence a philosopher should claim the right to include willing as such within the sphere of morals—morals being understood as the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of “life” comes to be. (*BGE*, 19)

**LS:** So that is the first statement, and I believe the only thematic statement of the will which occurs in this work. Now we have already heard before that life is the will to power. More generally, life is will, in aphorism 13. But the will of which he speaks here is obviously the human will, and we would have to understand how the relation of other wills to the human will has to be conceived. One can safely say that he means that all nonhuman or subhuman life is defective life. Only in the human life and in the human will [does] will come<sup>5</sup> fully into its own.

Now how can life be will to power? To some extent that is explained here: only if the body too is will; that is to say, soul. A hierarchy of souls, as Nietzsche suggests here. The final conclusion is: Life as a whole must be considered from a moral point of view. A moral point of view does not mean from the point of view of good and evil, because the whole consideration is, as the title says, beyond good and evil. There must be a morality different from that of good and evil. When he speaks of it elsewhere Nietzsche calls it<sup>6</sup> good and bad, as distinguished from good and evil. Good and evil is a particularly moralistic interpretation of morality, if that makes sense. Good and bad—this distinction must be made also from a nonmoral sense, nonmoral point of view. Think of health, when you speak of a healthy body or a diseased body; and the same would apply to the soul. So this is important. The overall consideration is moral in<sup>7</sup> the only sense in which Nietzsche can be moral.

Now there must be many, many things in this paragraph which call for comment. Yes?

**Student:** It seems that the line between following all the way through a sense of truth, the peculiar effect that language has on philosophical questioning, because here he says that philosophers are accustomed to speak of the will, and he says because the people use one word they conclude it's one thing. Earlier, in 7, he said [that] one infers here according to grammatical power, the cause and effect, and things like this, subject, or activity, agent. I am wondering if you could say something about the effect language has.

**LS:** Yes. I did not mention that, but did I not imply it in what I said? Because what you [call] and what Nietzsche calls language is interpretation. Ya? We are all under the spell of interpretations and, as Nietzsche implies, particularly unintelligent interpretations, going back to our remote ancestors.

One must also emphasize the other side:<sup>8</sup> The doctrine of the will, the will to power, is not it seems an interpretation. That is a fact. Whether one can maintain that is another matter. To this difficulty we must return. Yes?

**Another Student:** It seems to me that in the fourth paragraph, the last two sentences—

**LS:** In the fourth paragraph, what do you mean by that? Which aphorism?

**Same Student:** In 19. The last two sentences in what is in this book the fourth paragraph, there's an argument that's given, and I'm not sure I understand the argument. Here is how it reads. "Since in the great majority of cases there has been exercise of the will only when the effect of the command—that is, obedience; that is, the action—was to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the feeling . . ." Well, in order to understand that argument, you have to know *who* expected it. That is, is it the expectation of the person who is doing the willing, or is it the expectation of—

**LS:** No, no, the willing.

**Same Student:** It's the one who is doing the willing. Could you state that argument very simply, so that I could follow the steps of it?

**LS:** What does it mean in the context? The will is a complicated phenomenon, as he says, consisting of feeling, thinking, and an affect, the affect of command. But then he adds: one thing is not an ingredient of the will, namely, the action.

**Same Student:** But he says here that he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are somehow one.

**LS:** Ya, he believes erroneously.

**Same Student:** But who believes that?

**LS:** We do.

**Same Student:** Do we? Do we think that our will and our actions are the—

**LS:** Yes.

**Same Student:** But doesn't it sometimes happen that our will goes one way and our action goes another way?

**LS:** Yes, but this is perhaps not so important and was not so important for many philosophers, the fact that the will does not determine action. What Nietzsche is driving at is this: what you need for the will issuing in an action is not the character of the commanding will, but of the sub-wills.

**Same Student:** A good nature.

**LS:** Here the body, but as he understands the body.

**Same Student:** But that would be in Platonic terms a good nature.

**LS:** You can say that, ya, but it was not Nietzsche's expression. Because from Nietzsche's point of view that would all be nature.

**Same Student:** But still the argument is very hard to follow because certainly Nietzsche understands that there is a possibility of a weakness, that some men are weak and that their weakness might even be to some extent in their will and not in their body.

**LS:** Sure, but then it's clear; that is a relatively simple case. He speaks later on of people of weak wills and strong wills. He makes this distinction.

**Same Student:** But wouldn't that mean that there has to be some kind of freedom that the will would have to strengthen itself?

**LS:** In some sense perhaps, but the question is: To whom does the will owe that freedom?

**Same Student:** The strength in itself.

**LS:** Ya, but to what does the will owe its strength?

**Same Student:** If it can strengthen itself, then the strength that it gains in that way it would owe only to itself.

**LS:** He will take up this question later on under the heading: “Can there be a *causa sui*? Can there be a cause of itself?”

**Same Student:** Would you agree then that this argument is inconclusive?

**LS:** Yes, I grant that of all arguments here. [Laughter] You can say they all are suggestive and meant to be suggestive, and some are very persuasive. There is no demonstration here, and there is not meant to be a demonstration. That belongs, according to Nietzsche—[it] is essential to the philosophy of the future that it is not demonstrative in any sense. Ya? That is the point. Yes?

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** Does the distinction between feeling and thought make sense? The thought is determinative and dictates, as it were. Ya? Dictates. The feeling is from here to there, but then something comes down like a thunderbolt and this must be. That’s the thought. It is not further developed. It is not explained whether this has in any way the character of a *logos*, of reason; that’s not stated. And this is of course, as you see, directed against Schopenhauer. In Schopenhauer the will is thoughtless, and against Schopenhauer, Nietzsche says thought is essential to the will.

**Same Student:** . . . Thinking is just a kind of willing . . .

**LS:** An ingredient of willing. He doesn’t say thinking is the fundamental phenomenon, but the will to power. Will to power.

**Same Student:** . . . Will, but not thought.

**LS:** But what is willed? If you take the complete phenomenon, what is willed is thought, although thought alone would not account for everything, because there must also be feeling and there must also be affect. Affect. Now you are not—

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** But the main point, I believe, is that you cannot separate this thought from will as if there would still be will if you disregarded the thought. The thought is an essential ingredient of the will. And it is of course deplorable, you can say, that Nietzsche did not analyze what he meant by thought.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** —<sup>iv</sup>that this thought has the character of theoretical thought, of complete independence from will impulses. He is only as it were working his way toward his overall suggestion [that] the fundamental phenomenon is the will to power. What could this possibly mean, and why is this superior to what other philosophers have said before and which Nietzsche regards as not acceptable? Well, let us turn to the next aphorism.

**Reader:**

That individual philosophic concepts are not anything capricious or autonomously evolving, but grow up in connection and relationship with each other; that, however suddenly and arbitrarily they seem to appear in the history of thought, they nevertheless belong just as much to a system as all the members of the fauna of a continent—is betrayed in the end also by the fact that the most diverse philosophers keep filling in a definite fundamental scheme of possibly philosophies. Under an invisible spell, they always revolve once more in the same orbit; however independent of each other they may feel themselves with their critical or systematic wills, something within them leads them, something impels them in a definite order, one after the other—to wit, the innate systematic structure and relationship of their concepts. Their thinking is, in fact, far less a discovery than a recognition, a remembering, a return and a homecoming to a remote, primordial, and inclusive household of the soul, out of which those concepts grew originally: philosophizing is to this extent a kind of atavism of the highest order.

The strange family resemblance of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing is explained easily enough. Where there is affinity of languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophy of grammar—I mean, owing to the common philosophy of grammar—I mean, owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions—that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; just as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation. It is highly probable that philosophers within the domain of the Ural-Altai languages (where the concept of the subject is least developed) look otherwise “into the world,” and will be found on paths of thought different from those of the Indo-Germanic peoples and the Muslims: the spell of certain grammatical functions is ultimately also the spell of *physiological* valuations and racial conditions.

So much by way of rejecting Locke’s superficiality regarding the origin of ideas. (*BGE*, 20)

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<sup>iv</sup> There is a gap in the tape.

**LS:** Yes, and the critique of Locke was of course implied with everything that went before: that there is not, there are not, there never can be such a simple basic stratum like ideas in the Lockean or in the Humean sense. Philosophy cannot be liberation from all prejudices, as it claims. There is no without, no beyond, no outside of the cave. That is the radical difference between Nietzsche and Plato. But the objects of recollection, of *anamnesis*, are not the ideas in the Platonic sense, but something “quote historical unquote,” something conventional, as Plato might have called it. The philosophers all assert more than they know. They possess then some knowledge, obviously, what we call commonsense knowledge. They use a pen or sit at a table and talk with someone else and so on. Now this aphorism 20 seems to dispose of this difficulty. The commonsense knowledge, which is of course presupposed by all philosophers, is historically variable. It is an acquisition which is not necessary. Say, the Indo-Germanic races, [which have] such different assumptions than the Semites or any other race which Nietzsche has in mind. So it seems then that grammar—yes, grammar—but grammar goes back to something more fundamental according to Nietzsche, and that is what he calls here physiological value judgments, race conditions. This must be understood of course in the light of what Nietzsche has said. Physiology, the concern with the life of the body, is ultimately concerned with a certain kind of souls, if it is indeed true that the body is a hierarchy of souls. Yes?

**Student:** I find it hard to conceive of physiological effects which would influence language . . .

**LS:** I believe that this is not something so peculiar to Nietzsche. People formerly spoke very openly of the influence of climate and terrain and other things on human beings, and also of the differences between various races of human beings. Is it not possible—I mean, are there not certain differences between human races?

**Same Student:** I see that. I am just trying to put together how living in the heat all the time would affect literally the way I speak . . . the ramifications of that statement. I am having a hard time thinking of an example where climate would . . .

**LS:** Yes, but does it make sense to you that our language and the structure of our language may influence our thoughts?

**Same Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Very well. That is what Nietzsche says in the first—that’s the main point; and now he links that up with his general thesis, the will to power. Can<sup>9</sup> language structure be the ultimate? Must it not be traced to the will to power? And that he does in this sentence by speaking of physiological value judgments, which is only another way of speaking of the will to power. He doesn’t carry it through; we have to undergo the toil of thinking to figure out how he could have meant it. But<sup>10</sup> the broad purpose of what he says I think is clear.

**Same Student:** I’ll undergo some more toil.

**LS:** Ya, that is unavoidable from any point of view, even if it is not Nietzsche. Did you want to say something?

**Another Student:** I just wanted to say that . . . because there is a modern school of anthropologists and sociologists who are doing a lot of talking about the relationship between physiology and language. In peoples developing in certain kinds of climates, the roof of the mouth, the palate is so high and the teeth are more widely separated; consequently certain kinds of sounds can't be made and certain others can be made more easily. I just wanted to offer that as a clearcut case of the influence that physiology on the sounds that people make, and then to distinguish that from what Nietzsche is saying, because I don't think that he is referring to physiology in that sense, of the shape of . . .

**LS:** No, he speaks of physiological value judgments.

**Same Student:** Yes, I think that the kind of thing that he is talking about is the concept of the subject and the development of the philosophy of grammar and which would have more to do with the nature of the people, and not their physical nature but their spiritual nature.

**LS:** Ya, if the spiritual nature as you call it is completely separate from their bodily nature, which he would deny.

**Same Student:** I am talking about under-soul.

**LS:** Ya, sure, that is clear, but that does not affect the issue now. The main point is that—

**Same Student:** Oh, he might be a racist . . .

**LS:** Yes, but in a way we all are racist. I don't see what's wrong with that. A racist is a man who says there are different races. And I do not have sufficient evidence to answer the question whether<sup>11</sup> some races are not<sup>12</sup> more gifted than others. That is the most scientific definition of racism which I have ever heard. I say this although I just made it up at the moment. [Laughter] But I bet that I would be called a racist if I said that. That doesn't mean much—I mean, that is a slogan . . .

**Same Student:** But that certain people would be spiritually or in their souls superior to others is certainly in contradiction to the kind of thing that Lincoln was talking about when he said that men are created equal. In some way—

**LS:** But<sup>13</sup> Lincoln [was talking about]<sup>14</sup> the demand for political equality and that one must not exploit people through slavery. What has this to do with the question of equality in other respects?

**Same Student:** Well, I mean, Lincoln would be the first to agree that people may be very different with regards to intelligence . . . or something like that. But when he talks about

the equality, I think that he is referring to—insofar as they have souls, they are spiritually equal.

**LS:** Ya, but then we would have to find out what Lincoln understands by soul. Now if he understands by soul an immortal soul, which is possible,<sup>15</sup> then he argues from entirely different ground than Nietzsche, who denies that there is an immortal soul. Ya? We have seen that; there is no soul separable from the body in Nietzsche. And if there are great, profound differences among human beings in bodily respects, they would be connected, to use a very loose word, with profound differences in the higher aspects.

**Same Student:** According to Nietzsche.

**LS:** Ya.

**Same Student:** Yes. That's a very difficult question.

**LS:** I don't believe that this is so difficult. It may be obnoxious, but I don't believe it is difficult.

**Same Student:** To answer?

**LS:** To state it and to understand the meaning of the proposition.

**Same Student:** But the answer isn't.

**LS:** Ya, that requires these famous scientific empirical studies to which I referred in my definition of racism, and which are still coming. Yes?

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, he says so ultimately, ultimately because the sameness of the grammatical functions is stressed by him at the end of this aphorism to physiological value judgments.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Sure, it is unconscious. Sure it is unconscious, just as the physiological origin of the value judgments is unconscious. Ya?

**Another Student:** . . . philosophy is the most spiritual will to power . . .

**LS:** Sure. In other words, what does he understand by spiritual? What does he understand here by the highest rank? What are the criteria? Are these criteria his value judgments? His preferences? Or are they something more, much more? We have not yet sufficient evidence to settle that question. But I must say, if you crudify and vulgarize what Nietzsche says, you arrive at what is going on all the time in the social sciences. You know? I mean the destruction of the whole, of every possibility of distinguishing

responsibly between high and low, good and bad. But that is of course only the least important part of Nietzsche.

**Student:** . . .<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** No, you have the will and they have the thought. You say, I want to understand, understand Nietzsche: that is the object of your will, what you want to understand. These are thoughts.

**Same Student:** But what is thought?

**LS:** Yes, that is true. He owes us an account of what thought is and he does not give [it to] us. That is absolutely . . .

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, that is very hard to say. You see, that has something to do with Nietzsche's way of writing. Later on there occurs an aphorism, in chapter 4, which is to this effect: that a man's sexuality shows itself even in the highest peaks of his spiritual life. Not an atom of a proof. How can he assert that? Perhaps one can reconstruct the argument if one thinks that Nietzsche was tolerably careful, in spite of his statement, "Let us be cautious, let us be unphilosophical."<sup>vi</sup> I believe one knows a bit of Goethe—in Germany one knows a bit about Goethe's fantastic love life, you know, going together with this fantastic ability to change, going to the highest age and of all radical changes. One knows a bit about Kant, but there is nothing of this kind. One can compare perhaps Goethe's work with Kant's work and say of Goethe's style [compared] with Kant's style and see, does this not reflect that. And one can also think, although that is embarrassing, of Nietzsche himself. He must have known a bit about himself. People who were not very delicate dug up Nietzsche's love life—after, in my lifetime—and found that it was very deplorable, on the whole. And Nietzsche knew that, I suppose, and thought about that and saw how it affected his highest thoughts. Surely he did not investigate all human beings by questionnaires, which is even impossible if he had wanted, most human beings being dead already and can no longer be questioned, and the others—if you try to send questionnaires to people in China and Russia, they would not [be] permitted to answer you. So you have to make a selection, at any rate. And it is here so too. Nietzsche looks at will and sees, against Schopenhauer, that the essential ingredients of thought, of thinking in will must be strongly stated. Will is not a brewing of urges merely, but there is some brightness, light, thought.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** He will speak in the second chapter a bit about his way of writing, and perhaps this will retroactively help us to understand<sup>17</sup> the first chapter. I mean, that is Nietzsche's set purpose, not to demonstrate [but] to some extent he does it in some later writings like the

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<sup>v</sup> The student makes a lengthy statement which is largely inaudible.

<sup>vi</sup> Aphorism 19.

*Genealogy of Morals*, which is a much more popular writing than *Beyond Good and Evil*. But it is also much more misleading, because of a certain crudification which takes place for this very reason.

Now I believe it is essential for us—we will read the twenty-first aphorism very soon, but let us first read the twenty-second, because that is of a very broad bearing.

**Reader:**

Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but “nature’s conformity to law,” of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though—why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad “philology.” It is no matter of fact, no “text,” but rather only a naively humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning, with which you make abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul! “Everywhere equality before the law; nature is no different in that respect, no better off than we are”—a fine instance of ulterior motivation, in which the plebeian antagonism to everything privileged and autocratic as well as a second and more refined atheism are disguised once more. “*Ni Dieu, ni maître*”—that is what you, too, want; and therefore “cheers for the law of nature!”—is it not so? But as said above, that is interpretation, not text; and somebody might come along who, with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation, could read out of the same “nature,” and with regard to the same phenomena, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power—an interpreter who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all “will to power” so vividly that almost every word, even the word “tyranny” itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor—being too human—but he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a “necessary” and “calculable” course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment. Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better. (*BGE*, 22)

**LS:** Now that is perhaps not the last word, but it is surely the penultimate word of Nietzsche on the subject. So he makes here a distinction between interpretation and text. So as a philologist, an old philologist, he makes a distinction: this is a text, this is written [LS raps on the table for emphasis]; and what you say is your addition, your tampering with the text. Now<sup>18</sup> the distinction between interpretation and text corresponds to the distinction between mythology and what is in itself, nature. The alternative which is suggested by Nietzsche, the will to power, is also only interpretation. But Nietzsche says then: “All the better, *tant mieux*.” What does that mean? What does he enigmatically point to? The previous philosophers claimed to have established the text, the objective truth, but their claim is baseless. The text is unknowable, unsayable—one can never get more than an interpretation, a human creation. But is this very insight a human creation or the objective truth? Nietzsche himself calls the will to power a fact, the *fundamental* fact. Philosophy is the most spiritual will to power; that is to say, interpretation is the most spiritual will to power in the light of which everything else must be understood. But is not self-knowledge of the will to power both knowledge of the most fundamental fact

and interpretation at the same time, creation? For does it not require a radical change, a metabasis from naïve unconscious interpretation to self-consciousness of interpretation? But what Nietzsche explicitly says is: I am perfectly satisfied that what I propose is also only an interpretation. But, he implies, a better one, a sounder one, a healthier one than the others, the former ones.

Ya, there is another passage in the preceding aphorism. If you will have a look at it; we cannot read the whole thing. “We who alone have made the fiction of the causes, the sequence.”

**Reader:**

It is *we* alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed “in itself,” we act once more as we have always acted—*mythologically*. The “unfree will” is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills. (*BGE*, 21)

**LS:** Ya, now listen. In real life—and that is obviously not something behind the will, not something metaphysical, but something to which everyone has access and more fundamental than what the philosophers are talking about. Here we see the difference between strong and weak wills, and here the question of free will or unfree will doesn’t arise. Perhaps the distinction between strong will and weak will is of the utmost importance and evidence. Yes? Now let us finish.

**Reader:**

It is almost always a symptom of what is lacking in himself when a thinker senses in every “causal connection” and “psychological necessity” something of constraint, need, compulsion to obey, pressure, and unfreedom; it is suspicious to have such feelings—the person betrays himself. And in general, if I have observed correctly, the “unfreedom of the will” is regarded as a problem from two entirely opposite standpoints, but always in a profoundly *personal* manner: some will not give up their “responsibility,” their belief in *themselves*, the personal right to *their* merits at any price (the vain races belong to this class). Others, on the contrary, do not wish to be answerable for anything, or blamed for anything, and owing to an inward self-contempt, seek to *lay the blame for themselves somewhere else*. The latter, when they write books, are in the habit today of taking the side of criminals; a sort of socialist pity is their most attractive disguise. And as a matter of fact, the fatalism of the weak-willed embellishes itself surprisingly when it can pose as “*la religion de la souffrance humaine*”; that is *its* “good taste.” (*BGE*, 21)

**LS:** The point which he makes is this: free will and unfree will as metaphysical doctrines are unnecessary. They both assert too much, and this “too much” stems as in all cases from will. A will to be fully responsible, much more responsible than one can possibly be, free will; and those who want to get rid of all responsibility, unfree will. So these doctrines claiming to be theoretically true have such a moral motivation. But the point which we read first, the distinction between mythological and real life—and of course real life is the only one which counts for a reasonable man when he makes this

distinction. But the question is: What is the relation of real life to nature, of which he had spoken in aphorism 9? [For the answer to] that we must wait; we don't know. But it obviously makes sense to speak provisionally, as Nietzsche does all the time, of real life as distinguished from what metaphysicians assert on the basis of prejudices of which they are unaware.

I think we should also read the last aphorism of this chapter, and we can begin with the second chapter [next time]. Yes?

**Reader:**

All psychology so far has got stuck in moral prejudices and fears; it has not dared to descend into the depths. To understand it as morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*, as I do—nobody has yet come close to doing this even in thought—insofar as it is permissible to recognize in what has been written so far a symptom of what has so far been kept silent. The power of moral prejudices has penetrated deeply into the most spiritual world, which would seem to be the coldest and most devoid of presuppositions, and has obviously operated in an injurious, inhibiting, blinding, and distorting manner. A proper physio-psychology has to contend with unconscious resistance in the heart of the investigator, it has “the heart” against it: even a doctrine of the reciprocal dependence of the “good” and the “wicked” drives, causes (as refined immorality) distress and aversion in a still hale and hearty conscience—still more so, a doctrine of the derivation of all good impulses from wicked ones. If, however, a person should regard even the affects of hatred, envy, covetousness, and the lust to rule as conditions of life, as factors which, fundamentally and essentially, must be present in the general economy of life (and must, therefore, be further enhanced if life is to be further enhanced)—he will suffer from such a view of things as from seasickness. And yet even this hypothesis is far from being the strangest and most painful in this immense and almost new domain of dangerous insights; and there are in fact a hundred good reasons why everyone should keep away from it who—*can*.

On the other hand, if one has once drifted there with one's bark, well! all right! let us clench our teeth! let us open our eyes and keep our hand firm on the helm! We sail right *over* morality, we crush, we destroy perhaps the remains of our own morality by daring to make our voyage there—but what matter are *we*! Never yet did a *profounder* world of insight reveal itself to daring travelers and adventurers, and the psychologist who thus “makes a sacrifice”—it is *not* the *sacrificio dell' intelletto*, on the contrary!—will at least be entitled to demand in return that psychology shall be recognized again as the queen of the sciences, for whose service and preparation the other sciences exist. For psychology is now again the path to the fundamental problems. (*BGE*, 23)

**LS:** So psychology—but Nietzsche explains it: he says physiopsychology. And the other point which he does not make here but which he made in an earlier paragraph, [aphorism] 20 or thereabouts, where he spoke of the differences of linguistic structures, one could say, and one must say . . . historical physiopsychology, that is what ought to be the fundamental science. And one must come to see whether the psychologies which in a way stem from Nietzsche, like Freud and Jung, to what extent they live up to that

standard. But Nietzsche says something else: that psychology must or will *again* become the way to the fundamental problems, that psychology should again be recognized as mistress of the sciences: again. When was psychology the mistress of the sciences? I mean, it obviously excludes logic, which . . . in Nietzsche's time, that is obviously excluded. But when was psychology recognized as the mistress of the sciences? It is possible, I think, that he thinks of Plato. And it would be most interesting if he thought of Plato, because Plato is *the* irritant for Nietzsche. Plato brings out of Nietzsche all these strange thoughts and the way in which the thoughts are uttered. But there is this great difference; if we compare Nietzsche's psychology with Plato's, what is the Platonic equivalent to the will to power, may I ask?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya. What makes life life. But what is the Platonic equivalent of the will to power?

**Same Student:** *Eros*.

**LS:** *Eros*. Just as simple as that. But here we have the difference. The *eros* is directed towards, in Nietzsche's language, eternal values, and the will to power *generates* values. In Plato there is a self-subsisting order to which the *eros* is directed. There is no such self-subsisting order in Nietzsche. Therefore Nietzsche's psychology is beyond good and evil, and Plato's cannot be said to be [beyond] good and evil, because for Nietzsche there is nothing higher than life, but life can be higher or lower. And therefore psychology can be—I don't wish to quote this wrongly; in aphorism 19, I believe it is—will as itself must be seized within the circle of morality, within the circle of vision of morality. This remains. There must be a distinction between the higher and lower life, of which there is a sign in the real-life distinction between strong and weak wills. A very inadequate sign, but still it points there, but indeed beyond good and evil.

If everything goes well, we will next time begin the second chapter, entitled "The Free Mind." As you could easily see by browsing in that chapter, chapter 2 deals also with the philosophers. Whereas chapter 1 deals with the prejudices of the philosophers [and is] directed against the philosophers, chapter 2 states a case for the philosophers, but not under the name of the philosophers, only under the name of the free mind. And that has its reason, because the philosophers of whom Nietzsche speaks in chapter 2, they are the philosophers of the future, and since they are a new phenomenon they also must have a new name; and Nietzsche prefers for this purpose "the free mind," although that is not a new name at all but perhaps less burdened than the name "philosopher." I suggest that we begin there next time.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "but."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "so on assert and in all cases assert."

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "but."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "you have now."

<sup>5</sup> Changed from "will comes."

<sup>6</sup> Moved "Nietzsche calls it."

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<sup>7</sup> Deleted “in the sense.”

<sup>8</sup> Changed from “So the other side, which one must also emphasize.”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “can language.”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “it is clear that.”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “there.”

<sup>12</sup> Moved “are not.”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “what has this to do.”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “said.”

<sup>15</sup> Moved “which is possible.”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “well.”

<sup>17</sup> Changed from “the understanding of the.”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “this corresponds,.”

## Session 5: November 10, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** First to say a word about the plan of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which we can probably understand somewhat better now after we have read the first chapter. The first chapter, as you will recall, is entitled “Of the Prejudices of the Philosophers.”<sup>i</sup> The philosophers. It is a chapter directed against the philosophers: the philosophers. Just one example: He says in a passage which we have read, “let us be [more] cautious, let us be unphilosophic[al].” But it goes without saying that the first chapter is not unqualifiedly antiphilosophic, as you have seen when reading the chapter. Yet still it is remarkable that at the end of that chapter he calls psychology, not philosophy, the mistress of the sciences. It is clear that what Nietzsche understands by psychology *is* philosophy. That is a kind of disguise of Nietzsche’s philosophy, if he presents it as philosophy. But still we must take it seriously that he prefers here the term “psychology.” And he says now psychology will again become the mistress of the sciences, and the most simple explanation of that of course is psychology and not logic or physics, of which he had spoken before in that chapter.

Now the second chapter, “The Free Mind,” is in fact the statement *for* the philosophers, for the philosophers of the future. Then comes a third chapter, which I do not know how the man translates it—you have the—

**Student:** “What is Religious.”

**LS:** Ya, that one can say, but the German is “*Das religiöse Wesen*,” and that is I believe directed against a very famous thought and book, *Das Wesen der Religion*, [by] Feuerbach, *The Essence of Religion*.<sup>i</sup> For Nietzsche there is no essence of religion, but there is something which one can call (because the German noun, “*Wesen*” has a verbal meaning) “the religious goings-on,” “the religious doings,” or something [like that]. It is not easy to translate into English.

Now then comes an interlude, a chapter called “Saying and Interludes,” as one could translate it. There are aphorisms reminding of the *Maxims* of La Rochefoucauld.<sup>ii</sup> I think that you told me he translates it “Epigrams.” All right. But by the position of chapter 4 it is made clear that chapters 1 to 3 form a unit in contradistinction to chapters 5 to 9. The first unit deals then with philosophy and religion, one could say eternally friendly enemies or eternally inimical friends. The formula “atheism” does not exhaust Nietzsche’s posture toward religion. Chapters 5 to 9, as you see I think from the headings, are more popular themes where Nietzsche descends some to the preoccupation of most readers. So this much about the plan.

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<sup>i</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Religion*, trans. Alexander Loos (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004).

<sup>ii</sup> La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims* (New York: Penguin Books, 1959).

Now as for chapter 2 in general, I would like to make this point. In that chapter Nietzsche delineates the character of the philosopher of the future, of the philosopher who is free from *the* prejudices of *the* philosophers. We can also say, we must say, he delineates the character of the true philosopher. This true philosopher has not existed before, that's the implication. The experience on which this delineation is based is Nietzsche's own experience, his experience of himself. In other words, without saying so, Nietzsche describes himself as the true philosopher.

One cannot help contrasting it—and we are entitled to do so by Nietzsche's remark in the preface—one cannot help contrasting it with Plato. Plato presents Socrates, not himself, as the true philosopher. Nietzsche had no Socrates. The only man who he quotes with approval in chapter 2 is Stendhal, as you will see soon. But naturally some footnotes are needed, long footnotes, in regard to this contrastation of Nietzsche and Plato. First, one can raise the question: Is Socrates *the* philosopher for Plato? The most obvious point one could make is [to note] the Eleatic stranger and Timaeus in the corresponding dialogues.<sup>iii</sup> And secondly, Nietzsche has in a way had a Socrates: Zarathustra. But the relation of Nietzsche and Zarathustra is also very complicated. As a first approximation one may say that Plato never speaks in his own name and Nietzsche always speaks in his own name, subject to the qualifications I have mentioned.

So would you like to take up any of these points I made? All right, then we turn to the first aphorism [of the chapter], 24.

**Reader:**

*O sancta simplicitas!* In what strange simplification and falsification man lives! One can never cease wondering once one has acquired eyes for beholding this marvel! How we have made everything around us clear and free and easy and simple! how we have been able to give our senses a passport to everything superficial, our thoughts a divine desire for wanton leaps and wrong inferences! how from the beginning we have contrived to retain our ignorance in order to enjoy an almost inconceivable freedom, lack of scruple and caution, heartiness, and gaiety of life—in order to enjoy life! And only on this now solid, granite foundation of ignorance could knowledge rise so far—

**LS:** He says “science.”<sup>iv</sup> I will leave it at that.

**Reader:**

could science rise so far—the will to science on the foundation—<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>iii</sup> The Eleatic Stranger appears in the *Sophist* as the primary interlocutor with Theaetetus, though Socrates is present. In the *Timaeus* Socrates is also present, but most of the dialogue is a narrative presented by Timaeus (as with the *Critias*, in which Socrates is present but it is Critias who provides the narrative). In the *Statesman*, the “young Socrates” is shown in dialogue with “the Stranger.” In the *Laws* Socrates does not appear at all; the Athenian Stranger is the primary interlocutor.

<sup>iv</sup> Strauss retranslates “knowledge” as “science” from the line just read.

<sup>v</sup> Where the reader reads “science,” Kaufmann has “knowledge.”

**LS:** No, “the will to knowledge.”<sup>vi</sup>

**Reader:**

The will to knowledge on the foundation of a far more powerful will: the will to ignorance, to the uncertain, to the untrue! Not as its opposite, but—as its refinement!

Even if *language*, here as elsewhere, will not get over its awkwardness, and will continue to talk of opposites where there are only degrees and many subtleties of gradation; even if the inveterate Tartuffery of morals, which now belongs to our unconquerable “flesh and blood,” infects the words even of those of us who know better—here and there we understand it and laugh at the way in which precisely science at its best seeks most to keep us in this *simplified*, thoroughly artificial, suitably constructed and suitably falsified world—at the way in which, willy-nilly, it loves error, because, being alive, it loves life. (*BGE*, 24)

**LS:** “Being alive” meaning science. So the truth we have heard is deadly; but science, which is supposed to aim at the truth, is not deadly. For science paradoxically does not aim at the truth. “Science” has in German, and hence also in Nietzsche, a much broader meaning than in English. It means not only—not even primarily—the natural sciences, but also scholarship would be included. In other words, there is a perfect harmony between science and life; we may also say between philosophy and life. Everything is fine. Very clarifying. Question: Is it? And this question is answered in the next aphorism. Perhaps we should read that first before we discuss this aphorism.

**Reader:**

After such a cheerful commencement, a serious word would like to be heard; it appeals to the most serious. Take care, philosophers and friends, of knowledge, and beware of martyrdom! Of suffering “for the truth’s sake”! Even of defending yourselves! It spoils all the innocence and fine neutrality of your conscience; it makes you headstrong against objections and red rags; it stupefies, animalizes, and brutalizes when in the struggle with danger, slander, suspicion, expulsion, and even worse consequences of hostility, you have to pose as protectors of truth upon earth—as though “the truth” were such an innocuous and incompetent creature as to require protectors! and you of all people, you knights of the most sorrowful countenance, dear loafers and cobweb-spinners of the spirit! After all, you know well enough that it cannot be of any consequence if *you* of all people are proved right; you know that no philosopher so far has been proved right, and that there might be a more laudable truthfulness in every little question mark that you place after your special words and favorite doctrines (and occasionally after yourselves) than in all the solemn gestures and trumps before accusers and law courts. Rather, go away. Flee into concealment. And have your masks and subtlety, that you may be mistaken for what you are not, or feared a little. And don’t forget the garden, the garden with golden trelliswork. And have people around you who are as a garden—or as music on the waters in the evening, when the day is turning into memories. Choose the *good* solitude, the free,

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<sup>vi</sup> Strauss corrects the reader’s use of “science” to suggest that he use “knowledge” in the line just read.

playful, light solitude that gives you, too, the right to remain good in some sense. How poisonous, how crafty, how bad, does every long war make one, that cannot be waged openly by means of force! How *personal* does a long fear make one, a long watching of enemies, of possible enemies! These outcasts of society, these long-pursued, wickedly persecuted ones—also the compulsory recluses, the Spinozas or Giordano Brunos—always become in the end, even under the most spiritual masquerade, and perhaps without being themselves aware of it, sophisticated vengeance-seekers and poison-brewers (let someone lay bare the foundation of Spinoza’s ethics and theology!), not to speak of the stupidity of moral indignation, which is the unfailing sign in a philosopher that his philosophical sense of humor has left him. The martyrdom of the philosopher, his “sacrifice for the sake of truth,” forces into the light whatever of the agitator and actor lurks in him; and if one has so far contemplated him only with artistic curiosity, with regard to many a philosopher it is easy to understand the dangerous desire to see him also in his degeneration (degenerated into a “martyr,” into a stage- and platform-bawler). Only, that it is necessary with such a desire to be clear *what* spectacle one will see in any case—merely a satyr play, merely an epilogue farce, merely the continued proof that the long, real tragedy *is at an end*, assuming that every philosophy was in its genesis a long tragedy. (BGE, 25)

**LS:** Yes. Well, we have seen in the preceding paragraph that there is or seems to be perfect harmony between philosophy and life. And now Nietzsche takes up the objection. There is no harmony between philosophy and social life and solitude. There is no harmony between philosophy and society; solitude and living incognito for the sake of inner intellectual freedom. And he mentions here in this connection the greatest danger of persecution:<sup>2</sup> it endangers the inner freedom of the persecuted. Inner freedom requires some goodness. It is beyond good and evil. But [it requires] some goodness, and that goodness which is meant here is freedom from resentment.

In order to illustrate his point, Nietzsche refers to the examples of Giordano Bruno and Spinoza. As for the example of Spinoza, of which I know more than of Giordano Bruno, Nietzsche does not even attempt to prove his psychology of Spinoza. About a generation after him, after Nietzsche’s death, Hermann Cohen,<sup>vii</sup> the founder of the neo-Kantian school, attempted to prove fundamentally this point, this corruption of character. Cohen failed. I think the reason is this, and that is <sup>3</sup>true both of Nietzsche and Cohen, however different Nietzsche and Cohen were. Spinoza was, I think, a cool, not to say cold man. His posture toward revealed religion—in particular, Judaism—was simple contempt for the confused ideas underlying revealed religion: nonsense. His posture I believe is rather that of the cocksure unbelieving scientist than that of any man of an inner tragedy. He was less concerned with the truth of the principles, we can say, than with what one can do with the principles in order to get a clear and distinct account of everything.

I would like to stress one point. A certain goodness is indispensable for freedom of mind, so however valuable hatred and envy and the other things which Nietzsche mentioned

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<sup>vii</sup> Strauss first wrote about Cohen in 1924 in “Cohens Analyse der Bibel-wissenschaft Spinozas,” in Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 1: *Die Religionskritik Spinozas und zugehörige Schriften* (hrsg. Heinrich Meier) (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1996), 363-86.

occasionally before in chapter 1 may be for life in general, they are very bad for the most spiritual will to power. Good. Now is there any point you would like to bring up? Yes?

**Student:** First of all, what does he have in mind with the garden of golden trelliswork?

**LS:** When we hear of a garden we think of course of Epicurus, but whether Epicurus's garden had such golden trelliswork I do not know. Whether he thinks of something here that he has seen somewhere and enjoyed, that I couldn't say. Music over waters—that's of course Venice, but I do not know what this means.

**Same Student:** What is "good solitude?" I don't understand what he means by "good solitude."

**LS:** Well, in opposition to the imposed solitude of which he speaks later, the imposed solitude which makes men bitter and poisonous: the freely chosen solitude.

**Same Student:** Last question. For Nietzsche, does the philosopher have any place in society like he did in Plato—does he go back into the cave?

**LS:** That is a very good point which you make now. Nietzsche will take it up at once, but not in exactly that form which you suggest now. If you look at the headings of the chapters, one is called "Of Peoples and Fatherlands," for example, [a] political theme. Nietzsche was very much concerned with the unity of Europe, which is now a matter as you know of everyday political concern. So surely Nietzsche was concerned with politics, but that will come in the later chapters, not now. In other words, we have again a solution: there is indeed a conflict between philosophy and social life, but that is solved by voluntary solitude, voluntary incognito. Yes?

**Another Student:** At the end of 24, when he said that scientists willy-nilly love error, I don't understand why it's willy-nilly.

**LS:** If science is based on error, and this error is required for life, for human life, then science necessarily loves life. <sup>4</sup>Nietzsche links it up with another fact, that science is after all itself a phenomenon of life. Science is something living and therefore it is natural for science to love life.

**Same Student:** Why does it love error willy-nilly?

**LS:** Because it wants to have the truth, even the truth which is deadly. And therefore there is a certain ambiguity in that love.

**Same Student:** It seems also—he says right before that, where he spoke of a suitably falsified world, that science loves error in a very programmed way, a way that . . .

**LS:** Let us assume that science is based—even the most sophisticated science is based ultimately on commonsense knowledge, and this commonsense knowledge is relative to

man, and therefore absolutely speaking untrue, because it is relative to man. Now if science is based on such commonsense knowledge, then it is bound to man's world and to a world of men which science has not created in any way, which it only presupposes. It cannot say yes to itself as science without saying yes to life. That it is at the same time rebellious to life because of its concern with the truth that is not relative to man, that is true, and Nietzsche knows this very well, as we have seen with the first chapter. But this does not do away with that fundamental dependence and with that fundamental love. Love is a voluntary involuntary, as he says, an involuntary voluntary. It is first involuntary. Yes?

**Same Student:** He says here, "how poisonous, how crafty, how bad does every long war make one that cannot be waged openly by means of force." And he said earlier that every living being by nature seeks to discharge its strength. So putting those two things together, it would appear that every living being by nature seeks to not be poisoned, to not be crafty, to not be bad.

**LS:** Well, we cannot possibly consider all species of animals. But if you take, say, a lion and a lamb, the lion does not conceal its desire for killing and eating the lamb, does it? It is open, it's straightforward. It's terrible for the lamb, but there is nothing which makes the lion filled with resentment.

**Same Student:** That may be true of lions and lambs.

**LS:** Well, you can apply it also to human beings: there are lionlike human beings and lamblike human beings.

**Same Student:** Well, what do you think of the idea that maybe those wars that are not waged openly by means of force do poison people, and if people by nature want to discharge their strength, that might mean that they by nature seek the good, in a different way from—

**LS:** Yes, that is all right, but then you have to say beyond good and evil and good in a different sense. Good and evil as it is used here in the title of the work means in the moral sense as that is ordinarily understood. But there is another way of understanding good and its opposite, which is implied in what you said now.

**Same Student:** What do you think about that?

**LS:** That's a very long question. The whole question of morality would have to be raised, and I hesitate to take it up in the presence of Mr. Klein [laughter], who believes that that is a simple thing, at least he almost says that. [It is] complicated, but you only have to think of such simple everyday occurrences as wars. Ya? And where there is the moral question—and I do not mean to suggest that Mr. Klein says that: there are just wars and unjust wars, or as some people say, ethical and unethical wars. Ya? Only the line is terribly difficult to draw. There are extremely crude cases where you can say, "Everyone who opposes these people acts rightly"—for example, say, like Hitler and his fellows,

that was a morally simple situation. But in other situations it is more complicated. For example, think of Gandhi and the British Empire. Was Gandhi's position unqualifiedly morally superior to that of the decent Britishers? I'm speaking only of the decent people. Think of India now, I mean of the map of that subcontinent.

**Same Student:** It seems to me that what Nietzsche is implying is that where men have a real difference of principle, that all war is good, in a certain sense.

**LS:** Yes, Nietzsche was not a pacifist in any sense of the term, there is no doubt about that.

**Same Student:** Better to go ahead and fight openly than to have it brewing inside.

**LS:** Well, this can be defended, can it not? I mean to say, a dishonest and concealed enmity: is this not more hateworthy than an open enmity?

**Same Student:** That is where I agree so much with this, and that is why it seems that the distinction between just war and unjust war would be dissolved when you simply define war as a difference in principles and then say that war is good.

**LS:** But it is also hard to say without some footnotes that war is good. Did you read the first book of Plato's *Laws*, where the Athenian stranger makes some points against the Cretan or Spartan view that war is good? Because if war is good between cities, then <sup>5</sup>[it must also be that war is good] between individuals. There must also [be] war between the parts of the individual [and] it must be good. Ya? And that leads to—some place must be found for peace and rest, otherwise no life is possible. And so people who are in favor of war only mean by that war between nations and not civil war. So one would have to elaborate this a bit more. But the main point important in the context of the whole book is this, that Nietzsche makes here the point that good in some sense is indispensable, namely, indispensable for intellectual freedom, because hatred, envy and such things narrow a man, narrow his horizon, and that is incompatible with the desire to have an open horizon.

So we must not forget the overall context. Ya? The context is, to repeat, solitude as a solution to the difficulty pending between philosophy and life. Yes, but can you leave it at the solitude? <sup>6</sup>One of you said about the cave: Must he<sup>viii</sup> not return to the cave? Nietzsche's answer in the next aphorism is: he must return to the cave, but not for the reasons given in Plato's *Republic*. Will you read that?

**Reader:**

Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority— (*BGE*, 26)

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<sup>viii</sup> I.e., the philosopher.

**LS:** “Saved” is too weak; “where he is *redeemed*,” and the word is underlined in the German, so the emphasis is altogether on the word “redeemed.”<sup>ix</sup> Yes?

**Reader:**

where he may forget “men who are the rule,” being their exception—excepting only the one case in which he is pushed straight to such men by a still stronger—

**LS:** To that “rule,” to the “rule” concerning men.<sup>x</sup>

**Reader:**

by a still stronger instinct, as a seeker after knowledge in the great and exceptional sense. Anyone who, in intercourse with men, does not occasionally glisten in all the colors of distress, green and gray with disgust, satiety, sympathy, gloominess, and loneliness, is certainly not a man of elevated tastes; supposing, however, that he does not take all this burden and disgust upon himself voluntarily, that he persistently avoids it, and remains, as I said, quietly and proudly hidden in his citadel, one thing is certain: he was not made, he was not predestined, for knowledge. If he were, he would one day have to say to himself: “The devil take my good taste! but the rule is more interesting than the exception—than myself, the exception!” And he would go *down*, and above all, he would go “inside.”

The long and serious study of the *average* man, and consequently much disguise, self-overcoming, familiarity, and bad contact (all contact is bad contact except with one’s equals)—

**LS:** No, “company” one could perhaps say better than “contact.”

**Reader:**

this constitutes a necessary part of the life-history of every philosopher, perhaps the most disagreeable, odious, and disappointing part. If he is fortunate, however, as a favorite child of knowledge should be, he will encounter suitable shortcuts and helps for his task; I mean so-called cynics, those who simply recognize the animal, the commonplace, and “the rule” in themselves, and at the same time still have that degree of spirituality and that itch which makes them talk of themselves and their likes *before witnesses*—sometimes they even wallow in books, as on their own dung.

Cynicism is the only form in which base souls approach honesty; and the higher man must listen closely to every coarse or subtle cynicism, and congratulate himself when a clown without shame or a scientific satyr speaks out precisely in front of him.

There are even cases where enchantment mixes with the disgust—namely, where by a freak of nature genius is tied to some such indiscreet billygoat and ape, as in the case of

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<sup>ix</sup> Strauss retranslates “saved” as “redeemed” and reminds students of its emphasis in the line just read.

<sup>x</sup> Strauss suggests that the line just read ought to read “excepting only the one case in which he is pushed straight to the rule concerning men by a still stronger.”

the Abbé Galiani, the profoundest, most clear-sighted, and perhaps also filthiest man of his century—he was far profounder than Voltaire and consequently also a good deal more taciturn. It happens more frequently, as has been hinted, that a scientific head is placed on an ape's body, a subtle exceptional understanding in a base soul, an occurrence by no means rare, especially among doctors and physiologists of morality. [Laughter] And whenever anyone speaks without bitterness, quite innocently, of man as a belly with two requirements, and a head with one; whenever anyone sees, seeks and *wants* to see only hunger, sexual lust, and vanity as the real and only motives of human actions; in short, when any one speaks “badly”—and not even “*wickedly*”—of man, the lover of knowledge should listen subtly and diligently; he should altogether have an open ear wherever people talk without indignation. For the indignant and whoever perpetually tears and lacerates with his own teeth himself (or as a substitute, the world, or God, or society) may indeed, morally speaking, stand higher than the laughing and self-satisfied satyr, but in every other sense they are a more ordinary, more indifferent, and less instructive case. And no one *lies* as much as the indignant do. (*BGE*, 26)

**LS:** Ya. So there is something like a return to the cave, but not in order to save the cave dwellers or those who can be saved, but in order to understand the cave dwellers. And here Nietzsche speaks at some length of the immense usefulness of cynics. He refers here to the obvious inadequacy of the understanding of man in terms of hunger, sex, and vanity. That is the negative complement to what Nietzsche says about the will to power. The will to power is a possible key to man, whereas hunger, sex, and vanity could never be. The most “elementary” urges—elementary in quotation marks—are not the key to man. In this respect Nietzsche agrees of course with the so-called idealists, but he says we must find an urge which is truly elementary and covers all phenomena of life. There he sees none which fill that bill except the will to power.

Yes, one may also wonder whether any of the earlier philosophers, in particular Plato, would ever have suffered so terribly from people inferior to him and being together with them as Nietzsche does. Nietzsche was of an extreme tenderness. We will find more traces of that. So does this answer your question regarding the cave?

**Student:** I'm curious about the beginning of 26, where he speaks of knowledge in the great exceptional sense.

**LS:** Where is that? Because very few people have this desire for knowledge in this comprehensive sense. Ya? I mean, most people who are devoted to knowledge are devoted to specialties, and here what Nietzsche is concerned with is what he calls occasionally the whole fact: man. A man who is concerned with that must go to the cave, go down to the cave.

**Another Student:** So it's not necessary to have bad company in order to—

**LS:** Yes, obviously, but there are some abbreviations, so he doesn't have to study each individual case but namely what the cynics tell him and what he can then test. Yes?

**Another Student:** It seems that just in 25, he told us not to fight, not to become a platform-brawler, that is, not to fight with those people unless you could do it by force. And now he says: But listen to them.

**LS:** No. The qualification with these people is unjustified when you speak about agitators. Nietzsche did not like any agitators. Any.

**Same Student:** Why would he listen then to the cynics?

**LS:** They could be an interesting phenomenon, but they surely wouldn't be philosophers.

**Same Student:** But wouldn't that agitate him? That is, he agrees that he is not going to talk to them, especially in the way that they talk, but he listens to them nonetheless. Wouldn't that cause him in his soul to have a certain feeling against them?

**LS:** Ya, but he says how difficult it is not to suffer all kinds of misery if one is together with wrong kind of people. But that is necessary nevertheless. I mean, doctors also don't like what they see in human bodies, yet they have to if they want to help.

**Same Student:** This life has the springs of a passionate hatred, and that could—

**LS:** Ya, then it is wrong; then it leads to that narrowing of which Nietzsche spoke of, a lack of intellectual freedom.

**Same Student:** Might it lead to craftiness and vice?

**LS:** Yes, to some, yes.

**Same Student:** Maybe it would lead to Nietzsche.

**LS:** Not quite, not quite. I think you are not patient. I mean, Nietzsche's thought is very broad, and you try to establish a link between a sentence here and a sentence here, and you believe without having considered what other points come in and complicate the situation, if I may still use the word "situation." Ya?

**Another Student:** Does the philosopher have to seek bad company so that he can gain an understanding of the bad company, or is it so he can feel the low state that they are in? In other words, is it essentially a matter of knowledge or a matter of empathy?

**LS:** Why should this one exclude the other? Perhaps it is impossible to know a man without having empathy. That is not a difficulty. Yes?

**Another Student:** . . . Is the will to power also an interpretation of man's actions?

**LS:** We have read an aphorism last time in which he says people might make the objection, "Is the will to power doctrine not also interpretation?" And then he says,

“Well, all the better.” With this enigmatic exclamation mark<sup>7</sup> he conclude[s] that point. That is dark. It is an interpretation and it is a fact, and how the two things go together has not yet been cleared up. Whether it has ever been cleared up by Nietzsche is a question. We will take up this question today in the central paragraph of this chapter, aphorism 34, the only place in this chapter where he speaks of that. So we must be patient, and Nietzsche’s tells us now is something which can cure or appease our impatience. He begins now to speak of how he writes and why he writes the way he does, and I suggest that we read the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

It is hard to be understood, especially when one thinks and lives *gangasrotagati* among men who think and live differently—namely, *kurmagati*, or at best “the way frogs walk,” *mandukagati* (I obviously do everything to be “hard to understand” myself!)—and one should be cordially grateful for the good will to some subtlety of interpretation. As regards “the good friends,” however, who are always too lazy and think that as friends they have a right to relax, one does well to grant them from the outset some leeway and romping place for misunderstanding: then one can even laugh—or get rid of them altogether, these good friends—and also laugh. (*BGE*, 27)

**LS:** The main point I believe here is this. These words which he uses are Sanskrit, a language of which I know nothing—and one means obviously “the way of going like Ganges, the river Ganges,” and the last is “the way of going of a frog.” Ya? Nietzsche does everything in order to be understood with difficulty. He makes it deliberately difficult. There is a remark of his about his famous contemporary, John Stuart Mill, which is to this effect: John Stuart Mill, or the insulting clarity.<sup>xi</sup> Nietzsche is never insultingly clear. The individual sentence may be insultingly clear, but not the context. His obscurity is intentional. Are there no unintentional obscurities in Nietzsche? That does not follow. Does Nietzsche point out his unintentional obscurities, to the extent to which he is aware of them? To some extent I believe he does, as this remark about the will to power shows. Ya? So, good. Now let us turn to the next one.

**Reader:**

What is most difficult to render from one language into another is the *tempo* of its style—

**LS:** The tempo—how does he translate that, in 27?<sup>xii</sup> All right, “the way of walking”; the gait; that is connected.

**Reader:**

which has its basis in the character of the race, or to speak more physiologically, in the average *tempo* of its metabolism. There are honestly meant translations that, as involuntary vulgarizations, are almost falsifications of the original, merely because its bold and merry *tempo* (which leaps over and obviates all dangers in things and words)

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<sup>xi</sup> Nietzsche makes this remark in a section of *Twilight of the Idols*, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man.” *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 513.

<sup>xii</sup> There is a brief inaudible exchange with a student.

could not be translated. A German is almost incapable of *presto* in his language; thus also, as may be reasonably inferred, of many of the most delightful and daring *nuances* of free, free-spirited thought. And just as the buffoon and satyr are foreign to him in body and conscience, so Aristophanes and Petronius are untranslatable for him. Everything ponderous, viscous, and solemnly clumsy, all long-winded and boring types of style are developed in profuse variety among Germans—forgive me the fact that even Goethe’s prose, in its mixture of stiffness and elegance, is no exception, being a reflection of the “good old time” to which it belongs, and a reflection of German taste at a time when there was still a “German taste”—a rococo taste *in moribus et artibus*. (BGE, 28)

**LS:** This is a strange expression. Nietzsche asks that one forgive him the fact. Should he not have said, asked that he be forgiven the mention of the fact? And Nietzsche could never make such a slip. Such a slip, that is intentional, the fact that Goethe’s style becomes a fact through Nietzsche. Prior to Nietzsche, at least among Germans, this limit of Goethe’s style could not be seen. It was not there as a limit. It became a limit through Nietzsche’s seeing it. Fact and interpretation are the same. Yes?

**Reader:**

Lessing is an exception, owing to his histrionic nature which understood much and understood how to do many things. He was not the translator of Bayle for nothing and liked to flee to the neighborhood of Diderot and Voltaire, and better yet that of the Roman comedy writers. In *tempo*, too, Lessing loved free thinking and escape from Germany. But how could the German language, even in the prose of a Lessing, imitate the *tempo* of Machiavelli, who in his *Principe* [*The Prince*] lets us breathe the dry, refined air of Florence and cannot help presenting the most serious matters in a boisterous *allegriissimo*, perhaps not without a malicious artistic sense of the contrast he risks—long, difficult, hard, dangerous thoughts and the *tempo* of the gallop and the very best, most capricious humor?

Who, finally, could venture on a German translation of Petronius, who, more than any great musician so far, was a master of *presto* in invention, ideas, and words? What do the swamps of the sick, wicked world, even the “ancient world,” matter in the end, when one has the feet of a wind as he did, the rush, the breath, the liberating scorn of a wind that makes everything healthy by making everything *run!* And as for Aristophanes—that transfiguring, complementary spirit for whose sake one *forgives* everything Hellenic for having existed, provided one has understood in its full profundity *all* that needs to be forgiven and transfigured here—there is nothing that has caused me to meditate more on *Plato’s* secrecy and sphinx nature than the happily preserved *petit fait* that under the pillow of his deathbed there was found no “Bible,” nor anything Egyptian, Pythagorean, or Platonic—but a volume of Aristophanes. How could even Plato have endured life—a Greek life he repudiated—without an Aristophanes? (BGE, 28)

**LS:** That’s very beautifully said, but we must not fall victim to the beauty. This much is clear: that the difficulty which Nietzsche causes his reader, and deliberately causes his readers, has nothing to do with heaviness. That is clear. Why does he say in the case of Machiavelli that he had perhaps a malicious artist’s feeling about the contradiction he

dares to make? I think he underestimates Machiavelli. Machiavelli knew this very well, when he speaks for example in a single sentence, so to speak, of the complete absence of virtue in an abominable political criminal, Agathocles, and at the same time the presence of virtue, admirable presence of virtue in the same individual. And the use of the word “virtue” in two opposite meanings was obviously intended.

Plato and Aristophanes: I think that makes very much sense; it would not be too difficult to show. But is this not the reason which Nietzsche gives: that Plato needed Aristophanes, as it were, in order to bear the Greek life which he repudiated? I believe that is not a Platonic reason. I mean, the attraction of Aristophanes was not mediated by suffering, as it would have been in the case of Nietzsche. Now let's see, the next one.

**Reader:**

Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it even with the best right but without inner constraint proves that he is probably not only strong, but also daring to the point of recklessness. He enters into a labyrinth, he multiplies a thousandfold the dangers which life brings with it in any case, not the least of which is that no one can see how and where he loses his way, becomes lonely, and is torn piecemeal by some minotaur of conscience. Supposing one like that comes to grief, this happens so far from the comprehension of men that they neither feel it nor sympathize. And he cannot go back any longer. Nor can he go back to the pity of men.— (*BGE*, 29)

**LS:** Now this is again a corrective, as it were, of the preceding aphorism, where he spoke of the gay and daring character of the free mind. Nietzsche adds, yet it is “torn piecemeal by some minotaur of conscience.” By “conscience” I think we have to understand the intellectual conscience. The intellectual conscience, intellectual probity—which is a key word in Nietzsche—that not the same as love of truth. To take a superficial example, if someone is honest to himself about what he believes and does not believe, as distinguished from a man who wishes to believe and regards this and believes then that he believes it, therefore; this is intellectual honesty. But can one leave it at<sup>8</sup> this kind of probity? Must one not raise the question as to whether what one believes sincerely, honestly, is sound? That would be the love of truth as distinguished from intellectual probity. Intellectual probity can very well be easily satisfied, which the love of truth cannot so easily be.

I would like to make this point clear. Intellectual probity is understood by Nietzsche frequently (and also by others, I suppose) as the willingness to admit the ugly truth, and love of truth seems to imply that the truth is attractive. But why is the truth, the truth about the whole, attractive? Why is philosophy necessarily edifying, to use another expression to the same effect? And I think the simple answer which one can give to this question is this: The phenomenon with which we can be familiar most easily is the attractiveness of virtue, if I may use this old-fashioned term. But whatever may be true of the whole, it is sure that the whole renders possible virtue. Therefore it is more beautiful, more noble, than virtue. It is perhaps no accident that Nietzsche turns to the beauty of virtue, although he doesn't use that expression, in the next aphorism. I believe we must keep this in mind, the difference between intellectual probity and a love of truth. Yes?

**Reader:**

Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The difference between the exoteric and the esoteric, formerly known to philosophers—among the Indians as among the Greeks, Persian, and Muslims, in short, wherever one believed in an order of rank and *not* in equality and equal rights—does not so much consist in this, that the exoteric approach comes from outside and sees, estimates, measures, and judges from the outside, not the inside: what is much more essential is that the exoteric approach sees things from below, the esoteric looks *down from above*. There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic; and rolling together all the woe of the world—who could dare to decide whether its sight of it would *necessarily* seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?

What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type. The virtues of the common man might perhaps signify vices and weakness in a philosopher. It could be possible that a man of a high type, when degenerating and perishing, might only at that point acquire qualities that would require those in the lower sphere into which he had sunk to begin to venerate him like a saint. There are books that have opposite values for soul and health, depending on whether the lower soul, the lower vitality, or the higher and more vigorous ones turn to them: in the former case, these books are dangerous and lead to crumbling and disintegration; in the latter, heralds' cries that call the bravest to *their* courage.

**LS:** “To *their* courage.”

**Reader:**

Books for all the world are always foul-smelling books: the smell of small people clings to them. Where the people eat and drink, even where they venerate, it usually stinks. One should not go to church if one wants to breathe *pure* air. (*BGE*, 30)

**LS:** The main point which he makes here seems to be this: the concept of the philosopher is inseparable from that of order of rank. The philosopher's soul, the highest soul; the higher soul, the higher vitality—it refers us back to the will to power. The will to power itself supplies the standard of higher and lower. But that standard is not at the disposal of the lower, because they do not know the higher. These virtues of which he speaks, the virtues of the common man: whether they are identical with what is traditionally called the moral virtues is a long question, but there is a certain kinship between the two. Yes?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** That's very hard to say. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* has the title, *The Book for No One and Everyone*. “For no one” perhaps because it is Nietzsche's most personal thought. That's at least the way in which I understand it. And for everyone: everyone can get some direction, some edification through it.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** But one must distinguish. Every book is understood in  $n$  different ways, whether the author wants it or not. That's clear. That is so to speak the starting point of Plato. Plato writes his book[s] with the intention that they be understood differently by different kinds of people. That is what we have in mind. Well, the most obvious difference which I see is this: that Nietzsche has and refuses to have any "quote social responsibility" in the ordinary meaning of the term. If the truth is dangerous, that's no reason for Nietzsche not to say it. For Plato it is different, and not only for Plato.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Nietzsche would say—he speaks of it later in this chapter—the disguise would come naturally, without any contrivance. And at the same time there is contrivance; as he has said, he does everything in order to be understood with difficulty. Mr. Zuckerman?

**Mr. Zuckerman:** . . . He is being intentionally difficult . . .

**LS:** That the author is misunderstood. If one only has to look at a list of the labels which were put on Nietzsche from the beginning of his publications up to the present day, then one sees the disguises—the masks, as Nietzsche calls it—grow naturally, without any contrivance. Yet there is contrivance in Nietzsche, and there's no doubt about that.

**Mr. Zuckerman:** . . . would you agree that he's more easily misunderstood, more easily than Plato or anyone else? . . .

**LS:** Ya, one can say that. One can put it on the most simple level, most political level, as follows. Nietzsche attacks violently the ideas of 1789: liberty, equality, fraternity; and that meant of course liberalism, and democracy, and socialism, and communism, and anarchism. This was<sup>9</sup> in itself nothing striking, because the conservatives in Germany always thought that liberalism, as it were, was the progenitor of this brood, this terrible brood. I believe in old-fashioned America there must also be such people who think that there is only a short step from liberalism to communism and anarchism. At any rate, in an old-fashioned country like Germany it was much stronger, that there were the conservative people, but Nietzsche also rejects the conservatives, and this is only a defensive position which, because it is only defensive, is being eroded and has no future. What remained on the political plane? What remained? Superman. But what is the political meaning of superman? So whatever one may say against Marx, the way from Marx to practical Marxist politics, including Lenin, is very simple. But there is no clear way leading from Nietzsche, who touches all political hot irons with the greatest gaiety, one could almost say. This did not lead anywhere. And it is not surprising, nor altogether impossible that such people like D'Annunzio in Italy and similar people in Germany used him as the progenitor of fascism. That Nietzsche would have been shocked surely by Hitler and his people I have not the slightest doubt, and I suppose Mussolini's culmination as it were also showed the inadequacy of that. But still, can one do that? As a philosopher, Nietzsche is compelled to take up the fundamental political questions. But

he is necessarily vague. Necessarily vague. There is no way leading from the *Zarathustra* or from his other writings to politics, although all these books deal with politics.

**Mr. Zuckerman:**<sup>xiii</sup> . . . .

**LS:** No, that one cannot say. Well, he was not interested in who would win the next election—

**Mr. Zuckerman:** I mean not the election, but the spirit.

**LS:** Oh, he is very much. There is a passage which we will come across later in *Beyond Good and Evil*. You remember the passage when he said, In every philosophy one does well to ask what the morality is to which the teaching tends.<sup>xiv</sup> In a later passage he says the moral (paren[thesis], the political, close paren[thesis]).<sup>xv</sup> It's the same because—

**Mr. Zuckerman:** . . . That would be a way of saying that the present morality . . . If one side is really talking about morality, then the political morality necessarily follows . . .

**LS:** Yes, but is this not the core of—that the core of political theory is exactly that, the spirit which should animate politics. Could we agree on that?

**Mr. Zuckerman:** Yes, I agree.

**LS:** Then it's a moral question.

**Mr. Zuckerman:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, that is true; but on the other hand, as for the technicalities there can be a rather great leeway. That is not so important. But doubtless Nietzsche has a great responsibility. Nietzsche wrote such sentences as the commanding, praising the extermination of the weak. The weak. One cannot do that without being responsible for how this will be understood by former noncommissioned officers.

**Mr. Zuckerman:** That's what I mean when I say . . . your responsibility . . .

**LS:** That is true, that is undeniable. But the only thing one can say is: Did anyone do better, I mean, after Nietzsche? If I compare him with what happened in philosophy in Germany—after all, Nietzsche was a German, however critical of the Germans he may have been—who was there? There was Husserl, and not a word about these things. The first political word Husserl uttered was as far as I know in 1938, where even the most politically insensitive individual had to become aware of the problem. And Husserl's pupil, Heidegger—well, Heidegger was in 1933 a man who welcomed this revolt of the German youth as an expression of the spirit of moderation. This was of course never

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<sup>xiii</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 6, 13.

<sup>xv</sup> *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 211, 136.

reprinted since, but that exists. And there were old-fashioned people, like Hermann Cohen, but that was truly old-fashioned; that died of its own old-fashionedness. That was pre-First World War and did not cut any ice, if I may use this expression, after the First World War. So there was nothing. In England of course that was relatively untouched, but still, fundamentally it was not better. And France too. One can therefore say that Nietzsche's terrible things were only the obverse side of his clear-sightedness, that he saw that the possibilities of the nineteenth century—you know, this seesaw between conservatives and liberals—was drawing to a close.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** One cannot call it immoral unless one identifies morality with democracy, and that is hard to do.

**Same Student:** . . .<sup>xvi</sup>

**LS:** He wants truth, but the question is whether one can have it, [whether] everyone can possess it. Surely he means in the first place, surely in this chapter, [a distinction] between the two kinds of human beings: those who have a desire for understanding and those who do not have a desire. That is clear. And that he links up with the will to power by the statement which we read, that philosophy is the most spiritual will to power. We don't know yet what he understands by spiritual, that is . . .

**Student:** . . . It's by virtue of being misunderstood that terrible things happen. You know, it occurred to me that maybe the terrible things on a large political scale come from misunderstanding, but . . .

**LS:** Yes, but I don't believe that you interpreted Mr. Zuckerman correctly. Mr. Zuckerman, I believe, meant that Nietzsche does have a political responsibility. Did you say that?

**Mr. Zuckerman:** . . .<sup>xvii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, but when we speak about a subject and the subject which we are speaking about affects the subject about which we speak, you have to be considerate.

**Mr. Zuckerman:** Any imaginable solution . . .

**LS:** Sure, but that is where the vagueness comes in. He understands here, of course, by the superman a man of the highest spirituality. He has a formula: Caesar with the soul of Christ. Ya? I mean the bodily health and the political power of ruling which Caesar had with the soul of Christ. But this could not be understood, especially in the writings which are of a more screaming character, like the *Genealogy of Morals*, which lend themselves very easily to political propaganda. And I think one should grant it, but of course I would

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<sup>xvi</sup> This and the same student's previous comment are lengthy but not clearly audible.

<sup>xvii</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

indeed say that Nietzsche's seeming lack of responsibility or actual lack of responsibility is only the first sign of his farsightedness, that he saw these dangers, he saw the impossibility of going on in the way in which Europe had been going on since the nineteenth century, and that the two things are inseparable. He's inside the situation and the wild shouts from the housetops.

**Student:** . . . that means that the bad always comes from the inside. The people who are smart enough to understand this either it doesn't hurt them, or they don't hurt others, or—

**LS:** No, that I didn't say, and that would be absolutely opposed to Nietzsche because Nietzsche says, as we will read, that it is impossible to live without hurting people.

**Same Student:** Maybe the bad comes from Nietzsche.

**LS:** That is one first interpretation of *Beyond Good and Evil*, that good and evil in the ordinary sense implies "Do not hurt or harm others," and Nietzsche says that's impossible. Take an extreme case, the conclusion drawn by Albert Schweitzer regarding good and evil in the ordinary sense: [in] your reverence for life you must exclude a tiger who jumps at a child; you must exclude bacteria—he was a physician—and some other things.<sup>xviii</sup> But there is no human life possible according to this view without harming others. That does not mean that men cannot live without shooting their neighbors, but they harm them.

**Same Student:** So we might be able to say then that even if we know one has misunderstood Nietzsche, all the people who have read Nietzsche have understood it perfectly well, but still Nietzsche might be a very harmful man.

**LS:** It depends. If you accept the good and evil morality, from that point of view he is a harmful man without any question, and he is the first to admit it. Therefore he gave the book the title *Beyond Good and Evil*. Ya? The example of the lion and the lamb which I used, it was used in that sense by Nietzsche himself as an example of what the true understanding of good and bad is. The lion thinks that lamb's flesh is good, and consequently he kills him. And the application to human beings is too unpleasant to contemplate, but it can be [got]<sup>10</sup> out of that.

Our time has come, and we will next time continue at aphorism 31.

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<sup>xviii</sup> Schweitzer's notion was "reverence for life," according to which all life is sacred. The notion posed a dilemma however with, for example, deadly bacteria: "I rejoice over the new remedies for sleeping sickness," Schweitzer wrote, "which enable me to preserve life, whereas I had previously to watch a painful disease. But every time I have under the microscope the germs which cause the disease, I cannot but reflect that I have to sacrifice this life in order to save another life." *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, trans. C. T. Campion (NY: Henry Holt, 1933), Epilogue, 233-34. See also *The Philosophy of Civilization*, trans. C. T. Campion (NY: Macmillan, 1950), 316ff.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “the philosophers.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “because.”

<sup>3</sup> Moved “both.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “and that is due to.”

<sup>5</sup> Changed from “then there must also war be good”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “and here is what.”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “does.”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “that at.”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “not.”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “to get.”

## Session 6: November 17, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>i</sup>We came last time to the second chapter from *Beyond Good and Evil*. The theme of that chapter is the character of the true philosopher, and the true philosopher is understood as the philosopher of the future. He is described as free mind, and that means above all that he is free from the prejudices of the philosophers. He does not wear the blinders of all earlier philosophers. The earlier philosophers were not sufficiently aware of the fact that no philosopher has ever proved right, that no philosophy has ever proved to be true, finally true in the decisive respect. In every case, without their dreaming of it there were unsuspected, unexpected upheavals, enlargements of the horizon which rendered questionable the very foundations of earlier philosophy.

Now a very important part of the character of the philosopher of the future is his relation to other men, to “quote society unquote.” That relation is characterized by [the] voluntary solitude of the philosopher, voluntarily interrupted by descents to the cave. Now given the solitude of the true philosopher, the most important form in which he communicates with others is writing. He makes it difficult to understand him, not by the use of technical language, which would only mean by the use of congealed and concealed certainties, but by making himself intelligible only to attentive readers: to readers who are able and willing to solve riddles. He educates his readers while they read, while they go.

Now we turn to the next aphorism, which we have not yet read, aphorism 31. Or would you like to take up the points I repeated now?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** In 30? In aphorism 30? We have read 30.

**Student:** . . . [Nietzsche says], “It could be possible that a man of a high type, when degenerating and perishing, might only at that point acquire qualities that would require those in the lower sphere into which he had sunk to begin to venerate him like a saint.” . . . I don’t quite understand the point.

**LS:** May I try to state it in old-fashioned language? Let us assume that there is a difference between theoretical excellence and moral excellence. If the man of theoretical excellence—in the highest case, the philosopher, who as such is not intelligible or not easily intelligible to the nonphilosophers—becomes intelligible and visible to others by virtue of his moral virtues, and may on this account be revered as a saint. I think that something like this is what Nietzsche has in mind. His true excellences are invisible, and some lower excellences which he also has become more visible the less his true excellences are actual, the more they recede.

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<sup>i</sup> Strauss begins the session by mentioning the Thanksgiving break and when the class will meet again.

**Same Student:** He says here that they degenerate and perish.

**LS:** Yes, because if the highest loses its power then one can call this a degeneration, and a perishing, even. It's strong language, but intelligible. So then we shall turn to the next number, 31.

**Reader:**

When one is young, one venerates and despises without that art of nuances which constitutes the best gain of life, and it is only fair that one has to pay dearly for having assaulted men and things in this manner with Yes and No. Everything is arranged so that the worst of tastes, the taste for the unconditional, should be cruelly fooled and abused until a man learns to put a little art into his feelings and rather to risk trying even what is artificial—as the real artists of life do.

The wrathful and reverent attitudes characteristic of youth do not seem to permit themselves any rest until they have forged men and all things in such a way that these attitudes may be vented on them—after all, youth in itself has something of forgery and deception. Later, when the young soul, tortured by all kinds of disappointments, finally turns suspiciously against itself, still hot and wild, even in its suspicion and pangs of conscience—how wroth it is with itself now! how it tears itself to pieces, impatiently! how it takes revenge for its long self-delusion, just as if it had been a deliberate blindness! In this transition one punishes oneself with mistrust on one's own feelings; one tortures one's own enthusiasm with doubts; indeed, one experiences even a good conscience as a danger, as if it were a way of wrapping oneself in veils and the exhaustion of subtler honesty—and above all one takes sides, takes sides on principle, *against* “youth.”— Ten years later one comprehends that all this, too—was still youth. (*BGE*, 31)

**LS:** It is I believe not difficult to see that Nietzsche speaks here of his own experience: his youthful enthusiasm for Wagner and Schopenhauer, his passionate turning against them, and then finally an overcoming of the spiritedness, the spiritedness of both levels. The spiritedness, the wrathful, and reverential, which is characteristic of youth, as he says, [and] that was surely so in former times.

Now there is a connection I believe with the preceding aphorism. In the preceding aphorism Nietzsche has spoken of the incompatibility of philosophy and “quote people unquote.” Now he speaks of the incompatibility of philosophy and youth. But the case of youth is obviously different from that of people, because every philosopher has to be young for some time and where is no such necessity of his being ever of the people.

**Student:** Is the implication here that Nietzsche has gotten over being youthful?

**LS:** Yes, I think so.

**Same Student:** Well, the anti-Wagner writings at the end of his life . . .

**LS:** But the true anti-Wagner writings and thoughts, I believe, were the earlier writings, *Human-All-Too Human* and this kind of thing. And these later writings were self-presentations meant to prevent his being mistaken for something else. One sees it from the very amusing character of these writings, that it is not wrath and indignation against Wagner which . . .

**Same Student:** Then it is indignation—

**LS:** No, ultimately not, that is, if you think only of what he says about the Wagnerian texts, operatic texts, for example—this extremely funny way. I don't think that he could have written—he surely could not have published that, twenty years earlier. I believe that he had no longer to overcome any Wagnerianism in himself in the 1880's when he wrote and published these writings. Or?

**Same Student:** Well, it would take very long to discuss it, but it seems to me that he is still absolutely under the spell of the music and wants to fight that.

**LS:** Ya, but it is no longer in himself. It rules Germany, and in a way Europe.

**Same Student:** I don't mean the social aspect of the music, I mean his own fondness for it, but it would take a very long—

**LS:** Ya, but it is extremely limited. He makes it clear what he regards as great in Wagner's music. And it's precisely not that of which Wagner himself was most proud.

**Another Student:** Doesn't Nietzsche take a specific view of Wagner's music and what it is about Wagner that he doesn't like?

**LS:** Ya, but what he finds greatest in Wagner [is] very short passages here and there, [in] the *Tristan* and elsewhere, and not precisely the whole, like in the *Ring*. Ya, all right. We would have to read these writings in order to reach agreement either way.

**Another Student:** What does he mean in the first paragraph to risk of even trying what is artificial, as the real artists in life do?<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, well the worst of all tastes is the taste for the unconditioned, for the absolute. Ya? “Passionately yes, passionately no”: the worst of all tastes. And now after one has overcome that, after one has followed this natural inclination, one must learn to put some art into one's feelings and rather make an experiment with the artificial as distinguished from and opposed to the natural. And that is what the true artists of life do, that they do not follow the impulses, the natural impulses, but experiment with the artificial.

**Student:** Does this have something to do with interpretation? He's made it clear that we can't expect to find an adequate interpretation of anything.

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<sup>ii</sup> The student is referring to aphorism 31. *BGE*, 43.

**LS:** No, I think it has here a more limited meaning. But is it not generally speaking true that younger people are more radical, more unqualified, in their yeses and noes than older people? Is this not true?

**Same Student:** It seems to me to be so. The nuances that one gains with one's experiences . . . but isn't trying to risk what is artificial, is that the same thing as gaining these nuances or the ability to see the nuances?

**LS:** Well, is it not necessary in order to fight vice or a defect to use the opposite extreme? Must not, for example, such an abominable vice as snobbism, can this not sometimes have a redeeming function? And perhaps the artists of life are a kind of snobs, but [ones] who are helpful as counterpoison to that absolute yes and the absolute no of the simply young.

**Same Student:** So by using something opposite to counteract something else, that is using the artificial?

**LS:** It seems to be, in this connection. It is surely not the last word; it is only one stage. Dr. Kass?

**Dr. Kass:** On the same point, the passage at least reminds me of the discussion in Aristotle's *Ethics* of the complete form of moderation, although not in that language, and he seems to suggest that anything other than the extremes is artificial. That is, that what is natural is what is youthful extreme . . .

**LS:** No, that goes too far. I mean, there is an enormous difference between Aristotle and Nietzsche precisely regarding moderation, but I think that goes too far. He is speaking here of a limited subject, namely, the subject of youth and maturity, and what are the specific infirmities of youth and how they are overcome, and certain stages in their overcoming. But the final stage is of course that one is no longer young, as he makes clear in the last sentence.

**Another Student:** Are the nuances . . . with age, artificial, or are there really nuances?

**LS:** There are nuances, of course.

**Same Student:** There are nuances, then the artificiality is only . . .

**LS:** In a way, yes.

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** All right.

**Same Student:** . . .

**Another Student:** My question was what this word meant, whether it is artificial or is it called artistic inherently?

**LS:** No, the word which he uses is here in German “artificial.” He says to put some art into one’s feelings, and rather to make an experiment with the artificial as the true artists of life do.

**Same Student:** He seems to imply that the nuances are not then natural, if one must call them artificial. Am I not seeing something?

**LS:** No, the nuances are there, but the emphasis put on them, that may be overdone. So shall we go over to the next paragraph?

**Reader:**

During the longest part of human history—so-called prehistorical times—the value or disvalue of an action was derived from its consequences. The action itself was considered as little as its origin. It was rather the way a distinction or disgrace still reaches back today from a child to its parents, in China: it was the retroactive force of success or failure that led men to think well or ill of an action. Let us call this period the *pre-moral* period of mankind: the imperative “know thyself!” was as yet unknown.

In the last ten thousand years, however, one has reached the point, step by step, in a few large regions on the earth, where it is no longer the consequences but the origin of an action that one allows to decide its value. On the whole this is a great event which involves a considerable refinement of vision and standards; it is the unconscious aftereffect of the rule of aristocratic values and the faith in “descent”—the sign of a period that one may call *moral* in the narrower sense. It involves the first attempt at self-knowledge. Instead of the consequences, the origin: indeed a reversal of perspective! Surely, a reversal achieved only after long struggles and vacillations. To be sure, a calamitous new superstition, an odd narrowness of interpretation, thus become dominant: the origin of an action was interpreted in the most definite sense as origin in an *intention*; one came to agree that the value of an action lay in the value of the intention. The intention as the whole origin and prehistory of an action—almost to the present day this prejudice dominated moral praise, blame, judgment, and philosophy on earth.

But today—shouldn’t we have reached the necessity of once more resolving on a reversal and fundamental shift in values, owing to another self-examination of man, another growth in profundity?

**LS:** “Another deepening of man?”

**Reader:**

Another deepening of man? Don’t we stand at the threshold of a period which should be designated negatively, to begin with, as *extra-moral*? After all, today at least we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it, while everything about it 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. In short, we believe that the intention is merely a sign and symptom that still requires interpretation—moreover, a sign that means too much and therefore, taken by itself alone, almost nothing. We believe 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—but in any case something that must be overcome. The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality—let this be the name for that long secret work which has been saved up for the finest and most honest, also the most malicious, consciences of today, as living touchstones of the soul. (*BGE*, 32)

**LS:** Ya. Well, I think there is an obvious connection between this and the preceding aphorism. In the preceding aphorism he had spoken of three stages in the development of the high-class youth; now he speaks of three stages in the history of mankind in regard to morality. There is no parallelism of three stages [in these aphorisms]. I believe it is possible that Nietzsche just wanted to let us see that there is no parallelism between the (how was this called?) philogenetic and the ontogenetic development. The highest stage here is the extramoral, the transmoral stage. It is characterized by the overcoming of morality and, as he adds, in a certain sense self-overcoming of morality, overcoming of morality through morality, out of morality. Intellectual probity leading to the turning of morality against itself, intellectual probity leading to the questioning of morality. And that is what is happening here in this book as a whole, *Beyond Good and Evil*. But there are many more things here you might wish to discuss. Yes?

**Student:** There’s a passage that really baffled me, and I’m trying to understand the last paragraph of this aphorism. “After all, today at least we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it, while everything about it 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. In short, we believe that the intention is merely a sign and symptom that still requires interpretation—moreover, a sign that means too much and therefore, taken by itself alone, almost nothing” [*BGE*, 32]. Will that be elaborated on later?

**LS:** Yes, but I believe we already have enough material to understand it now, don’t we?

**Same Student:** Does that have anything to do with psychology?

**LS:** Ya, it has something to do with that and it can easily be understood in terms of depth psychology, which goes beyond the skin, beyond the conscious intention. But what does Nietzsche mean more precisely by that, I mean, without going into any technicalities of these depth psychologies? Well, one expression used for the second stage of morality as here presented is the conscience. Ya? The conscience. Now there are many people who are satisfied with whatever they propose or do if they can say: My conscience dictates it to me. Ya? That’s the same; you can replace intention by conscience. Now Nietzsche says somewhere this simple thing: that the conscience of a man is as much worth as the

man himself. So you cannot leave it at the conscience as the intention—although that may be the only thing which falls within the purview of the actor or speaker—but you have to take the whole man. And one must in one's own case be aware of it, that there is always something in what appears to be the irreducible decision of the conscience which fronts one—and one has to take this into consideration. What Nietzsche suggests is that the intention morality is almost as superficial as the consequence morality. You know? If someone does something which has bad consequences, and he didn't intend these consequences in any way and there is no intrinsic connection between what he intended and the consequences, that's very superficial. But Nietzsche says it is almost as superficial to make the intention the sole consideration for moral judgment.

**Same Student:** . . . But then he goes on, he says that whatever would be in a man behind his intentions is too clear; it means too much and means therefore almost nothing. Is that what you just said?

**LS:** I don't understand what you meant.

**Same student:** In the last sentence I read, it seems that Nietzsche has a bit more than the fact, that he seems to think that intention is too superficial a way of judging the value of an act. That even something beyond good intention—it would seem that he goes beyond intention, beyond conscience into the depths of man, but then he says there are things there . . .

**LS:** I mean, you read every day in the daily papers or magazines of cases of men who are very indignant about pornography and such things. Some people say that in many cases the indignation, which is the intention of these people, is not the whole story of what is going on in these indignant people—you must have heard of this, that there can be a kind of obscene interest in obscenity. Have you heard of that?

**Same Student:** Well, not that way. I don't recall hearing it described that way.

**LS:** <sup>1</sup>I read that sometimes in columns and so on, and that would be a simple example of the insufficiency of intention.

**Same Student:** But I don't understand the example. Could you try again?

**LS:** If someone fights obscenity—which I would regard as something laudable, by the way—but if he does it, he may very well be prompted by prurient interests in himself. So his intention would not be sufficient for understanding his action. And this is true in other cases. Yes?

**Another Student:** Does Nietzsche make a connection between the ideas that he expresses here and the artist?

**LS:** Here he does not speak of the artist.

**Same Student:** . . . I know, here he is speaking of morals . . .

**LS:** What do you mean by that?

**Same Student:** It seems to me that we are no longer judging whether an action is moral by its intention, so should we judge a work of art by its intention . . .

**LS:** Well, he doesn't speak of that here. In a certain sense, Nietzsche would say in his sense of the word that the works of art have to be judged in moral terms. Only what he understands by morality is not the morality of good and evil but another morality, and therefore it is not very helpful by itself. I suggest that we postpone discussion of the question of art. He will take this up later on. Yes?

**Another Student:** It's one thing to say that the intention isn't the whole story, but it's another thing to say that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it. That would mean that if I said something to you, and that set you off on some tangent of thinking which was completely different from what I had intended—

**LS:** That would not be your merit or your demerit.

**Same Student:** That wouldn't be my value because I had done something that was unintentional.

**LS:** Sure. What then does he mean?

**Same Student:** Well, I don't understand it. This strikes me as having a misology . . .

**Mr. Klein:** . . . Let's imagine that I pass here, and I want to go home; that's my intention. But while I go this way, I am not thinking of anything but going home. And I talk to you, and I slap your face, but not intentionally.

**Same Student:** Not intentional?

**Mr. Klein:** Not intentional. [Laughter]

**Same Student:** You mean by accident. [Laughter] Wait, let me understand here—

**LS:** These things are not accidental. [Laughter]

**Same Student:** I don't understand the case, I really don't. You wanted to go home—

**Mr. Klein:** Yes, that is my intention.

**Same Student:** But could you have some sub-intentions on the way?

**Mr. Klein:** Maybe at the moment I see you.

**Same Student:** So then you would intend to slap me?

**Mr. Klein:** Well, then I would intend; that is true, yes. [Laughter]

**Same Student:** But I don't think that people act that way.

**Mr. Klein:** Oh yes, sometimes they do, and you yourself do sometimes.

**Same Student:** You mean act in a way that is completely spontaneous, with no intention at all?

**Mr. Klein:** Yes.

**Same Student:** Well, if I agreed that I acted that way on some occasions in my life, that wouldn't lead me to think that the decisive value of my action in a general case lay in what is unintentional. That really wouldn't lead me to that conclusion. So I think that your argument is an example of something, and I think that it's a valuable example, but it certainly doesn't make the point that Nietzsche makes . . .

**Mr. Klein:** So what is the point he makes?

**Same Student:** That if there is value in the world, it comes from unintentional things.

**Mr. Klein:** Ya.

**Same Student:** Yes, well, how absurd. How could he say that? Shouldn't we question that?

**LS:** Sure.

**Same Student:** Is that something that we should accept or even countenance?

**LS:** Let us perhaps state it as follows. If the worth of a man consists not only in his intentions but in his whole being, if this is an intelligible expression—

**Same Student:** That fits well with another idea, which is that we love people because of what they are—

**LS:** All right, think of love if you don't like Mr. Klein's example of slapping the face [laughter], because he could have as well said he embraces you, of course. Yes, or hugs everyone, and he in no way intends to do that, but—

**Same Student:** Ah, ah, I see what you mean.

**LS:** So you like that better! It's easier. [Laughter] Well, that shows something of you which it was not your intention to show.

**Same Student:** That's true. [Laughter]

**LS:** Okay. Yes?

**Another Student:** . . . action is unintentional in a way . . . In using the word "moral," should we not be "extramoral," not "amoral," but "beyond moral?" We don't know—

**LS:** Well, if it is something beyond the Alps, then it is trans-Alpine, on the other side of the mountain, ultra-mountain. In the same way, what is beyond, what is outside of morality is beyond morality. Beyond good and evil.

**Same Student:** . . . We cannot judge what he means by these things, it is not clear. But what is clear is one thing, that the premoral can be called premoral . . . But this is after this.

**LS:** But Nietzsche has good reasons for calling it extramoral, as you will see from the next aphorism. But apart from the next aphorism, think only of the book title, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche wants to show the necessity of going beyond good and evil, and since good and evil are the fundamental distinctions of all reigning morality, it is good, rhetorically wise to say that he goes beyond morality, that he is an immoralist, as he occasionally says too. That doesn't mean that he is a criminal, or that he is bestial or a monster, but a questioning of the whole of the usual morality, even on such high levels as, say, Kantian morality.

I suggest that we read the next aphorism and then it will become a bit clearer.

**Reader:**

There is no other way: the feelings of devotion, self-sacrifice for one's neighbor, the whole morality of self-denial must be questioned mercilessly and taken to court—no less than the aesthetics of "contemplation devoid of all interest" which is used today as a seductive guise for the emasculation of art, to give it a good conscience. There is too much charm and sugar in these feelings of "for others," "*not* for myself," for us not to need to become doubly suspicious at this point and to ask: "are these not perhaps—*seductions?*"

That they *please*—those who have them and those who enjoy their fruits, and also the mere spectator—this does not yet constitute an argument in their *favor* but rather invites caution. So let us be cautious. (*BGE*, 33)

**LS:** That is of course again a reminder of the "let us be cautious, let us be unphilosophic," which occurred in the first chapter. So the morality to be questioned, which he called intention morality in the preceding paragraph, he calls now altruism,

although he doesn't use that word. The reigning morality. And Nietzsche, you can say, speaks in favor of egoism; but again, it all depends [on] what kind of ego. Yes?

**Student:** When he speaks of the charm and sugar in the feelings, it seems to me that Nietzsche could condone the effects of altruism, but the focusing on the people's reasons for it. In other words, he could say that the effects of acting in this way towards other people are good effects, and yet a person supposing that his reason for doing it is not the complete reason. Is that possible?

**LS:** No, I believe he simply means that one must mercilessly, as he says, question the whole morality of self-denial. Of self, and also, how shall I translate it?

**Another Student:** "Self-renunciation?"

**LS:** Ya, something [like that], ya.

**Student:** I suppose what makes me ask that is the "too much charm and sugar"—

**LS:** "Charm" is perhaps not the proper translation. "Witching," "something witching and sugar."

**Same Student:** In other words, we are attracted to these views because they seem nice?

**LS:** Yes, to many people, but not to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is rather disgusted by it, just as he is with a parallel phenomenon in aesthetics called disinterested contemplation. He has a long discussion of that subject in "What is the Significance of Aesthetic Ideals?" in the *Genealogy of Morals*, where he questions that Kantian and pre-Kantian view of the beautiful, and he opposes there Stendhal's definition of the beautiful: not what pleases, is pleasing in disinterested beholding, but what promises happiness.<sup>iii</sup> Art as a stimulant rather than as a sedative. A parallel example in morals is the morality of altruism as opposed to morality of the right kind of egoism.

**Same Student:** I'm still not quite clear. Is he particularly against the effects of altruism or the rationale of altruism?

**LS:** Well, the effects to a certain extent are all right, but that is not the key point. It concerns the principle, and the principle means what extends to everything.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** It is not that there are quite a few altruistic actions of which every sensible man, and therefore also Nietzsche of course would approve, but he would question his own altruism in it. He would say there is a lot of indifference, there is a lot of convenience, and other things which are not truly love of neighbor.

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<sup>iii</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Now the next aphorism is in a way the most important of this chapter. It is the central aphorism of it. Now let us read it. In this aphorism, Nietzsche returns to the overall subject of chapter 1, which he seems to have lost sight of, but now he seems to continue the harmonization effected in the first paragraph of this chapter. Now let us read it.

**Reader:**

Whatever philosophical standpoint one may adopt today, from every point of view the *erroneousness* of the world in which we think we live is the surest and firmest fact that we can lay eyes on: we find reasons upon reasons for it which would like to lure us to hypotheses concerning a deceptive principle in “the essence of things.” But whoever holds our thinking itself, “the spirit,” in other words—

**LS:** The “mind,” I would say. It is hard to translate.

**Reader:**

“the mind,” in other words, responsible for the falseness of the world—an honorable way out which is chosen by every conscious or unconscious *advocatus dei*—whoever takes this world, along with space, time, form, movement, to be falsely *inferred*—anyone like that would at least have ample reason to learn to be suspicious at long last of all thinking. Wouldn’t thinking have put over on us the biggest hoax yet? And what warrant would there be that it would not continue to do what it has always done?

In all seriousness: the innocence of our thinkers is somehow touching and evokes reverence, when today they still step before consciousness with the request that it should please give them *honest* answers —

**LS:** “Honest answers,” underlined.<sup>iv</sup> Yes?

**Reader:**

for example, whether it is “real”—

**LS:** Whether the consciousness is real, yes?

**Reader:**

and why it so resolutely keeps the external world at a distance, and other questions of that kind. The faith in “immediate certainties” is a *moral* naïveté—

**LS:** He also underlines “moral.” Ya? It is a moral naïveté.

**Reader:**

that reflects honor on us philosophers; but—after all we should not be “*merely* moral” men. Apart from morality, this faith is a stupidity that reflects little honor on us. In bourgeois life ever-present suspicion may be considered a sign of “bad character” and hence belong among other things imprudent; here, among us, beyond the bourgeois world

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<sup>iv</sup> Strauss points out the emphasis placed on “honest” in the line just read.

and its Yes and No—what should prevent us from being imprudent and saying: a philosopher has nothing less than a *right* to “bad character”— (*BGE*, 34)

**LS:** “Eventually,” rather. That’s not the best translation. “After all what has happened, the philosopher has a right to a bad character.” Ya?

**Reader:**

as the being who has so far always been fooled best on earth; he has a *duty* to suspicion today, to squint maliciously out of every abyss of suspicion.

Forgive me the joke of this gloomy grimace and trope; for I myself have learned long ago to think differently, to estimate differently with regard to deceiving and being deceived, and I keep in reserve at least a couple of jostles for the blind rage with which the philosophers resist being deceived. *Why not?* It is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than mere appearance; it is even the worst proved assumption there is in the world. Let at least this much be admitted: there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances; and if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and clumsiness of some philosophers, one wanted to abolish the “apparent world” altogether—well, supposing *you* could do that, at least nothing would be left of your “truth” either. Indeed, what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of “true” and “false”? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance—different “values,” to use the language of painters? Why couldn’t the world *that concerns us*—

**LS:** “That concerns us” is underlined.

**Reader:**

be a fiction? And if somebody asked, “but to a fiction there surely belongs an author?”—couldn’t one answer simply: *why?* Doesn’t this “belongs” perhaps belong to the fiction, too? Is it not permitted to be a bit ironical about the subject no less than the predicate and object? Shouldn’t philosophers be permitted to rise above faith in grammar? All due respect for governesses—but hasn’t the time come for philosophy to renounce the faith of governesses? (*BGE*, 34)

**LS:** <sup>v</sup>The key sentence is this sentence which Nietzsche partly underlines: “The world *which is of concern to us*.” This is the fictitious world. It is fictitious because it is anthropocentric. But is the true world of which people spoke, however the true world be understood, not also fictitious: an interpretation, anthropocentric, as he indicated when he spoke of Boscovich and Copernicus and modern physics in aphorism 14? There is a passage which Nietzsche himself did not publish, which was found among his papers after his death, and which states in the clearest form the thought which he has in mind. In Kaufmann’s translation of the *Zarathustra*, it is on page 485. It is of course not a part of the *Zarathustra*. The title is *How the “quote True World unquote” Finally Became a Fable: “The History of an Error.”*<sup>vi</sup>

<sup>v</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

<sup>vi</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

**LS:**

[First—LS]: The true world—attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, *he is it*.

(The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, and persuasive. A circumlocution for the sentence, “I, Plato, *am* the truth.”)

[Second stage—LS]: The true world—unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”).

(Progress of the idea: It becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible—*it becomes female*, it becomes Christian.)

[Thirdly—LS]: The true world—unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative.

(At bottom, the old sun, but seen through mist and skepticism. The idea has become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian.) [Königsberg was the birthplace of Kant.—LS].

[Fourth—LS], The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?

(Gray morning. The first yawn of reason. The cockcrow of positivism.)

5. The “true” world—an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—*consequently*, a refuted idea: let us abolish it!

(Bright day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness; Plato’s embarrassed blush; pandemonium of all free spirits.)

6. The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one*.

(Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)<sup>vii</sup> [Zarathustra begins.—LS]

**LS:** The point which we have to consider is especially at the end. If we have abolished the true world, we have abolished also the apparent world. In other words, the apparent world and no other is the true world: there is only one world. The anthropocentric world is the true world. Its relativity to man is no objection. There is no beyond, no without. The text, as Nietzsche called it in the first chapter in contradistinction to the interpretation, the text is wholly unattainable. We can also say perhaps nature, in the sense in which he used it in the paragraph on Stoics, is unattainable. But nature as text is in a way accessible. Remember what he said about Copernicus and Boscovich: the break, the evidently necessary break with anthropocentrism. There’s a difference.

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<sup>vii</sup> Strauss reads *How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), 485-86. Strauss indicates the quotation marks and parentheses as he reads.

Now the anthropocentric world is fictitious. Who or what is responsible for that fiction? Nietzsche says apparently the question is *mal posé*, is badly put. But as the subjunctives and the “perhaps” there show, the question is legitimate. Nietzsche’s answer [to the question] “Who or what is responsible for the world which is of concern to us, for the anthropocentric world?” is,<sup>2</sup> as we know, the will to power. The will to power is the cause, and the world is its effect. But as Nietzsche says at the end of aphorism 36, as we shall see, the world *is* the will to power, not the effect of it. The world is the producing, the self-producing and self-reproducing of the will to power. There is here a difficulty which one may doubt whether it has ever been cleared up by Nietzsche. It is this: the true world, that is to say, the text in contradistinction to the interpretation, the nonanthropocentric world, the world as it is in itself, nature; on the other hand, the true world is the anthropocentric world, and it is by virtue of interpretation, of human creation.

This underlined or italicized relative clause, “*which is of any concern to us.*” The distinction between the world which is of no concern to us, the world of physics, except in a very derivative way because it leads to technology and so on—but the world in which we live is fictitious, but it is the only world. We have seen that Nietzsche questioned the truth of the true world, and in particular of the true world of physics. If I am not mistaken, that is the root of the difficulty. We will come later on across a passage where Nietzsche speaks of nature with some emphasis, and where he uses nature all the time in quotation marks. Only at the end of that aphorism does he use nature without quotation marks. What has happened? I believe that is the fundamental question for Nietzsche, that Nietzsche needs nature and cannot assert it. And we must see whether we can understand him from this point here. Yes?

**Student:** . . . from a moral standpoint . . .

**LS:** Yes, that Nietzsche would grant, but everything proceeds from a moral endeavor because everything, at least everything human, is an expression of will to power. A certain will to power is effective in physics, as it is effective in various forms of art and so. This is not difficult, I believe.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Now that was for me a very long sentence.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ultimately, yes, but not immediately. And if you think of the following point, which I have referred to *ad nauseum*: the Kantian sentence, the human understanding which prescribes nature its laws, which can easily be translated into a Nietzschean term [as] an act of the will to power. But Kant understood here by the “natural laws” modern physics, as everyone admits. Now as humans, that there are other possibilities of physics, and one does not have to think merely of post-Newtonian physics, would not the same apply to them too, that they also are interpretations of the world?

In the moment that the simple and final truth of physics is questioned, you get a variety of “quote interpretations.” Does not the same physics look different if understood by a materialist, say, people like Comte and . . . and as understood by Kant? Are these not different interpretations of the same physics?

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** As long as people generally believed that what happened in the seventeenth century was a clear, clean-cut progress of knowledge, that Aristotle himself, living in the seventeenth century, would have to swallow the modern physics hook, line, and sinker—because, in other words, no question of principle is raised. If this is true, clear and fine. But is it true? Were the principles of knowledge, of what is understood by knowledge, of what is understood by raising a question and answering it—has this not been changed? And if that is so, is it not at least permitted to raise the question whether the change from one kind of physics, the Aristotelian physics, to modern physics is not due to a change in, as people call it, *Weltanschauung*? I believe millions of people would say yes today; and when Nietzsche speaks of morality, he is only somewhat more precise. He may be wrong, but it is nevertheless more precise to speak of morality than to speak of *weltanschauung*. I do not know whether I made myself understood.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** I believe Mr. Klein, in his illuminating study of the genesis of modern algebra, made somewhere the remark—and you can correct me if I misquote—that this radical and new understanding of number, that was connected with deeper changes which you would not enter into.<sup>viii</sup> (Did you not say something to that effect?) If this is so, if there are deeper changes than the strictly intrascientific changes, then it is a hypothesis to call this deeper change a moral change. Nietzsche does not seriously assert moral[ity]. I mean, formerly people spoke of *weltanschauung*, literally translated, “worldview,” but it has become a technical term in English as well as in German. And then they changed to “life view,” *lebensanschauung*, and that was already due to Nietzsche, because it was not a matter of viewing the world but the manner in which *man* views himself morally. Mr. . . . ?

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** In other words, the possibility of science is not deducible from the will to power. Is this what you mean?

**Same Student:** . . .<sup>ix</sup>

**LS:** Ya, that makes sense, but from Nietzsche’s point of view the question would still arise: What animates such things as science, as art, and whatever other activities of the mind or the spirit? And I believe that it is a bit unfair to Nietzsche if one would try to

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<sup>viii</sup> Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (1968).

<sup>ix</sup> The student’s comment is lengthy but inaudible.

claim by saying: Show the way from the will to power to modern physics. If what Nietzsche seriously asserts and primarily asserts is that science cannot altogether be understood in its own terms, there is something more fundamental—the whole man—what is he after? Morality. In this respect that is Plato, too, to say that striving for happiness, striving for the good, is a necessary starting point for understanding science.

**Same Student:** . . . both expressions of a kind of will . . .

**LS:** Sure, no he does make the distinction and he has this formula for his whole work: to view science in the perspective of art and art in the perspective of life. He shows a hierarchy.

**Same Student:** It's just hard to know how you could tell what's missing. There is nothing left that you're dealing with.

**LS:** Well, could we not leave it at the time being at the commonsensical fact, admitted by you too, I believe, in your heart of hearts, that, say . . . as a physicist . . . is not a poet.

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** But for Nietzsche that is the same. Man is one particularly interesting, particularly important bundle held together by the will to power.

**Same Student:** But the will to power could mean—I mean, can man evolve in Nietzsche?

**LS:** Sure, sure. But what does evolving mean? If you mean that it means progressing, that is not evident. We will come to the question of the historical process, which is of course crucial for Nietzsche throughout, crucial, and which is ultimately the reason why nature becomes problematical for him. Let us read the next very brief paragraph.

**Reader:**

O Voltaire! O humaneness! O nonsense! There is something about “truth,” about the *search* for truth; and when a human being is too human about it—“*il ne cherche le vrai que pour faire le bien*”—I bet he finds nothing. (*BGE*, 35)

**LS:** That is I believe, apart from the reference to altruism—after he had stated in the preceding aphorism the case for anthropocentrism, Nietzsche reminds us of the danger of anthropocentrism. So that is really I think the subject here. Yes?

**Student:** I got the feeling that when Nietzsche first started talking about man and science, there were a couple of real short statements made; and the discussion sort of develops in another direction, but one of them implied that knowledge might have a currency, that it might also in itself have a certain character, a certain form, and that the development of the new science, that is, the development of a new conscience, might have to be mediated by some kind of understanding of the possibility that the character of

knowledge itself is changing, that is the form . . . What Aristotle knew according to his principles, what Einstein knew according to his principles, they both had . . . but the understanding of knowledge itself is different in Aristotle . . . It seems to me that the world spirit could be understood more or less by an epistemological shift, if you take epistemology to be the study of what is knowable, of what knowledge is.

**LS:** And you assert that what you want is an epistemological shift. That is intelligible by itself. And you presuppose . . .

**Same Student:** Well, no . . .

**LS:** But then the question is: What is that which makes it intelligible?

**Same Student:** Couldn't it be that at a certain period in history, certain people are more herd and certain people are less herd? Certain people are more religious and certain people are less religious?

**LS:** But still, that is not the way in which one can make things stick, if you try.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** It could be, I mean, prior to any sophistication, prior to any thinking about it.

**Same Student:** . . . The simple historical fact, it could not be an accident that certain people were able to . . . and certain people had to . . . could be due to the radical differences between the souls of men.

**LS:** But then it is not mere chance when you speak of nature.

**Same Student:** It's dependent partly on gradation of man, and also partly on an accident of history that the lower was chosen over the higher.

**LS:** But then you of course introduce also another difficult and unknown magnitude called history. I mean, if you say from a certain moment on science changed its character, and after some hesitation the new science proved to be absolutely victorious and reduced the old science to oblivion, this seems to be fact. Of course the first question is: What are the characteristic differences between the two sciences, the old science and the new science? But still, then the question arises: Why this change? And the situation would be extremely simple if modern science were superior to the old science according to the standards of the old science. But that is perhaps not so evident as it seemed to be in the nineteenth century.

**Same Student:** Well, the standards of the old science, by that you mean the understanding that the old science had concerning what kind of things qualified to be known.

**LS:** Ya, that is the questioning of the absoluteness of modern science; that is a great event which is linked in the first place with the name of Nietzsche but which today of course may determine all knowledge. Yes?

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, sure. We have already chosen one without knowing it.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, in a way it very well could be, and probably in most cases is, because we all grow up in a certain interpretation which is obtruded by our parents, teachers, and so on, and it was never a matter of, there was not much choice. We grow into it rather than having chosen it; and then perhaps at a later date we begin to question and we see that we have accepted something which we did not have to accept, and then choice becomes possible. How to proceed in that choice and how to choose wisely is a long question, and Nietzsche has somehow an answer to this question. We must read more until we find that there is not mere arbitrariness—you know, that there are *n* points of view and we are confronted with these *n* points of view, and you pay your money and you make your choice. That is not so, and for Nietzsche—to mention only the main point—for Nietzsche hitherto all philosophies were interpretations, that is to say, acts of the will to power, without the philosophers knowing it. This unconscious, this *naïveté*, condemns all earlier interpretations. And what Nietzsche seems to drive at is this: that that interpretation which is aware, is fully conscious of the fact of interpretation, is the absolute interpretation. That is the will to power. The philosophy of the will to power at the root of all interpretations is the final philosophy, and it includes of course also a moral teaching . . . Dr. Kass?

**Dr. Kass:** On this point, Nietzsche's own definition that . . .

**LS:** Ya, sure, but I thought of that also, that no philosopher has proved right . . . But one must be aware of this, otherwise one may fall into a trap, which, for example, Jaspers did not avoid, namely, in saying there is no philosophy in Nietzsche. Nietzsche questions all convictions, because convictions are . . . and there is nothing, no thesis, which is not questioned somewhere in Nietzsche himself, a point which he [Jaspers] can prove only by disregarding completely the chronological order of Nietzsche's writing. So there is no passage in the mature Nietzsche where he questions the will to power or eternal return, or the superman or overman, however you want to translate it. So there is a teaching in Nietzsche. There is a teaching of Nietzsche but the teaching is supplied by Nietzsche with question marks, as we have seen, and with subjunctives and other devices of the same kind.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, but of course he must say that the will to power in all its implications is the text, the basic text, as he calls it sometimes. That he must say. By the way, as regarding the

“God is dead” thesis, that is sometimes understood as if Nietzsche meant—there are some passages in Nietzsche which support this—that this is an event of, say, the last hundred years or so. Well, that cannot be true, because the biblical God, who Nietzsche says is eternal and is not affected by epochs of unbelief and rebellion and what have you, for Nietzsche the biblical God never lived in the sense in which he was meant to. But in another sense, namely, as something living in man and affecting man, he lived, and that has ceased.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** He was, to put it very crudely, the product of a certain kind of the will to power. That he speaks of later on. What you say is one of the many, the very many objections against Nietzsche.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** But there are varieties of atheism. That is to say, there are varieties of interpretations—or Nietzsche uses the term “nihilism.” There are *n* kinds of nihilism. And this nihilism is a fate of the Western world, and the question is only whether this nihilism is one which can overcome nihilism or one which can never lead man out of nihilism . . . Nietzsche contends that his nihilistic doctrine is a self-overcoming of nihilism and is, in old-fashioned language, the true doctrine.

If I am not mistaken, the time is up.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “no that.”

<sup>2</sup> Added “to” in “Nietzsche’s answer to “who or what is responsible” and deleted Strauss’s repetition of “Nietzsche’s answer.”

### Session 7: December 1, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —but this truth, namely, that the truth is deadly, is not deadly. Then truth is a human creation. But this truth, that truth is a human creation, is not a human creation. At any rate, there seem to be two notions of truth, and this comes out most clearly in what Nietzsche says about text and interpretation. The truth is a text. The truth is an interpretation. To take the most important example, the will to power is a fact, the fundamental fact. The will to power is an interpretation; that is to say, not a text. Another aspect of the duality of truth. In number 34 he spoke of the world of concern to us as fictitious, which means the world in itself is not fictitious. On the other hand, he says earlier, in number 21, in real life there are only strong and weak wills, not free or unfree wills. “In real life”: that means it is not fictitious, as the free and the unfree will are. Yet Nietzsche’s last word is that this dualism of a true and fictitious world has been abolished. With the abolition of the true world, the apparent world as apparent world has also been abolished. There is only one world, the world of concern to us, the anthropocentric world. But can Nietzsche leave it at that? Is there not something wrong with anthropocentrism, with man’s being the measure of all things? There is a reference to this at the end of number 3.

Furthermore, man is surely an earthly being. The *Zarathustra* says, “remain loyal to the earth.” Anthropocentrism would seem to imply geocentricism, but Copernicus. Yet Copernicus’s revolution led to Kant’s Copernican revolution. As you may remember, Kant says that while prior to Copernicus one assumed that the whole army of stars turns around the spectator, Copernicus tried to make the spectator turn around and to leave the stars at rest. The activity is on the side of the spectator according to Copernicus, and surely according to Kant. Kant thus restores, in a way, anthropocentrism. According to Kant the all-comprehensive question is the question, What is man? And yet Kant does not restore nor intend to restore geocentricity. Yet the case of Nietzsche is different, because for Nietzsche the fundamental phenomenon is the human understanding; more generally, the pure consciousness. And Nietzsche replaces the pure consciousness by man in his fullness; whereas the pure consciousness is not obviously related to the earth, man in his fullness surely is.

The world of concern to us—which is the work of a man in his fullness, the anthropocentric world—is nevertheless said by Nietzsche to be fictitious. There is then a true world different from the fictitious world; so Nietzsche did not succeed, it seems, in abolishing the true and apparent world. That abolition seems to be so sensible, to dispose of so many sham provenances. What is the obstacle to that abolition? What makes it so hard to leave it at the one world, the world of concern to us?

In modern times we encounter the distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities: the primary qualities which belong to moved matter as such, and the secondary qualities (color, sound, and so on) which are merely subjective. The primary qualities are

the qualities of the object of science. The secondary qualities are the qualities of the thing as sensibly perceived. So this distinction leads up to the distinction of the world of science and the world of sense perception. Following what Nietzsche suggests regarding physics, one is easily led to say that the world of sense perception is primary and the world of physics derivative. But is the world of sense perception truly primary? What about what we can call the tertiary qualities, the value qualities: pleasant, good, noble, and the various subdivisions of them? Do they not belong as much to the full thing as the primary and secondary qualities? Does not the full thing—for instance, the worn-out shoes of an old peasant woman—belong to the whole life history of the human being or group in question? Is it understood in its fullness if it is not seen as part of the whole world, which is not the world of physics and is not the world of sense perception only?

Now the highest among the value qualities are those of the sacred. Question: Is not the most important quality of a cow for a Hindu its quality of being sacred, or is not the most important quality of a pig for a Jew or a Muslim its quality of being impure? So the one world dissolves into a multiplicity of worlds, of historical worlds, as people say. There is an alternative to that, namely to understand the qualities of the sacred and its opposite as being by virtue of *nomos*—law, convention—and hence as not belonging to the thing itself. The cow is sacred to the Hindus by virtue of their law; it is not a quality inherent in the cow as cow. This understanding presupposes nature because *nomos* is understood in contradistinction to *physis*. History or *physis* seem to be the fundamental alternative, and we must try to find out (not today, but in the course of our reading) how Nietzsche stands in regard to that alternative: nature, history. Under no circumstances is it possible, I think, to maintain one world without qualification.

This much regarding the subject we discussed last time. Now is there any point you would like to raise?

**Student:** . . . whether for Nietzsche . . . the text or the interpretation of both.

**LS:** Ya, that is the question. Just as he said in that paragraph which we read, is the doctrine of the will to power, if this is also only an interpretation is the objection which will be made to him and he says: Well, that's all the better.

**Same Student:** . . . It seems to me that the other has become text for him, the fundamental text.

**LS:** Ya, but the same difficulty is there because the will to power is only a positive expression of what the death of God is a negative expression.

**Same Student:** Yes, but the will to power is only the truth when you look at what a man is, whereas the other seems to be a fundamental fact.

**LS:** The will to power is *the* fundamental fact. The difficulty regarding text and interpretation applies equally to all of this. Yes?

**Another Student:** When you gave your example that said that a cow is sacred, you took one thing which is abstract and one thing which is concrete, and you predicated the concrete on the abstract.

**LS:** What do you mean, what is concrete and what is abstract in this case?

**Same Student:** The cow is abstract.

**Another Student:** A cow is not abstract . . . [Laughter]

**LS:** Did you ever see how a cow is milked?

**Same Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Can you milk an abstract cow? [LS chuckles] That you can say only metaphorically.

**Same Student:** Well, all right. I was thinking that the cow is abstracted from being, and that—

**LS:** That does not make sense. Can you say it without using these apparently misleading terms, “abstract” and “concrete”?

**Same Student:** Okay. If you say the cow is sacred, then you encounter the problem of nature, and you might say that there is a confrontation between nature and *nomos*.

**LS:** As far as I know, as far as I was able to find out by discussing that with a Hindu, they don’t have a word for nature. They don’t have the notion of nature.

**Same Student:** Yes, but it might be interpreted that way by an outsider; for example, a Westerner might have that trouble. But what if you took an expression like “Justice is good,” then you wouldn’t be able to generate a confrontation between nature and *nomos*. You’d either have to say that it was *nomos* or that it was something else, but you couldn’t say that it was *physis*.

**LS:** Perhaps justice is natural; that is not so easy.

**Same Student:** It wouldn’t be *physis* in the same way that a cow would be.

**LS:** Well, who tells you that the cow is the only example of something natural?

**Same Student:** When you say “justice is good,” do you mean by justice—

**LS:** Justice could be good while being conventional.

**Same Student:** Ah.

**LS:** Ya, that doesn't lead us further. Well, since the discussion seems to be exhausted, we will turn to the next number, number 36. Now this is a particularly important aphorism for the following reason: it is devoted to the will to power. Nietzsche had spoken of the will to power in at least four earlier aphorisms: 9 and 13, 22, 23. But there he spoke of it only by way of assertion. He asserted it dogmatically without giving any reasons. Now he stated his principles regarding philosophic reasoning in number 5. We do not have to read the whole of number 5, but somewhere toward the middle of that, where he says they are all advocates (do you have that?) who do not wish to be known as such and in most cases even tricky defenders of their prejudices which they baptize as truth. Do you have that? Go on.

**Reader:**

and *very* far from having the courage of the conscience that admits this, precisely this, to itself; very far from having the good taste of the courage which also lets this be known, whether to warn an enemy or friend, or, from exuberance, to mock itself. (*BGE*, 5)

**LS:** Ya. This is what Nietzsche must show himself, if he is to be taken seriously: that courage or bravery of conscience which admits openly the problematic character of its own assertion. We must see whether Nietzsche lives up to it. What he does in number 36 is a specimen of his intellectual honesty or courage of conscience. Nietzsche does not know more than what he says here. His reasoning is hypothetical, as you see. The question is whether it is undogmatic in spite of its hypothetical character. So let us first read it and then explore it.

**Reader:**

Suppose nothing else were “given” as real except our world of desire and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other “reality” besides the reality of our drives—for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other— (*BGE*, 36)

**LS:** Now let us stop for one moment. The given. The given. Now what is the given? Not, of course, for Nietzsche something like dogs and cats and cows, or tables, the sun and moon and stars, but that out of which our understanding forms dogs, cats, and so on: say, the mere sense data—and that was said by many people before Nietzsche. But perceptions, if we may use that term, are derivative or secondary, as Nietzsche indicated in his critique of Locke at the end of number 20. In different species the different senses have different ranges. So the perceptions depend on the needs, on the urges. So that is the starting point, qualified by a “suppose that.” “Suppose that.” Now go on.

**Reader:**

is it not permitted to make the experiment and to ask the question whether this “given” would—

**LS:** This is stronger in German—I can't translate it into English. And not to raise the question, the verb is from the same root as the noun.<sup>i</sup> Well, all right . . . So you see the

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<sup>i</sup> A student makes an inaudible comment.

very cautious form which he uses: “is it not permitted to make the experiment and to question the question.” Yes?

**Reader:**

not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or “material”) world? I mean, not as a deception, as “mere appearance,” an “idea” (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affect—as a more primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process (and, as is only fair, also becomes tenderer and weaker)—as a kind of instinctive life in which all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism—as a *pre-form* of life.

**LS:** In other words, <sup>1</sup>assuming that the given is the urges as we know them from ourselves and from other living beings, <sup>2</sup>is it not possible to understand the inanimate things as undeveloped animalism, so that we can understand stones or whatever it may be only in terms of urges? That means of course ultimately the will to power. Yes?

**Reader:**

In the end not only is it permitted to make this experiment; the conscience of *method* demands it. Not to assume several kinds of causality until the experiment of making do with a single one has been pushed to its utmost limit (to the point of nonsense, if I may say so)—that has a moral of method which one may not shirk today—it follows “from its definition,” as a mathematician would say.

**LS:** Well, I think you see here the irony in Platonism to which he alluded before at the very beginning. What is sufficient for explanation is the true explanation. This is the principle to which he tacitly refers. And this is what the conscience of method requires. Yes?

**Reader:**

The question is in the end whether we really recognize the will as *efficient*, whether we believe in the causality of the will: if we do—and at bottom our faith in this is nothing less than our faith in causality itself—then we have to make the experiment of positing the causality of the will hypothetically as the only one. “Will,” of course, can affect only “will”—and not “matter” (not “nerves,” for example). (*BGE*, 36)

**LS:** You see that he puts now “will” in quotation marks. Yes?

**Reader:**

In short, one has to risk the hypothesis whether will does not affect will wherever “effects” are recognized—and whether all mechanical occurrences are not, insofar as a force is active in them, will force, effects of will.

Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will—namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment—it is *one* problem—then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as—*will to power*. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its “intelligible character”—it would be “will to power” and nothing else.— (*BGE*, 36)

**LS:** So you see Nietzsche states clearly that he does not know. Suppose one would be compelled—if this notion of method driven up to nonsense is accepted and so on and so on, there is surely a great difference between this kind of assertion and the kind of assertions for which Nietzsche blamed his predecessors, the philosophers.

**Student:** Once you begin to spread the will to power down into the plants and animals, and later on, maybe even into the stones—

**LS:** Yes, surely you must do that.

**Same Student:** Then the word “will” begins to lose its meaning as we understand it when we speak of men, because if a stone can have will to power—and a stone is understood to be a group of molecules or atoms bouncing around against each other—if there can be will to power in that by virtue of some kind of activity, that means that will is not autonomously determined, but somehow a mechanism, it’s something that is essentially in the nature of the atom.

**LS:** But mechanism is surely the wrong word. Nietzsche precisely tries to prevent that. And from the other point of view, if the key to the animate—then the animate must be understood in terms of the inanimate, life in terms of mechanical or other physical things. Ya?

**Same Student:** You have to start understanding the will to power as expressed in a living thing, as being something like the propensity of one chain of amino acids to link up with another one, or something like that.

**LS:** Sure. Nietzsche tries to prevent that and says you must go the other way around. The starting point—in the most important case you cannot understand man in terms of the subhuman. You cannot understand the living in terms of the nonliving. But you can understand, say, animals as not yet human beings, and you have to define them, of course. You can understand the inanimate as not yet animate. Just the opposite: Nietzsche tries to prevent the reduction of the living to the inanimate by his doctrine of the will to power. Whether he succeeds is another matter, but that is the purpose. Will to power, the doctrine surely has this meaning: that the nonliving must be understood in the light of the living, as a pre-form, a prefiguration of the living, and not the other way around.

**Same Student:** I think that that statement could be accepted by both a mechanist and an antimechanist.

**LS:** If he knows what he is doing, it could not.

**Same Student:** I would think that Nietzsche would make a stronger statement and say something like, “The whole thing is a lie” in some sense.

**LS:** He does. Does he not say—how does he put it at the end of this number? The world seen from within—the world seen from within is will to power and nothing else.

**Same Student:** So then there is nothing that is inanimate.

**LS:** Yes, ultimately nothing.

**Same Student:** Okay, then that makes the position here as though nothing were believable.

**LS:** Especially one can say whether the difference between man and beasts is sufficiently provided for. But you remember the passage [with] the first mention of the will to power: philosophy is the most spiritual will to power. So man is then characterized by something called spirituality. And what is the relation between spirituality and the will to power? Nietzsche surely doesn’t wish to say the world seen from within is spirit: that he tries to avoid. You know? But the question is whether he can give a sufficient account of the distinctive character of man in terms of the will to power. That is surely not on the basis of what we have read hitherto. We cannot say that he has succeeded in that.

**Student:** . . . <sup>ii</sup>Do you know to what end he says this?

**LS:** Yes, sure, I believe I know what you are referring to, but I don’t know whether I can give you a satisfactory answer. I can only repeat what I said before. The alternative is the mechanistic explanation or the physicalistic explanation. And if that is open to grave objection, you must understand the inanimate in terms of the animate. Of course this half sentence does not suffice; that goes without saying.

**Same Student:** Freud, in his view of pleasure, makes a difference between . . . and one who comes to . . .

**LS:** But Freud was—I don’t know him, but I heard this or read this somewhere—he was originally a pupil of Ernst Haeckel, if you remember him. Ernst Haeckel was a very famous Darwinist and more precisely, a materialist in Germany around 1900.<sup>iii</sup> Ernst

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<sup>ii</sup> The student’s statement is lengthy and barely audible.

<sup>iii</sup> Only a small part of Haeckel’s large *oeuvre* has been translated into English, e.g., *The History of Creation, or, The Development of the Earth and Its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes: A Popular Exposition of the Doctrine of Evolution in General, and that of Darwin, Goethe and Lamarck in Particular*, trans. revised by E. Ray Lankester (NY: D. Appleton, 1876);

Haeckel. He was world famous, as famous as Lord Russell was in the later day. And so that is not surprising, but that means only that Freud has the opposite intention as Nietzsche has, which also doesn't surprise me. Dr. Graham?

**Dr. Graham:** Am I correct in understanding this aphorism, that he seems to be suggesting that the notion of the causality of the will to power rests on the correctness of the supposition that will to power is the explanation of the whole of the inanimate? The last paragraph of the last section.

**LS:** Now do you mean this passage where it begins, "The question is ultimately whether we recognize the will really as efficient, effective, whether we believe in the causality of will"? And Nietzsche's answer is, as he says here: *We must believe in the causality of will because the belief in the causality of will is identical with our belief in causality.* Let me put it this way. There is a statement of Nietzsche's somewhere which I do not have here, where Nietzsche says all causality rests on the assumption of ends, of *tele*. Now there are no longer any *tele* [according to] <sup>3</sup>Nietzsche, and therefore the place of ends must be taken by the will. So in the causality, that which makes possible causes is will. Now if this is so, then of course all other causality, or so-called mechanical causality, must be understood in terms of causality of will. It follows then that will can affect only will and not, for example, nerves. But he qualifies that by using here "will" in quotation marks, and by this indicating that this is based on the assumption which he has made: we must make the experiment to posit hypothetical will causality as the only causality.

**Dr. Graham:** So when the stone falls to the earth, it is an act of will.

**LS:** Ultimately, yes. Sure. Nietzsche does not show us how, but that is implied.

**Dr. Graham:** The stone becomes a mere bundle of will?

**LS:** Yes, Nietzsche must interpret it [that way]. Nietzsche sees only two alternatives. One is a mechanical explanation; and then he says the living cannot be understood in terms of the nonliving. The other alternative is the spirit, and that has to do with God. And God is dead. So the only way open to him is something like will, or more specifically, will to power.

**Student:** Does that mean that everything that happens, happens on purpose?

**LS:** No, this will is not purposeful. That's the difficulty.

**Same Student:** Then the problem that I raised before is really a problem. The use of the word "will" here is very different from when he used it to talk about man.

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*The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (NY and London: Harper & Brothers, 1902). Haeckel was "pained" by the "unnatural and fatal opposition between science and philosophy" and developed what he called a Monistic Philosophy (*Riddle of the Universe*, preface, vi).

**LS:** That is one reason why he puts here the word “will” into quotation marks.

**Same Student:** Then why not use the word “tendency” instead of “will”? That would get rid of the connotation of purpose. “A tendency to power” or “a propensity for”—

**LS:** Would not something be lost if Nietzsche had spoken of “tendency,” of “propensity to power” as distinguished from will to power? Some X—

**Same Student:** The staging, the drama, the histrionic—

**LS:** Yes, if you call it that way, but the evocative would be something more. Well, ultimately of course the starting point of Nietzsche is man and his thinking about man. And his thinking about man leads him to the doctrine of the will to power. And then the question is: How does man stand in the whole? Does he have nothing whatever in common with other beings? Is his manner of being so totally different from that of everything else that we can say man is characterized by the will to power and other beings by something entirely different? Is man not, to use a well-known expression used by Nietzsche himself, is man not also a natural being in the way in which all other natural beings are natural? Must we therefore not find one formula comprising man as well as nonman?

**Same Student:** No, because man does things on purpose and other things don’t. So we might say that everything else has a propensity to power, but man has a will to power. But it would be wrong to say that everything has a will to power because will implies purpose—

**LS:** But we would have to read his aphorism on will, on the complicated character of the will, and also what we discussed last time: are purposes or intentions the complete account of will. And do we not—is this perhaps not our most profound will which does not take on the form of an intention?

**Same Student:** Oh, that’s right, the unintentional thing is the most important.

**LS:** It could be. [LS laughs. Laughter] Remember, you were almost slapped. [Laughter]

**Same Student:** I remember.

**Another Student:** You said in the first class that Aristotle didn’t exist for Nietzsche, but in the last paragraph here I see allusions to Aristotle, or at least similarities to him in terms of language, but it could be the translation. I am just wondering if you thought it was possible that he paid some attention to Aristotle.

**LS:** Sure, in a very general way. A man who was a classical scholar and wrote on the pre-Socratics must have read Aristotle. But how important Aristotle as Aristotle was for his philosophic reflections, that’s an entirely different question. I think that he was very unimportant. No, a very simple thing—he speaks of Plato and Epicurus very frequently.

They occupied his mind. There is no trace, as far as I remember, of Aristotle having occupied his mind.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** A very good question, and an absolutely necessary question. Still, the world points in a certain direction, and there was one passage at least where Nietzsche made this clear, that will to power replaces the will to life, of which people spoke so much, especially in the time of Darwinism. So what every living thing is after is not merely self-preservation, or maybe the preservation of its species, but also overcoming other species—or other individuals of the same species; that depends. That’s a minimum.

Now the other reasons which induced Nietzsche to assert the will to power are taken from a seemingly very different world. I believe I mentioned that, when Kant says it is the understanding which prescribes nature its laws. It is the understanding which imposes its laws on nature. Then we are on our way to Nietzsche. It is the will to power which organizes the sense data that form an intelligible whole, to say nothing of the moral phenomenon of self-overcoming, transcending oneself, which is of course always implied by Nietzsche. But he is concerned with a formula which is all comprehensive and not only applicable to man, because otherwise the world, the whole would fall into, would disintegrate into two parts which have nothing in common.

**Same Student:** . . . will to power as desire to explain the order of . . .

**LS:** Sure, that is what Nietzsche is compelled to—

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Sure, but on the other hand Nietzsche’s assertion is not as sweeping, as you see from the many “supposing” and the many subjunctives and so on.

So this is in a way the only aphorism which gives some reasoning for [what is] underlying the doctrine of the will to power. So this is of major importance for the book. Read again the end of number 36 and then number 37.<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** —Read in plain English.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** It is not so simple, not so simple. What he says here, I believe, is rather that the doctrine of the will to power is rather a vindication of God, not of the devil. Sure, that is popular language, but still the divinity of the whole is proven for Nietzsche by the will-to-power character of the will.

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<sup>iv</sup> There is a break in the tape at this point.

**Student:** It seems that the only kind of god that would be acceptable having taken this turn is a kind of pantheistic god, not a god of—

**LS:** Let us wait until we come to the chapter on religion and on gods. Before, we cannot tell. It is here only an indication. It is not as a diabolical doctrine, but rather the opposite. In other words, the truth—if the will to power is a truth—is edifying rather than its opposite.

**Same Student:** That does not jibe with what he said before about the truth.

**LS:** Ya, but have we not observed that Nietzsche says contradictory things about the truth? We must follow these two paths, each one to its end, and see where we come to. It's a simple thing: truth is deadly but this truth, namely, that truth is deadly, is not deadly.

**Same Student:** Yeah, I saw that, but he says at some point that the greatness of a man can be told by how much truth he can stand.

**LS:** Ya, sure.

**Same Student:** But if truth is edifying, I would think—

**LS:** Edifying, but not, say, for a crybaby. That would not be sufficient. But for someone who can bear the terrible character of reality.

**Same Student:** In other words, it is only edifying for a certain kind of people.

**LS:** Ya, ya, that Nietzsche would say, I think. By the way, quite a few truths regarding, say, eternal damnation, that is in one way an edifying doctrine, but for some people it is not edifying at all. Those who are presumably condemned are not edified by it, but you wouldn't take their objections seriously if you believed in eternal damnation of the wicked.

**Same Student:** I guess, then, that kind of gets rid of the idea that there is something that is simply edifying and something else that is simply not. It's sort of moving away from the constant and more toward the listener.

**LS:** Well, I suppose you always have to ask, Whom does it edify? If you say, of course, men and not dogs, then you will soon find out it is not edifying for all men. I mean, if the truth demands sacrifice, as it presumably does, then its edifying character depends on the willingness to bring to sacrifice.

**Same Student:** And who is getting sacrificed.

**LS:** What do you mean, "who is getting sacrificed"?

**Same Student:** Well, this might be edifying to someone who is strong and intelligent, but—

**LS:** Do you mean something like what they pay to priests or other people?

**Same Student:** No, who's getting sacrificed, is what I am saying. I mean—

**LS:** Well, if someone's sacrificing—

**Same Student:** But this wouldn't be edifying to someone who felt they were going to get sacrificed because of this, or felt that if this were true then they would drop by the wayside as a kind of eddy in the great stream of will to power. No one like that would be edified by reading this.

**LS:** No. We come to that later. But surely this much is clear: if something is said to be edifying, it does not necessarily mean that everyone will be edified by that. Now let's read the next one.

**Reader:**

What happened most recently in the broad daylight of modern times in the case of the French Revolution—that gruesome farce which, considered closely, was quite superfluous, though noble and enthusiastic spectators from all over Europe contemplated it from a distance and interpreted it according to their own indignations and enthusiasms for so long, and so passionately, that *the text finally disappeared under the interpretation*—could happen once more as a noble posterity might misunderstand the whole past and in that way alone make it tolerable to look at.

Or rather: isn't this what has happened even now? haven't we ourselves been this "noble posterity"? And isn't now precisely the moment when, insofar as we comprehend this, it is all over? (*BGE*, 38)

**LS:** Yes, that is said almost immediately after the aphorism on the will to power, and also on this corollary about the devil, which we must not forget. Now what does he mean by that? You note of course that he speaks again here of text and interpretation. So we can safely say that the text is the will to power. But does it mean from now on there can no longer be interpretations as distinguished from text, or what? What did the people do with the French Revolution according to Nietzsche?

**Student:** They made it tolerable to look at.

**LS:** I don't believe that this is what Nietzsche means. How was it in itself? It was a gruesome and fundamentally superfluous farce. And they made out of it a grand spectacle. They made it attractive. They made it brilliant.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** There is a simple word which one can use in order to indicate what Nietzsche means: they idealized the French Revolution. And I think we must bring this together with what we just saw or read about the will to power. The idealizing interpretations, they are no longer possible.

**Student:** But aren't they also an expression of the will to power?

**LS:** Oh, there are various kinds. There are strong and weak wills, as we know. There are healthy and diseased wills.

**Same Student:** But they are all will to power.

**LS:** But who said that will to power is identical with being good? Nietzsche never says that.

**Same Student:** Well, mightn't it be the case that the French Revolution, although it was superfluous, created waves and waves of passionate indignation, interpretation, and enthusiasm, and those waves of thinking weren't superfluous? They might have had some—

**LS:** Well, Nietzsche may be entirely wrong with his discussion on the French Revolution, but that is not the matter here. We must see what we can learn from this aphorism about Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power. Previously, in the preceding aphorism it appeared that in a way the will to power doctrine is a vindication of God—speaking popularly. Ya? Edifying, as I ventured to say. And now we learn [that] idealizing interpretations are impossible. So this can be maintained only if there is a radical difference, that is to say, an opposition between edifying and idealizing. Does this make sense?

**Same Student:** If the idealizing can never be edifying, then it does make sense.

**LS:** The distinction would be possible even if there were some cases in which the idealizing was possible.

**Same Student:** If the idealizing that followed the French Revolution was edifying, then—

**LS:** No, it was not edifying.

**Same Student:** Yeah, for Nietzsche. But if in fact it was—

**LS:** Well, you suppose the opposite of what Nietzsche has said.

**Same Student:** I present the possibility that he might be wrong.

**LS:** Sure, we have to study the French Revolution.

**Same Student:** But idealizing doesn't always have to be the way that he says it is.

**LS:** But what is Nietzsche's point? Idealizing, that is out. Nietzsche sometimes uses the word "ideal" with real horror. That also needs a long interpretation, but does it make sense to say the truth, the doctrine of the will to power, is edifying but not idealizing? Nietzsche would say that the traditional views of the world are idealizations [and] that they did not bring out sufficiently the power of the terrible and evil . . . You see there are some words which you hear every day in the daily paper, words which Nietzsche uses from time to time. There was a thing called "optimism." That does not mean the same as when you say that President Nixon is optimistic regarding the results of the SALT negotiations.<sup>v</sup> Optimism means this world is the best of all possible worlds. Ya? With all the misery in it, is necessary to make it the best of all possible worlds. But taken abstractly, if I may use your term, it means the world is the best possible world and can be misunderstood in various ways. And then there came other people in the nineteenth century. Nietzsche's teacher Schopenhauer was the first [of those] who called themselves pessimists. The world is the worst of all possible worlds. You know? That was Nietzsche's starting point, Nietzsche only gives it a much more profound explanation. And Nietzsche deepens that and this leads him into what he calls nihilism. So pessimism is only a prefiguration of nihilism. But what Nietzsche comes to finally is an overcoming of nihilism, and the important part of that overcoming is the doctrine of the will to power. So all the terror of life is fully recognized as terror, all the evil as impossible to abolish. Yes?

**Student:** Where would you put *Les Fleur du mal*?

**LS:** I do not—

**Same Student:** Would you think that Hugo is an example of someone who is edifying? Baudelaire is an example of someone who is—<sup>vi</sup>

**LS:** I do not know Baudelaire enough to answer your question. So at any rate Nietzsche is concerned with a nonidealizing interpretation, and from his point of view practically the whole past was idealizing. Ya? But the nonidealized view of the world is rightly understood, maturely understood, edifying. In Schopenhauer's pessimism, that was not meant to be idealizing, but it was also explicitly said to be not edifying. That was pessimism.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** There is no providence, sure. Providence is from his point of view an idealizing dogma.

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<sup>v</sup> Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreements (SALT I and SALT II). Negotiations between the former Soviet Union and the United States took place from 1969-1972 to implement the second phase of the arms limitation treaty.

<sup>vi</sup> Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), both prominent French writers.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Sure, sure.

**Another Student:** Someone said earlier that if what people ultimately are bundles of will to power, and what will to power wants to do is overcome itself, isn't there something else there besides will to power? Isn't there some drama of self? I don't understand how it would overcome itself if it didn't know itself.

**LS:** Now if one is dissatisfied and doesn't know why, but one is definitely dissatisfied and rebels against the established, the given, how important is here the knowledge? There will be some knowledge, and Nietzsche never denied that. But is knowledge the whole story of that overcoming?

**Same Student:** But is there knowledge of this satisfaction, is there understanding—

**LS:** Sure, sure.

**Same Student:** Well, what is it that does that? I have a hard time understanding how the will is not only a will to overcoming, but is somehow aware of its will to overcoming at the same time.

**LS:** That cannot be universally true because then animals other than man would not have will to power—I mean beings without this kind of self-awareness of which human beings are in principle capable.

**Same Student:** I just don't understand how it is processed and also looks upon itself—of will to power. It seems to describe and it also seems to be an understanding.

**LS:** Nietzsche had spoken of that in the analysis of will in the first chapter when he said that thinking belongs essentially to it, and he meant here of course especially the human will. There is affect, there is thinking, there is feeling; they all are united in the act of willing.

**Another Student:** How do you reconcile that with what you said to me earlier—the unconscious aspect of the will is most important?

**LS:** Because the affect and the feeling are something different from the thinking. And above all, even if all three are fully conscious, they may be driven by something of which they are unaware.

**Same Student:** But then thinking, as far as it goes, is superfluous to the manifestation or the efficiency of the will.

**LS:** On the lower level, sure, on the subhuman level, thinking in any precise sense will be absent.

**Same Student:** But even on the human level, it is not the thinking of the person about their will to power and what they are now and how they are going to overcome—that's irrelevant.

**LS:** Who thinks about the will to power prior to Nietzsche? No one. So a man like Bismarck, who one could without hesitation call a man filled with the will to power: but did he know that he had a will to power?

**Same Student:** But he was a thinking man.

**LS:** Ya, sure—

**Student:** Although he might not have known that.

**LS:** Ah, if that is correct, then Bismarck saw clearly that he is the man to solve Prussia's problem. And then, as matters stood, that meant also [that he could solve] the German problem. That he knew, and therefore he had to do all kinds of things in order to remain the prime minister to the king of Prussia. That he knew. The will to power—he probably also knew that he was a very ambitious man.

**Same Student:** Then his consciousness would somehow be important. It would be a manifestation—

**LS:** Sure, Nietzsche would admit that.

**Same Student:** But didn't you say that the unconscious acts are the most important?

**LS:** But the unconscious is—

**Same Student:** It is what we do unconsciously that is really significant?

**LS:** Ya, sure. That would need an investigation of, say, Bismarck in this case, of the things of which he was unaware and which made him do or abstain from doing whatever he did or abstained from doing.

**Same Student:** I see that there's a problem there, but I don't quite know—

**LS:** Let us wait until we come to an example which is clear. The French Revolution: Kant had said that the French Revolution, or rather, the reaction of educated Germans or Dutchmen or Italians to the French Revolution, is a proof of the basic goodness in man. Because the Dutch, the Germans, the Italians did not have anything to gain from the French Revolution, but merely the aspect of other people acting so gloriously, so courageously, this fascinated them, made them admire [the French]. What does Nietzsche

say to that? Nietzsche only says that's the proof of Kant's gross naïveté. Because even without Nietzsche one could know that these people, the members of the German and so on middle class knew that what happened in France was their business too, even if there would be no direct political consequence in Germany. Ya? Is Nietzsche not right against Kant on this point?

**Same Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Good. So could there not be all kinds of things going on in Bismarck? Bismarck was not a naive man—I mean, he never said such a thing as that, but in other things. To take something that I regard as wholly undesirable or unsavory, or what have you: Bismarck was married and he had children, and that was apparently a very happy marriage. Perhaps Freud, if he had investigated Bismarck, would have found out certain things about Bismarck's political inclinations which had to do with his marriage. You know they do this kind of thing. So that would be something of which Bismarck was unaware, perhaps. I can't now find a better example . . .

**Same Student:** Let me ask a very sort of basic question. Do unconscious things have sometimes the character of necessity with respect to the individual? I mean, we talk about the reaction of Bismarck to the French Revolution; the French Revolution is not something that is a part of his . . . conscience that would make it happen that in some way he was called upon to react to it, and that reaction might be the most important thing. But in the second book of the *Memorabilia*, Socrates talks about necessity—there's a discussion of Socrates and necessity, and he mentions that sometimes the most pleasant things are the necessary ones; for example, it's necessary who your parents are and who . . . But isn't there a connection between what we are now talking about with respect to consciousness—those things which are consciously done and those things which happen unconsciously too which might be the most important thing—and Socrates's understanding of those things which are necessary and may be the most important and pleasant things in your life?

**LS:** Your question is too long for me to answer now. So I suggest that we wait until we come to something where we know both the facts sufficiently and can therefore argue. And by the way, I think we must also never forget that we are reading *Beyond Good and Evil*, and now the second chapter; and the purpose of this second chapter is to make clear to us what is the philosopher of the future. And<sup>4</sup> we cannot take up anything which is touched upon on that occasion and make it the center of discussion. So I suggest that we go on and read the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

Nobody is very likely to consider a doctrine true merely because it makes people happy or virtuous—except perhaps the lovely “idealists” who become effusive about the good, the true, and the beautiful and allow all kinds of motley, clumsy, and benevolent desiderata to swim around in utter confusion in their pond. Happiness and virtue are no arguments.

**LS:** This is directed against the idealists who are also responsible for the idealizing interpretations of phenomena like the French Revolution. So happiness and virtue are no arguments.

**Reader:**

But people like to forget—even sober spirits—that making unhappy and evil are no counterarguments. Something might be true while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree. Indeed, it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish, in which case the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the “truth” one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified. (*BGE*, 39)

**LS:** There is something remarkable—happiness and virtue are no arguments, and then Nietzsche does not discuss the other possibility, more generally, that the attractive character of something is no argument that it is so. Ya? The other side is not discussed here by Nietzsche, namely, that the terrible character of a doctrine is also no proof of its truth. That is, I think, characteristic, that he does not do that. Yes?

**Reader:**

But there is no doubt at all that the evil and unhappy are more favored when it comes to the discovery of certain *parts* of truth, and that the probability of their success here is greater—not to speak of the evil who are happy, a species the moralists bury in silence. Perhaps hardness and cunning furnish more favorable conditions for the origin of the strong, independent spirit and philosopher than that gentle, fine, conciliatory good-naturedness and art of taking things lightly which people prize, and prize rightly, in a scholar. Assuming first of all that the concept “philosopher” is not restricted to the philosopher who writes books—or makes books of *his* philosophy.

**LS:** That is important for Nietzsche, of course, because it is Nietzsche who is the subject of the second chapter. Nietzsche is not a philosopher who writes books or brings his philosophy into books. So what he brings into books are perhaps pointers to his philosophy, not his philosophy. I think we have mentioned this before when he spoke of masks and other things of this kind.

**Reader:**

A final trait for the image of the free-spirited philosopher is contributed by Stendhal whom, considering German taste, I do not want to fail to stress—for he goes against the German taste. “*Pour être bon philosophe,*” says this last great psychologist, “*il faut être sec, clair, sans illusion. Un banquier, qui a fait fortune, a une partie du caractère requis pour faire des découvertes en philosophie, c’est-à-dire pour voir clair dans ce qui est.*” (*BGE*, 39)

**LS:** So that surely illustrates what Nietzsche means by not idealizing, because a banker who has made a fortune is not usually an idealistic person. Although you never can tell. He may talk that way, but it is not really credible if he talks that way.

And now he continues this thing about writing, philosophers writing books in the next one. Or would you like to discuss this quotation from Stendhal and the implication? Yes, all right.

**Reader:**

Whatever is profound loves masks; what is most profound even hates image and parable. Might not nothing less than the *opposite*— (BGE, 40)

**LS:** Image and likeness—that is a deliberate allusion to the Second Commandment, and that is a point where Nietzsche happens to agree with the Bible.

**Reader:**

Might not nothing less than the *opposite* be the proper disguise for the shame of a god? A questionable question: it would be odd if some mystic had not risked something to that effect in his mind. There are occurrences of such a delicate nature that one does well to cover them up with some rudeness to conceal them; there are actions of love and extravagant generosity after which nothing is more advisable than to take a stick and give any eyewitness a sound trashing: that would muddle his memory. Some know how to muddle and abuse their own memory in order to have their revenge at least against this only witness: shame is inventive.

It is not the worst things that cause the worst shame: there is not only guile behind a mask—there is so much graciousness in cunning. I could imagine that a human being who had to guard something precious and vulnerable might roll through life, rude and round as an old green wine cask with heavy hoops: the refinement of his shame would want it that way.

A man whose sense of shame has some profundity encounters his destinies and delicate decisions, too, on paths which few ever reach and of whose mere existence his closest intimates must not know: his mortal danger is concealed from their eyes, and so is his regained sureness of life. Such a concealed man who instinctively needs speech for silence and for burial in silence and who is inexhaustible in his evasion of communication, *wants* and sees to it that a mask of him roams in his place through the hearts and heads of his friends. And supposing he did not want it, he would still realize some day that in spite of that a mask of him is there—and that this is well. Every profound spirit needs a mask: even more, around every profound spirit a mask is growing continually, owing to the constantly false, namely *shallow*, interpretation of every word, every step, every sign of life he gives.— (BGE, 40)

**LS:** So that, as you see, continues what he said before about why the philosopher as he understands him does not bring his philosophy into books. But it would be interesting to compare that with Socratic or Platonic statements on that same subject. Surely, shame would not occur in the Platonic context. Irony as it was understood by Socrates or Plato had nothing to do with a sense of shame, unless we give the Socratic irony already a modernizing or idealizing interpretation. For Nietzsche, shame plays a very great role,

but not in the sense in which it was used by the ancients, as awe or reverence, *aidos*. He would call this reverence; *Ehrfurcht* in German. When he speaks of shame he has in mind something different from reverence, surely. I believe it is connected with his doctrine of the will to power. I couldn't find at the moment another document for that, except a passage from the *Zarathustra*—if I find it. In the Kaufmann translation, [page] 124, that is in the first part of the *Zarathustra*, the third speech.

“All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape.”<sup>vii</sup>

Now if this is so, then shame must be a most powerful, not to say a preponderant feeling. Our awareness of our pasts, that is to say, of ourselves. So that if the will to power is a fundamental phenomenon, then overcomings, serious overcomings have made anyone what he is if he is of any worth. And this overcoming implies that what is overcome is still in him: shame. I can't do better than that now.

Well, I thought we would finish the reading of the second chapter today, but that won't be possible. Is there anything you would like to bring up? Yes?

**Student:** . . . Is it not also a mask itself?

**LS:** As he indicated, it could be. It could be. To conceal not one's superiority, but one's most delicate possession.

**Same Student:** Well, he claims that shame leads to a mask, leads to a desire to have a mask. But what I meant was, is this, which Nietzsche says is the cause of having masks, namely, shame, is that itself a mask or is it real or . . .

**LS:** I think he distinguishes two things. There is a deliberate maskmaking for reasons of fairy tales, but then there is also the growing of masks, which is not intended but necessary and inevitable. And that is because a profound mind, as he calls it, will necessarily be misunderstood; and therefore there will be a mask. You know? A mask which he has not promoted, which he has not produced, but which grows. The first is one which is made.

Well, then we meet next time.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “is it not possible.”

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<sup>vii</sup> *Zarathustra*, *Zarathustra's Prologue*, 3, *Portable Nietzsche*, 124.

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<sup>2</sup> Deleted “but.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “by.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “these questions which.”

## Session 8: December 8, 1971

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —a few aphorisms of the second chapter, in particular, number 36, which conveys *the* reasoning in support of the doctrine of the will to power. And it leads to the conclusion that the world in itself is will to power and nothing else. In aphorism 34, which is the central aphorism of chapter 2, Nietzsche had spoken of the world of concern to us, which is fictitious. Question: Is the world as will to power identical with the world of concern to us? Or is this not the root of the many difficulties which we had last time, and of many other difficulties, that Nietzsche tries but does not succeed in abolishing the distinction between the true and the apparent or fictitious world? So in this decisive respect we are still in the dark.

Now be this as it may, Nietzsche regards the truth as edifying, but not edifying through being an idealizing interpretation. The truth is terrible, hard to bear, accessible only to strong minds—to some extent even to evil minds. Strong minds are of course beyond good and evil. Hardness and cunning supply perhaps more favorable conditions for the emergence of the strong independent mind and philosopher than the opposite qualities. The philosopher of the future is of course not evil. His cunning has its root not in hardness, hard-heartedness, but in shame, in his delicacy. Up to this point we have read last time, and we should now turn to number 41.

### Reader:

One has to test oneself to see that one is destined for independence and command—and do it at the right time. One should not dodge one's tests, though they may be the most dangerous game one could play and are tests that are taken in the end before no witness or judge but ourselves.

Not to remain stuck to a person—not even the most loved—every person is a prison, also a nook. Not to remain stuck to a fatherland—not even if it suffers most and needs help most—it is less difficult to sever one's heart from a victorious fatherland. Not to remain stuck to some pity—not even for higher men into whose rare torture and helplessness some accident allowed us to look. Not to remain stuck to a science—even if it should lure us with the most precious finds that seem to have been saved up precisely for us. Not to remain stuck to one's own detachment, to that voluptuous remoteness and strangeness of the bird who flees ever higher to see ever more below him—the danger of the flier. Not to remain stuck to our own virtues and become as a whole the victim of some detail in us, such as our hospitality, which is the danger of dangers for superior and rich souls who spend themselves lavishly, almost indifferently, and exaggerate the virtue of generosity into a vice. One must know how *to conserve oneself*: the hardest test of independence. (BGE, 41)

**LS:** He begins here—that is still the free mind: dissembling, independent, commanding, not obeying. And the last sentence: One must know how to preserve oneself, how to

guard oneself, not to lose oneself to something, for this would be loss freedom, of independence, of command. He mentions in particular the fatherland. It is fairly easy not to be stuck to a victorious fatherland, as Germany was in Nietzsche's time, and <sup>1</sup>that is a kind of justification for the anti-German character of very large parts of the present work. I think the context is still clear: the free mind, and the free mind is at least an ingredient of the philosopher of the future if he is not identical with it. Now he takes up the subject of the philosopher of the future explicitly in the next aphorism. Will you read that, please?

**Reader:**

A new species of philosophers is coming up: I venture to baptize them with a name that is not free of danger. As I unriddle them, insofar as they allow themselves to be unriddled—for it belongs to their nature to *want* to remain riddles at some point—these philosophers of the future may have a right—it might also be a wrong—to be called *attempters*. This name itself is in the end a mere attempt and, if you will, a temptation. (*BGE*, 42)

**LS:** In German the pun is much clearer, of course: *Versucher, Versuch, Versuchung*. Now the tempter is the devil; therefore it may be somewhat misleading. But surely they are men of the attempt, of the experiment, and even that is, if one wishes, a temptation. Nietzsche is beckoning to something, some people to something. He speaks now for the first time specifically, explicitly of the new species of the philosophers. The old species discussed in chapter 1 did not have this character. They believed to possess the truth. There was no longer any experimenting, according to Nietzsche's understanding of them. They possessed the truth, and of course they would have been insulted by the suggestion that they were tempters. That is at least implied by Nietzsche. Let us perhaps first complete our reading of this chapter before we discuss it.

**Reader:**

Are these coming philosophers new friends of “truth”? That is probable enough, for all philosophers so far have loved their truths.

**LS:** “Their truths.” Therefore for this reason he puts “truth” simply in quotation marks because naturally the philosophers of the future will also love their truth.

**Reader:**

But they will certainly not be dogmatists. It must offend their pride, also their taste, if their truth is supposed to be a truth for everyman—which has so far been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations. “My judgment is *my* judgment”: no one else is easily entitled to it—that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself.

One must shed the bad taste of wanting to agree with the many.<sup>i</sup> “Good” is no longer good when one's neighbor mouths it. And how should there be a “common good”? The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value. In the end it must be as it is and always has been: great things remain for the great, abysses for the

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<sup>i</sup> Kaufmann has “with many.”

profound, nuances and shudders for the refined, and, in brief, all that is rare for the rare.— (*BGE*, 43)

**LS:** There are here many things of course which remind us of Plato, but there is a very obvious difference. <sup>2</sup>[I do not mean] here what he says about the common good, but what can be common has always little value. Someone, an Englishman<sup>ii</sup> I think, suggests this definition of snobbism: to despise the common merely because it is common. And I think there is something to that. Think of such examples as air and water—especially air, which is very common and by no means despicable. And water, said the Greek poet, is best—also something very common. So there is a certain fine line which Nietzsche may transgress here. Yes?

**Student:** Is the word also in German “vulgar”?

**LS:** Yes, but that is also in other languages. In English “common” can also mean that. Common. “It’s very common.” I think so.

**Same Student:** Is it?

**LS:** That there is no important difference between English and German here you see from his use of the word “*Gemeingut*,” common good. That’s the point where<sup>3</sup> this possibility of snobbism could enter.

Nietzsche somewhere says, and we may read that later on, in the section on “We Scholars,” that the classical scholars are the most educated, “*Gebildet*,” and the most “*Eingebildet*,” which is arrogant, of all scholars. That was so in German. Now in in the present time it would be very different. So that may have something to do with that. Now the next number.

**Reader:**

Need I still say expressly after all this that they, too, will be free, *very* free spirits, these philosophers of the future— (*BGE*, 44).

**LS:** “They too,” that is to say, there are also other free minds who are not the philosophers of the future. Is this not implied, that they too will be free, *very* free minds. Yes?

**Reader:**

though just as certainly they will not be merely free spirits but something more, higher, greater, and thoroughly different that does not want to be misunderstood and mistaken for something else. But saying this I feel an *obligation*—almost as much to them as to ourselves who are their heralds and precursors, we free spirits—to sweep away a stupid old prejudice and misunderstanding about the lot of us: all too long it has clouded the concept “free spirit” like a fog.

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<sup>ii</sup> Strauss might mean William Makepeace Thackeray, who wrote *The Book of Snobs* (1846).

In all the countries of Europe, and in America, too, there now is something that abuses this name: a very narrow, imprisoned, chained type of spirits who want just about the opposite of what accords with our intentions and instincts—not to speak of the fact that regarding the *new* philosophers who are coming up they must assuredly be closed windows and bolted doors. They belong, briefly and sadly, among the *levelers*—these falsely so-called “free spirits”—being eloquent and prolifically scribbling slaves of the democratic taste and its “modern ideas”; they are all human beings without solitude, without their own solitude, clumsy good fellows whom one should not deny either courage or respectable decency—only they are unfree and ridiculously superficial, above all in their basic inclination to find in the forms of the old society as it has existed so far just about the cause of *all* human misery and failure—which is a way of standing truth happily upon her head! What they would like to strive for with all their powers is the universal green-pasture happiness of the herd, with security, lack of danger, comfort, and an easier life for everyone; the two songs and doctrines which they repeat most often are “equality of rights” and “sympathy for all that suffers”—and suffering itself they take for something that must be *abolished*.

We opposite men, having opened our eyes and conscience to the question where and how the plant “man” has so far grown most vigorously to a height—we think that this has happened every time under the opposite conditions, that to this end the dangerousness of his situation must first grow to the point of enormity, his power of invention and simulation (his “spirit”) had to develop under prolonged pressure and constraint into refinement and audacity, his life-will had to be enhanced into an unconditional power-will. We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man, everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species “man” as much as its opposite does. Indeed, we do not even say enough when we say only that much; an at any rate we are at this point, in what we say and keep silent about, at the *other* end from all modern ideology and herd desiderate—as their antipodes perhaps?

Is it any wonder that we “free spirits” are not exactly the most communicative spirits? that we do not want to betray in every particular *from what* a spirit can liberate himself and *to what* he may then be driven? And as for the meaning of the dangerous formula “beyond good and evil,” with which we at least guard against being mistaken for others: we *are* something different from “*librespenseurs*,” “*liberi pensatori*,” “*Freidenker*,” and whatever else these goodly advocates of “modern ideas” like to call themselves.

At home, or at least having been guests, in many countries of the spirit; having escaped again and again from the musty agreeable nooks into which preference and prejudice, youth, origin, the accidents of people and books or even exhaustion from wandering seemed to have banished us; full of malice against the lures of dependence that lie hidden in honors, or money, or offices, or enthusiasms of the sense; grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its “prejudice,” grateful to god, devil, sheep, and worm in us; curious to a vice, investigators to the point of cruelty, with uninhibited fingers for the unfathomable, with teeth and stomachs for the

most indigestible, ready for every feat that requires a sense of acuteness and acute senses, ready for every venture, thanks to an excess of “free will,” with fore- and back-souls into whose ultimate intentions nobody can look so easily, with fore- and backgrounds which no foot is likely to explore to the end; concealed under cloaks of light, conquerors even if we look like heirs and prodigals, arrangers and collectors from morning till late, misers of our riches and our crammed drawers, economical in learning and forgetting, inventive in schemas, occasionally proud of tables of categories, occasionally pedants, occasionally night owls of work even in broad daylight; yes, when it is necessary even scarecrows—and today it is necessary; namely, insofar as we are born, sworn, jealous friends of *solitude*, of our most profound, most midnightly, most middaily solitude: that is the type of man we are, we free spirits! And perhaps *you* have something of this, too, you that are coming? you *new* philosophers?— (*BGE*, 44)

**LS:** Yes. What is then Nietzsche’s relation to the philosophers of the future? He seems to say that he is only a herald and precursor of the philosophers of the future. But the end of this aphorism seems to show that the free minds are perhaps different from the philosophers of the future, perhaps because the free minds are only heralds and precursors of the philosophers of the future. Or simply stated, *the* free mind is Nietzsche, and Nietzsche is not the philosopher of the future. There is perhaps a distinction here, as there was between Nietzsche and Zarathustra in *Zarathustra*.

Now this indescribably eloquent paragraph, there is one point which—I suppose you recognized the phenomenon against which Nietzsche polemicizes without any comment—but there is one point which I would like to stress. Not freedom, as the ordinary free thinkers say, but necessity, compulsion—or to use a famous phrase, not the realm of freedom but the realm of necessity is *the* indispensable condition of human greatness. And that means of course a complete break with the modern ideals as they are and were commonly understood. There is another point which is not clear, I believe. When he speaks, about a page before the end, no wonder that we free minds are not the most communicative minds, that we do not wish to betray in every respect from what a mind has to emancipate itself, and where he is then driven, perhaps? Question: Is this reason for silence the same as the shame spoken of in number 40? It seems to be something different.

By the way, when he<sup>iii</sup> translates “spirit,” does he not say “free spirit?” One can do that, but then one must consider Nietzsche’s interpretation of spirit which he gives here: the power of inventing and dissembling. So it has no spiritual connotations.

**Student:** I have a question about this line a few aphorisms back, I think it’s in 43, when he says “My judgment is my judgment and no one else has a right to it.” In a certain sense, that could almost be said by Socrates, but coming from the mouth of Nietzsche, it sounds like the most misanthropic and selfish thing that a man could say.

**LS:** How do you come to think that this could have been said by Socrates?

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<sup>iii</sup> Kaufmann.

**Same Student:** Well, because of the word “easily.” He says, “my judgment is my judgment, but no one else is easily entitled to it,” and that sounds almost like a Socratic statement.

**LS:** I see, if you put it this way.

**Same Student:** But coming from Nietzsche, that leads me to think that his prejudice against the becoming common of an idea is so strong as to border on the irrational. His attitude toward the select few where even the truth should be kept among them even in this case if his judgment specifies it even to himself, this is a problem—

**LS:** But cannot and will not necessarily a truth become a prejudice if it is broadcast?

**Same Student:** Well, would it be possible for morality—for one man to seek the judgments of another because of—

**LS:** Well of course, if it is a question of stealing silver spoons and similar matters, of course. But these are not the most important moral questions.

**Same Student:** But even concerning the most important moral questions, what can you say when a wise man comes and demonstrates by his example that his understanding is great, and people come and seek his judgment and they follow it as a custom or as a prejudice or whatever you like—

**LS:** No, but will his judgment not be transformed through that process?

**Same Student:** Only if there are intellectuals around. Only in the case of scholars.

**LS:** Well, scholars and intellectuals are two very different kinds of people, I would say. <sup>4</sup>Well-intentioned, solid citizens, will they not necessarily transform the judgment of the wise man regarding the most profound questions?

**Same Student:** Not if he doesn’t give them the grounds for doing that—if he gives his judgment in the most simple possible form.

**LS:** But then it is most easily transformed if it is stated baldly.

**Same Student:** If it is stated simply, though their only real option is to obey or to disobey. They don’t have much of a—

**LS:** But then they need reasons for obedience, and then an argument begins.

**Same Student:** It depends. If they are really struck by his example, that is, if their reasons are really *ex hominum* reasons, then they don’t need to make arguments—they have reasons, but it is not something which has to be argued.

**LS:** The question would be whether these are reasons. Would you like to bring up another point? After all, there are many more things which we have to discuss.

**Another Student:** I'm struck by the fact that what Nietzsche says about what we might roughly call a moral philosopher is what people now or perhaps in Nietzsche's time would be saying about an artist, that is, that an artist would be unwilling to share, that the artists each want to be individual in the same way as Nietzsche is describing a free spirit as wanting that. Is he perhaps thinking of the artist as an analog to the kind of person he's describing?

**LS:** Well, there are artists of various kinds.

**Same Student:** Well, I mean what now I'm afraid is called the "creative artist."

**LS:** But that is so debased a word.

**Same Student:** Yeah, I know.

**LS:** Every six-year-old child in the first grade is supposed to do creative writing, creative painting, and I don't know what. That is the trouble.

**Same Student:** I don't like the word either. But I wonder whether it isn't an accident.

**LS:** But Nietzsche makes a fundamental distinction among artists: the healthy ones and the morbid, decayed ones. And so one would have to consider that distinction.

**Same Student:** But their distinction is in part of being unlike anyone else or refusing to share opinions. Well, the quality of unique that the great composer, for example, is supposed to have would seem to have good deal in common with the person described here.

**LS:** I believe it would even be true of statesmen. Don't you think so? What they call in political science "style." Style. The style, say, of President Nixon is different from that of President Truman. Perhaps it is so difficult because Nietzsche seems to preach, "Be concerned with your individuality." That he does not mean. I mean, what he says is, and he does not address this to all human beings: "Be yourself." Be yourself.

**Same Student:** By insisting.

**LS:** Not quite, otherwise it would not be necessary to say so. Be yourself and be not a slave of other men's opinions. Nietzsche confronted<sup>5</sup> the so-called modern ideas. Nietzsche was compelled perhaps to overstate certain things, that is possible. So in other words, the true individuality in the sense in which you mean it will come out precisely if it is not willed. If someone wishes to have an original style, the best way I believe, [is] never to get it.

**Same Student:** I agree. But on the other hand, there is a kind of nineteenth-century artist—I think Beethoven is the best example. He seems in some way or another, at least in one clichéd view of him, always to be asserting something rather than to be letting things speak through him. And it seems to me that that figure, Beethoven or someone like him, is one ingredient in this.

**LS:** I do not know Beethoven.

**Same Student:** I mean just the notion of the willful creative artist asserting his personality. I am purposefully using words that . . .

**LS:** That is not entirely wrong, because I believe no one did so much to make the word “creative” so popular as Nietzsche has done. But you see what happened—this is partly an answer to what you said. Nietzsche meant something when he spoke of creativity. But then it became accepted; somehow it impressed people. It became accepted and it came even into departments of education, and then into the practice of grade schools and what not. You can draw up a very long list of words which originally had a very high meaning and which have become completely debased within a very short time by virtue of this inclination against which Nietzsche speaks. “Personality” is another example. It meant formerly, of course, a man or woman of stature, and now it means absolutely nothing. Everyone has a personality. Is this not a common term in scientific psychology? I forgot the details which I have once read, but everyone has a personality.

**Same Student:** There is something called personality that means degrees; that some people have lots of personality.

**LS:** That is a link with the older view.

**Another Student:** In the aphorism we just read, when he speaks of the men who are falsely called free spirits, he says that the two doctrines that they founded are equality of rights and the abolishment of suffering, and then he identifies himself with the opposite point of view. I guess he means that those two doctrines must somehow be harmful to men.

**LS:** Sure, he says so.

**Same Student:** Yeah, but early in the first book, we talked about the truth that Nietzsche seems to be concerned with as somehow life-promoting.

**LS:** Ya, sure. But the question is, what does life-promoting mean?

**Same Student:** So these doctrines are dangerous or—

**LS:** Or simply debasing or degrading. There is no doubt about that. I made this quite clear at the very beginning of the course when I said that there is some connection, tenuous but not negligible, between Nietzsche and the violent, passionate, antidemocratic

movement of the twentieth century. There is no doubt about that. Nietzsche did not mean it in the way in which people like Hitler and Mussolini meant it, but through his negations he prepared that. There's no doubt about that.

**Same Student:** I just don't see how sympathy through suffering is contradictory to life promoting.

**LS:** Because sympathy—you referred here to compassion for everything suffering. Ya? What was the formula coined by Albert Schweitzer? “Respect for life.” “Reverence for life,” thank you.<sup>iv</sup> Reverence for life. Now try to act on it. You must become a vegetarian, first, and that even will not do, because are not plants living things? So this doesn't quite work. The world is tougher, too tough for that. So this must be specified very much to make sense. We come later on to Nietzsche's explicit criticism of the morality of compassion. Yes?

**Student:** Nietzsche is very much for suffering because he thinks its integral for a person's development in his life.

**LS:** Yes, he says so. By accident, I found a passage in Plato's *Laws* in which he says that as regards the honoring of the body, most people think that this consists in getting a strong and handsome and especially a healthy body. Ya? This is obviously what we all seem to desire. Then he says neither these qualities nor their opposites are to be desired, but something in between; because if someone is very healthy, very strong, and so on, that leads to arrogance and this kind of thing. The other, the defects, lead to what he calls humility. The true thing would be in the middle, between not only strength and weakness but even between health and sickness. In this respect there seems to be agreement between Nietzsche and Plato. There will be later on an aphorism in which he takes issue with all the anarchist tendencies in modern times and where he develops this theme more fully. And one can really say Nietzsche is *the* opponent of Marx and the people who prepared Marx: there is no possibility or desirability in the realm freedom. Division of labor, which is the ground of all evil—but what does division of labor mean? Compulsion, coercion. There are certain things which you cannot do and are not permitted to do, and not only like murder and so on, but limitation is essential for excellence and not, as Marx said in a famous formula, of the man—how does he put it so nicely?—who milks the cows in the evening and fishes in the morning?

**Student:** And a critical critic at night.

**LS:** Ya. Maybe I did wrong in imputing to him the notion that before the invention of electric light they would milk the cows in the night.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** It covers you. I mean, the mask conceals yourself.

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<sup>iv</sup> See session 5, n. xx.

**Same Student:** . . . In 40, when he speaks about this mask . . . Well, what is the example of . . . what this mask should cover?

**LS:** Well, we find this even among other people, that people are ashamed to benefit others and to be thanked for it. Is this not—

**Same Student:** . . . Nietzsche says, “Wait,” you have to unmask Nietzsche.

**LS:** Ya, if you can.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, but is this not intelligible that a man might be ashamed of his excellences or of his virtuous actions? And he would be embarrassed by praise, by gratitude, and so? You can say—

**Same Student:** Excellence cannot be ashamed of itself.

**LS:** But look at it in practical terms. You have helped someone else, and that someone else overpowers you with gratitude. Would this not be unbearable? Would it not be better to conceal one’s good deed? Well, one must ascend from that. But there is no doubt that the mask, as Nietzsche says, will be there and will conceal the self, the man himself. That is true even of ordinary human beings, but much more so in the case of extraordinary human beings. Yes?

**Another Student:** It seems to me that by that line, if you do something to someone else, you in a way put them under your power. But if you realize that you are under somebody’s power, and you don’t like this because you have a will to power and this is somehow thwarted when someone else overpowers your power, wouldn’t you—if you understood this thwarting aspect of being under someone else’s power, wouldn’t you want to attempt not to have them know that you are under their power? In other words, you wouldn’t want gratitude. First, because it might be overbearing, and second, because it wouldn’t be good for the person that you are doing it for.

**LS:** Well, and the second would be an additional reason for taking a cane and beating up that fellow so that he doesn’t become aware of the fact that he did him a good turn.

**Another Student:** Why does he call man a plant?

**LS:** Very frequently he calls them a beast. That is his common usage: man is a beast—for example, “the beast with red cheeks,” meaning by that the beast which has a sense of shame. But here he wishes to avoid the word “beast,” perhaps because he speaks here of the qualities which would be regarded by kind people as bestial, and therefore he uses the word “plant.” That is my explanation. Yes?

**Another Student:** In this same passage, first of all, the word “man” is used in quotation marks, but in the image of plant in nature he speaks of growing vigorously to height. So, my question is, what is this view of height, and his view is somewhat similar perhaps to other . . .

**LS:** As far as I know, but my knowledge is extremely limited in this matter surely, the term “growth” with all these implications was first used by John Dewey; that is to say, after Nietzsche, if I am not mistaken. I don’t believe that John Stuart Mill speaks of growth in this way. It didn’t strike me [in Mill’s work], but in Dewey it is a key word. The main point which you make, that Nietzsche has something important in common with his enemies, that is clear and will become clearer while we go on. That is surely true.

Now shall we turn to chapter 3? We have already spoken about the title, “*Das religiöse Wesen*” in German, and not “*Das Wesen der religiön.*” The reason being that if you speak of “*Das Wesen der religiön,*” “the essence of religion,” you assume that the most important thing in the variety of religions is something common: the essence. But for Nietzsche the differences between the various religions are much more important.

This chapter has a very clear plan, and I wonder in retrospect whether the preceding chapters also do not have such a clear plan, only I was unable to find it. Or it may be that this is a peculiarity of this chapter. In the first two chapters it seemed that the connection between preceding and following aphorisms was much more associative than based on a plan. The plan, to mention this first, is very simple. First, number 45, the introduction. Then there follow numbers 46 to 52, religion hitherto, which is subdivided as follows: numbers 46 to 48, Christianity; number 49, Greek religion; numbers 50 to 51, Christianity; and number 52, the Old Testament. And then a new section begins in 53 to 57, the religion of the future. 58 to 60, the nobility of religion; 61 to 62, religion as viewed by the philosopher or religion in relation to philosophy. Now let us first read the introductory.

**Reader:**

The human soul and its limits, the range of inner human experiences reached so far, the heights, depths, and distances of these experiences, the whole history of the soul *so far* and its as yet unexhausted possibilities—that is the predestined hunting ground for a born psychologist and lover of the “great hunt.” But how often he has to say to himself in despair: “One hunter! alas, only a single one! and look at this huge forest, this primeval forest!” And then he wishes he had a few hundred helpers and good, well-trained hounds that he could drive into the history of the human soul to round up *his* game. In vain: it is proved to him again and again, thoroughly and bitterly, how helpers and hounds for all the things that excite his curiosity cannot be found. What is wrong with sending scholars into new and dangerous hunting grounds, where courage, sense, and subtlety in every way are required, is that they cease to be of any use precisely where the “*great hunt,*” but also the great danger, begins: precisely there they lose their keen eye and nose.

To figure out and determine, for example, what kind of a history the problem of *science and conscience* has so far had in the soul of *homines religiosi*, one might perhaps have to be as profound, as wounded, as monstrous as Pascal's intellectual conscience was—and then one would still need that vaulting heaven of bright, malicious spirituality that would be capable of surveying from above, arranging, and forcing into formulas this swarm of dangerous and painful experiences.

But who would do me this service? But who would have time to wait for such servants? They obviously grow too rarely; they are so improbable in any age. In the end one has to do everything *oneself* in order to know a few things oneself: that is, one has *a lot* to do.

But a curiosity of my type remains after all the most agreeable of all vices—sorry, I meant to say: the love of truth has its reward in heaven and even on earth.— (BGE, 45)

**LS:** You choose whichever you like of these two explanations. Now this I believe is a perfectly reasonable and perfectly well-argued condemnation of all history of religion. Intellectual history or how you call it if you take this . . . how can this condition be fulfilled? To be a Pascal and to be beyond Pascal at the same time. And the same things would apply to other great men in whatever field. Yes?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Because otherwise you are a religious human being, and not a student of religion.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** In a certain way, yes. That is at least what Nietzsche says. Beyond good and evil. Now you see he begins here, he uses the expression “hitherto,” or however he translates it, and “the history of the human soul”—such expressions all the time. That is in a way the introduction to the consideration of the history of religions, religions hitherto.

The first sentence, when he speaks of the human soul and its limits, reminds of a famous saying of Heraclitus of the limits of the soul, which you could not find out because it has such a deep, such a profound, *logos*. Nietzsche surely thought of that, but Nietzsche's thought is modified by the notion of history. The profundity of the soul is historically variable. Yet despite all change, its potentialities seem to be stable. The whole history of the soul hitherto and the not-yet exhausted possibilities of the soul—these possibilities somehow seem to be there, belong to it. We have heard before that psychology must be recognized again as the mistress of the sciences, but only now does a chapter begin with a remark on the soul. Religion has more obviously to do with the soul than philosophy, speaking from ordinary parlance.

Why does he speak of the need and impossibility of scholarship in the case of religion and not in the case of philosophy? Is philosophy more simple, more vulnerable, than religion, in which the variety of experience is more obvious? He entitled the first chapter “Of the Prejudices of *the* Philosophers.” *The Variety of Religions* is the title of a well-

known work of William James.<sup>v</sup> Is it impossible of farming out, of delegating tasks in the interesting fields of study, and this shows the necessary inferiority of scholarship. Nietzsche will devote a whole chapter later on to the question of the scholars, entitled “We Scholars.”

Now I must make a remark for the understanding of what follows, and in a way for the understanding of the whole work. *Beyond Good and Evil* is primarily addressed to Germans. Nietzsche was not simply a German patriot, as we have seen: “not to remain stuck to a fatherland,” not even if it suffers most and needs help most. It is less difficult to sever one’s heart from a victorious fatherland, as we have seen in number 41. But Nietzsche was of course a German. Hegel had said the philosopher is the son of his time. Nietzsche modified that by speaking of the philosopher as the stepson of his time. That is to say, he is out of step with his time but belongs nevertheless in this way to his time. Something similar applies also to the country. Nietzsche is a stepson of his fatherland, not simply its son.

Now the Germany in which lived Nietzsche most of his time, Germany after 1866, was predominantly Protestant, and the view which was very common: Christianity in the Protestant-Lutheran interpretation was the absolute religion. It prepared the conciliation between Christianity and the world—abolition of celibacy, abolition of independent ecclesiastical power, the prince being the *summus episcopus*—in contradistinction to Catholicism, which of course had still uncontested celibacy at that time and naturally independent ecclesiastical power. An argument which was popularized especially by Carlyle, that this difference between Protestantism and Catholicism explains the French Revolution:<sup>vi</sup> the Protestant countries solved people’s problems by their Reformation, and therefore they were never in need of a revolution. But the Catholic countries did not solve it, and therefore [it is] there<sup>6</sup> [that] this terrible outburst happens. But of course in the meantime we have seen certain things happening in Germany in spite of the Protestant character of the country, although one could perhaps say that the chief man, Hitler, was not a Protestant and did not come from Protestant Germany. But this . . . At any rate, the entire Protestant character of what follows must be understood in the light of the fact that Germany, Nietzsche’s Germany, was a predominantly Protestant country.

Now shall we read the next number?

**Reader:**

The faith demanded, and not infrequently attained, by original Christianity, in the midst of a skeptical and southern free-spirited world that looked back on, and still contained, a centuries-long fight between philosophical schools, besides the education for tolerance given by the *imperium Romanum*—this faith is *not* that ingenuous and bearlike subalterns’ faith with which, say, a Luther or a Cromwell, or some other northern barbarian of the spirit, clung to his god and to Christianity. It is much closer to the faith

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<sup>v</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1905).

<sup>vi</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1906).

of Pascal, which resembles in a gruesome manner a continual suicide of reason—a tough, long-lived, wormlike reason that cannot be killed all at once and with a single stroke.

From the start, the Christian faith is a sacrifice: a sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit; at the same time, enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation. There is cruelty and religious Phoenicianism in this faith which is expected of an over-ripe, multiple, and much-spoiled conscience: it presupposes that the subjection of the spirit *hurts* indescribably; that the whole past and the habits of such a spirit resist the *absurdissimum* which “faith” represents to it.

Modern men, obtuse to all Christian nomenclature, no longer feel the gruesome superlative that struck a classical taste in the paradoxical formula “god on the cross.” Never yet and nowhere has there been an equal boldness in inversion, anything as horrible, questioning, and questionable as this formula: it promised a revaluation of all the values of antiquity.

It is the Orient, *deep* Orient, it is the Oriental slave who revenged himself in this way on Rome and its noble and frivolous tolerance, on the Roman “catholicity” of faith. It has always been not faith but the freedom from faith, that half-stoical and smiling unconcern with the seriousness of faith, that enraged slaves in their masters—against their masters. “Enlightenment” enrages: for the slave wants the unconditional; he understands only what is tyrannical, in morals, too; he loves as he hates, without nuance, to the depths, to the point of pain, of sickness—his abundant *concealed* suffering is enraged against the noble taste that seems to *deny* suffering. Nor was it skepticism concerning suffering, at bottom merely a pose of aristocratic morality, the least cause of the origin of the last great slave rebellion which began with the French Revolution. (*BGE*, 46)

**LS:** So the original Christian faith is not Protestant, but he avoids in this paragraph to speak of [its] birth in<sup>7</sup> Catholicism, although this is of course present. It is rather like the faith of Pascal: sacrifice of the intellect, the ingredient of cruelty, cruelty [as] the will to power turning against itself, as Nietzsche calls it elsewhere. Original Christianity is the transvaluation of all values of antiquity. Christianity is therefore the negative model for Nietzsche, who also wishes to bring about the transvaluation of all values.

In one of his other writings, he alludes to this thought here, that the only respectable word in the New Testament is Pilate’s, “What is truth?” The skepticism of the Roman . . . Nietzsche’s will, the will to power is opposed to faith or belief as such. In faith or belief, you expect that the good or the desirable come about by God, and for Nietzsche that is impossible. Let’s turn to the next.

**Reader:**

Wherever on earth the religious neurosis has appeared we find it tied to three dangerous dietary demands: solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence. But one cannot decide with certainty what is cause and what effect, and *whether* any relation of cause and effect is involved here. The final doubt seems justified because among its most regular symptoms, among both savage and tame peoples, we also find the most sudden, most extravagant

voluptuousness which then, just as suddenly, changes into a penitential spasm and denial of the world and will—both perhaps to be interpreted as masked epilepsy? But nowhere should one resist interpretation more: no other type has yet been surrounded by such a lavish growth of nonsense and superstition, no other type seems to have interested men, even philosophers, more. The time has come for becoming a bit cold right here, to learn caution—better yet: to look away, *to go away*.

Even in the background of the most recent philosophy, that of Schopenhauer, we find, almost as the problem-in-itself, this gruesome question mark of the religious crisis and awakening. How is the denial of the will *possible*? how is the saint possible? This really seems to have been the question over which Schopenhauer became a philosopher and began. And so it was a genuinely Schopenhauerian conclusion when his most convinced adherent (perhaps also the last one, as far as Germany is concerned), namely, Richard Wagner, finished his life's work at precisely this point and in the end brought this horrible and eternal type on the stage as Kundry, *type vécu*, in the flesh—at the very time when the psychiatrists of almost all the countries of Europe had occasion to study it at close quarters, wherever the religious neurosis—or what I call "*das religiöse Wesen*"—

**LS:** "Or as I call it."

**Reader:**

or as I call it "*das religiöse Wesen*"—had its latest epidemic outbreak and pageant in the "Salvation Army."

Let us ask what precisely about this whole phenomenon of the saint has seemed so enormously interesting to men of all types and ages, even to philosophers. Beyond any doubt, it was the air of the miraculous that goes with it—namely, the immediate *succession of opposites*, of states of the soul that are judged morally in opposite ways. It seemed palpable that a "bad man" was suddenly transformed into a "saint," a good man. The psychology we have had so far suffered shipwreck at this point: wasn't this chiefly because it had placed itself under the dominion of morals, because it, too, *believed* in opposite moral values and saw, read, *interpreted* these opposites into the text and the facts?

What? The "miracle" merely a mistake of interpretation? A lack of philology? (*BGE*, 47)

**LS:** Nietzsche says elsewhere that there were two human pursuits which were the torchbearers of free mind throughout the century, and these were medicine and philology. And he refers obviously to certain parts of medicine and also of course of philology here.

Now the transition I hope is clear. He spoke of original Christianity as distinguished from Protestantism; therefore the worship of saints, the fascination exercised by the saint, by the miracle of repentance. But this miracle is based on the question of an assumption of the opposition of moral values: good and evil. And Nietzsche had spoken near the beginning of the whole work of the question of the character of the assumption, that there is such an opposition. They belong together, they are inseparable. He continues his critique of Catholicism in the next aphorism.

**Reader:**

It seems that Catholicism is much more intimately related to the Latin races than all of Christianity in general is to us northerners—and unbelief therefore means something altogether different in Catholic and Protestant countries: among *them*, a kind of rebellion against the spirit of the race, while among us it is rather a return to the spirit (or anti-spirit) of the race. We northerners are undoubtedly descended from barbarian races, which also shows in our talent for religion: we have *little* talent for it. We may except the Celts, who therefore also furnished the best soil for the spread of the Christian infection to the north: in France the Christian ideal came to flourish as much as the pale sun of the north permitted it. How strangely pious for our taste are even the most recent French skeptics insofar as they have any Celtic blood! How Catholic, how un-German Auguste Comte's sociology smells to us with its Roman logic of the instincts! How Jesuitical that gracious and clever cicerone of Port-Royal, Sainte-Beuve, in spite of all his hostility against the Jesuits! And especially Ernest Renan: how inaccessible the language of such a Renan sounds to us northerners: at one instant after another some nothing of religious tension unbalances his soul, which is, in the more refined sense, voluptuous and inclined to stretch out comfortably. Let us speak after him these beautiful sentences—and how much malice and high spirits stir immediately in our probably less beautiful and harder, namely more German, soul as a response!

*“Disons donc hardiment que la religion est un produit de l’homme normal, que l’homme est le plus dans le vrai quand il est le plus religieux et le plus assuré d’une destinée infinie. . . . C’est quand il est bon qu’il veut que la vertu corresponde à un ordre éternel, c’est quand il contemple les choses d’une manière désintéressée qu’il trouve la mort révoltante et absurde. Comment ne pas supposer que c’est dans ces moments-là, que l’homme voit le mieux?”* (BGE, 48)

**LS:** Did you understand it? But I suppose the translator gives the translation of that.

**Reader:**

These sentences are so utterly *antipodal* to my ears and habits that on finding them my first wrath wrote on the margin *“la niaiserie religieuse par excellence!”* But my subsequent wrath actually took a fancy to them—these sentences standing truth on her head! It is so neat, so distinguished to have one's own antipodes! (BGE, 48)

**LS:** Well, in the preceding aphorism he had spoken above all of the saint, of a phenomenon belonging to Catholicism. Now he makes this point that Catholicism belongs to the Latins as Protestantism to the northerners. That is to say that the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism cannot be sufficiently understood in terms of dogma: one has also to consider what Nietzsche calls “race.” As for the difference between the Germans and the French, there is the famous, oldest document, what Caesar says in *The Gallic Wars* about the religion of the Celts and that of the Germans.<sup>vii</sup> It reads like a premonition of the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. There is

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<sup>vii</sup> Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. Carolynn Hammond and Aulus Hirtius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

something to that. But it is clear that Nietzsche's antagonism to Catholicism is as deep as his antagonism to Protestantism. It depends on the context which of the two he criticizes most sharply. Ya, please.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Pascal here . . .

**Same Student:** . . . <sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Nietzsche knew that. Oh yes, he refers to it in this form—I think in this very chapter, later on—that through Christianity modern man has a link to antiquity, to paganism, and what will happen if Christianity has lost its power so that the crucial link will no longer exist. He knew that. He knew that. But Sainte-Beuve<sup>ix</sup> and Renan<sup>x8</sup> are after all representatives of those deeper concerns of Nietzsche, and how much, for example, [of] the critic in Renan, of course that is absolutely in Nietzsche. But when Renan tries to make psychology Jesuit, then Nietzsche comes into a condition which is hard to distinguish from comity, and which one can perhaps understand. Whether Nietzsche's psychology is true is an entirely different thing. But it was altogether beyond his possibilities, to try this. So I think that all these statements are consciously one-sided, but he knows it.

I believe we should read the next one, because that throws light retroactively on what we have said. Yes?

**Reader:**

What is amazing about the religiosity of the ancient Greeks is the enormous abundance of gratitude it exudes: it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in *this* way.

Later, when the rabble gained the upper hand in Greece, *fear* became rampant in religion, too—and the ground was prepared for Christianity.— (*BGE*, 49)

**LS:** Ya. The Greek gratitude: not fear, not wish. That belongs to them. The serenity of worship. Serenity of worship. And this stands here as a standard for judging Christianity, just as a little bit later, the Old Testament is used for the same function. And how the praise of the ancient Greeks and the praise of the ancient Jews can possibly be reconciled, that he doesn't say here. He has written something on this elsewhere.

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<sup>viii</sup> The comment is a lengthy one, and inaudible.

<sup>ix</sup> Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), French poet, essayist, and historian. Nietzsche encouraged Ida Overbeck, the wife of his friend Franz Overbeck, to translate Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du lundi* into German. The translation appeared in 1880 as *Die Menschen des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, now published in a new edition by Andreas Urs Sommer (Berlin: Die Andere Bibliothek, 2014).

<sup>x</sup> Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French philologist and historian of religions.

By the way, in number 50, Mr. Klein, he speaks of the aristocratic qualities of Catholicism, which . . . Yes?

**Student:** How is Aquinas relegated to the same position as Aristotle?

**LS:** When one reads number 50, one cannot help thinking of Thomas Aquinas, among others. But when Nietzsche quotes him, as he does somewhere in the *Genealogy of Morals*, then he uses a passage from that part of the *Summa* which is not by Thomas, namely, something about how the saints enjoy the pains of the damned in hell. That is of course for Nietzsche further proof of the cruelty in the guise of law, but this passage is not from Thomas. That he quotes. How much he knew of these matters is hard to say, but he had a friend, a very close friend, who was a great student of religion, Franz Overbeck, and from him he got some guidance in these matters.<sup>xi</sup>

I do not know what we shall do when we are through with chapter 3, because chapter 4 consists of very short apothegms, and it is much more difficult to interpret—especially their connection to the work—than in the case of aphorisms. I must see how we can overcome this.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “as.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “I am not meaning”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “I mean where.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “No—” from the start of the sentence. While it is in the audio recording, it is only confusing in writing.

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “with.”

<sup>6</sup> Moved “happens.”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “the.”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “they.”

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<sup>xi</sup> Franz Overbeck, *How Christian is our Present-Day Theology?*, trans. Martin Henry and David Tracy (New York: T & T Clark Publishers Group, 2005).

### Session 9: April 19, 1972

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —<sup>i</sup>the pure mind and the good in itself. From this it would follow that no human being is wise because no human being is the pure mind; only the god is. Human beings can only strive for wisdom or philosophize . . . Gods do not philosophize. We read this in Plato's dialogues. Now in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in the penultimate aphorism, number 295, Nietzsche divulges the novelty that gods too philosophize. That follows necessarily, because if there is no pure mind, there cannot be wise beings in the strict sense and gods too can only philosophize. But this thesis contested by Nietzsche, according to which gods do not philosophize, is stated not by Plato, but by Diotima or Socrates<sup>ii</sup>—it is hard to distinguish between the two. Plato, for all we know, might also have thought that gods philosophize. In the dialogue called *Sophist*, Socrates calls the Eleatic Stranger at the beginning, playfully of course, an elenctic, refuting god. And elenchus refutation is of course fifty percent of what the philosopher does. <sup>iii</sup>

In the final aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche speaks of the profound difference between what he calls the written and painted thoughts, and thoughts in the original form. Only the latter are genuine. That reminds us or may remind us of what Plato says on the weakness of speech, of the *logos*, the unsayable and unwriteable character of the truth as distinguished from everything said or written. The purity of mind of which Plato spoke does not necessarily establish the strength of the *logos*, <sup>1</sup>even of the genuine *logos*. So that the radical opposition of Nietzsche and Plato is not all comprehensive.

Now let us turn for a moment to the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which is, as you may remember, "Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future." *Beyond Good and Evil* is meant to prepare not *the* philosophy of the future, prelude to *a* philosophy of the future. It is not meant to prepare the true philosophy, but a new kind of philosophy, of philosophizing. And it is meant to do that by liberating man from "quote the prejudices of the philosophers," meaning the philosophers of the past and, in brackets, of the present. But Nietzsche is not particularly interested in the latter. By this very fact *Beyond Good and Evil* is meant to be a specimen of the philosophy of the future. Chapter 1 is entitled "Of the Prejudices of the Philosophers." Chapter 2 is entitled "The Free Mind." The free mind is free from the prejudices of the philosophers of the past. But are the free minds the same as the philosophers of the future? That's a hard question. Nietzsche says they are the precursors of the philosophers of the future—aphorism 44. Do the free minds belong to the epoch between the philosophy of the past and the philosophy of the future? Do they possess a freedom, an openness, not possible under the philosophy of the past nor under

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<sup>i</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

<sup>ii</sup> From Plato's *Symposium*.

<sup>iii</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

the philosophy of the future? I believe that question goes to the root of what Nietzsche is doing. But we cannot answer him.

Be this as it may, philosophy is the obvious theme of the first two chapters of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Now if we turn to the whole book, we see it consists of nine chapters, the third chapter being devoted to religion. The heading of chapter 4, “Sayings and Interludes,” does not indicate any subject matter as all other chapters do. It is distinguished from all other chapters by the fact that it consists exclusively of short aphorisms of three, four, five lines at the most. Chapters 5 to 9 can be said to be devoted to morals and politics. So the whole book seems then to consist of two main parts which are separated by the one hundred twenty aphorisms of chapter 4.<sup>iv</sup> The first of the two main parts is devoted to philosophy and religion, and the second part, chapters 5 to 9, to something else. Yes?

**Student:** It says here, “And, the devil—who forces you to speak with the vulgar” [*BGE*, 37]. The “you” in that sentence, what does that refer to?

**LS:** “You”—the people who draw this conclusion in the brief dialogue. These people say—Nietzsche has said in the preceding aphorism: the world is the will to power. And then there are some people who hear that for the first time, but does this not mean, if you express this popularly, that “God has been refuted but not the devil, if the will to power is the ultimate reality”? And Nietzsche says: “On the contrary, on the contrary, my friends, and apart from that, who forces you to speak popularly?”

**Same Student:** “*Zum Teufel*” in the last sentence, is that an interjection?

**LS:** Ya. What would be the English equivalent to that? “To the devil.”

**Same Student:** “The devil.” “The devil,” but Kaufmann is not clear there at all.

**LS:** Kaufmann is I suppose quite good if he has to give the dates of birth of individuals whom Nietzsche mentions. And the translation, by the way, of the *Zarathustra*, which is the only thing which I know, is not bad.

**Same Student:** No, usually he is very good, but here it is not clear that the devil, he should have put it in brackets.

**LS:** Ya.

**Another Student:** It seems as if in this sentence he was starting a sentence about the devil and then broke it off because of the dash and changed his mind and decided to—

**LS:** That is a good point which you make. In other words, these people who didn’t fully grasp Nietzsche’s thoughts brought in the devil, and then Nietzsche replies to them by throwing the devil out twofold.

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<sup>iv</sup> There seem to be 123 aphorisms in chapter 4 and not 120, as Strauss claims here.

**Same Student:** It seems that that is unfair. I mean, you said before that we should never become so subtle as to neglect the things which are crude.

**LS:** Yes, sure. But as you know, Nietzsche was not squeamish and he said all kinds of terrible things about God.

**Same Student:** But this is terribly unfair because he knows that the vulgar people are going to interpret this in a certain way—<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** Ya, but there is no such opposition, no such antagonism between good and evil. You remember, that is the way in which he began the whole book: that the belief in the antagonism of values, as he called it there, is a prejudice.

**Student:** Is it that there is an antagonism between good and bad?

**LS:** No, he says good and evil. Good and bad is another story.

**Same Student:** Good and evil, sorry.

**LS:** Ya, that good and evil are inseparable for one another. Are inseparable from one another. If you want to use the language of piety, God and devil are inseparable.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** No, that is what I tell you in my capacity as a teacher: Don't bring in "bad." Good and evil is one thing, and good and bad is another one, entirely different. He develops that most clearly in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Good and bad is a distinction which for Nietzsche is absolutely indispensable for living well or intelligently, but good and evil, that is a special interpretation which is very questionable. Nietzsche sometimes uses the word—well, to take an extreme case, and I hope you will not be offended by it: Cesare Borgia. You know who that was? According to Machiavelli, he had *virtù*, which is the Italian word for virtue. But *virtù* may also mean a certain selection from the virtues consisting of great shrewdness and great courage. Nietzsche preferred this partial virtue within certain contexts, and here good and evil are inseparable. But if you speak of good and evil, then you say, of course quite rightly, that Cesare Borgia was an evil man, there is no doubt about that. And Nietzsche occasionally says the same, that he was inhuman. Inhuman.

At any rate, in order not to complicate things too much let us postpone the distinction between these two pairs, good and evil, good and bad, and let us only speak of good and evil, if you don't mind. But, for example, say, tuberculosis: something bad in itself, not evil. Nietzsche is thinking of the defects of the soul rather in the way in which we ordinarily think of defects of the body: bad and not evil, but in certain perspectives they

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<sup>v</sup> There is a break in the tape at this point. The transcriber notes that it lasts for approximately twenty seconds.

are evil. And this perspective Nietzsche regards as a bad perspective. Not that he didn't know what we mean by evil and that he didn't loathe it, but he had a special way of loathing it and we must try to discover it. Ya?

**Student:** Is he a psychologist?

**LS:** Yes, he claimed to be a psychologist, but not in the way in which Butler—is it not Samuel Butler in *Erewhon* who said they treat the diseases as sins and the sins as diseases?<sup>vi</sup> Ya? Is this what you mean?

**Student:** He seems to want to see the sins as diseases. It seems that what you are saying is that Nietzsche would like to get rid of the concept of evil entirely.

**LS:** Ya, of sin especially. The reasoning is very long and I cannot—how do you say?—I cannot sketch it in a few minutes. One point which Nietzsche has in mind is this. Evil and sin calling for divine punishment, ya? And Nietzsche loathed punitiveness and thought it distorts our whole moral perspective if we are tainted by this way of looking at things. My feeling is different. I like punishment—I mean not that I'm to be punished, of course, but that others are punished. But I have not this feeling; but still, that is very important for Nietzsche, and not only for Nietzsche. Not only for Nietzsche: that plays a great role in the whole history of the West, the liberation from the prejudice of punishment. And if I am not totally mistaken, what is happening in Dante's *Divine Comedy* is this: that Dante is there in hell [and] educated to punitiveness.<sup>vii</sup> You see, when you compare the beginning, when he begins in very unorthodox ways with Francesca and Paolo, and where one does not know, is only this relatively harmless sin which they commit which they read in a book, and then at a certain point they stop reading it? Is this the whole story as he is discovering it in the First Canto, or is it also the unnatural things too—you know, pederasty and so on—<sup>2</sup>which he had also mentioned there? . . . But apart from that, the first moment Dante becomes indignant is, I believe, in the Seventh Canto, when he comes to a place in which an abominable Florentine tyrant is being punished. This individual wants to get into the boat together with Dante and Virgil, and then Dante takes the—how do you call it in English?—the oar and hits him so he that can't get in. There he becomes vicious. And one can say [that] no desire for punishment is more respectable, according to a very common view which I fully share, than punishing tyrants. But at the same time this is the beginning of your infection with punitiveness, because what you do now with the tyrant you will do later on with other criminals and with the enemy. But even while punishment is indispensable . . . there is no doubt about that, the overall moral perspective should not be that of punitiveness.

Nietzsche has a simple word for what he poses against this, and that he calls “innocence.” Now innocence does not mean here<sup>3</sup> the [alleged] age of innocence children were thought to possess. Ya? “Age of innocence” means prior to the Fall, but he means “beyond.” He has no other expression which I will offer, because he offers always this [one].

<sup>vi</sup> Samuel Butler, *Erewhon; or, Over the Range* (1872). See chap. 10, “Current Opinions.”

<sup>vii</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. C. E. Wheeler (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1911).

Somewhere he has this aphorism: “Great things demand that one talks about them greatly.” “Greatly,” that means cynically and with innocence. Now cynically is the original meaning of this term, this given, the whole thing.<sup>viii</sup> But we must continue, because we should really try to make some headway after this interruption.<sup>ix</sup>

So we have discussed hitherto the sole passage of the first two chapters dealing with religion, and which makes clear that the whole book is in a way a vindication of God. Everything is concentrated in the expression, in a way. Chapter 3 is explicitly devoted to religion. In German, “*Das religiöse Wesen*,” which literally translated, misleadingly translated, would mean “the religious essence,” because the German word *Wesen* may very well be verbally, popularly, “the religious doings,” “the religious goings-on.” Surely Nietzsche doesn’t say “*Das Wesen religiön*,” the title of a famous book by Feuerbach, which is *The Essence of Religion*. That he does not say. Because the “essence of religion” would mean what is common to all religions, and this is not or should not be of any concern to us. <sup>x</sup>Therefore it’s not the essence of religion, “*Das Wesen religiön*,” but “*Das religiöse Wesen*.” Nietzsche has the impudence in chapter 3 to translate “*Das religiöse Wesen*,” by “*Die religiösen Neurose*,” “*la Neurose Religieuse*”—how do you say it?—“The Religious Neurosis.” So that belongs to Nietzsche, that he also uses very insulting terms for things which he does not simply . . . on the contrary.

This chapter has a very clear plan, much clearer than any other. First, religion<sup>xi</sup> — subdivided in this way. First, Christianity, numbers 46 to 48. Second<sup>xii</sup> . . . and also *Deuteronomy* and in contradistinction to . . . by this mechanism . . . without making a distinction between that . . . which he admires and that part which he does not admire.

Now in order to understand this aphorism on the Old Testament, we must consider the context. It is preceded by an aphorism devoted to the saint, the saint, especially known of course from Catholicism. The context suggests there are no saints, no holy men, in the Old Testament. I mean, that is again not quite literally true, but fundamentally true. What this means is made clear in an aphorism of the *Dawn of Morning*, which I happen to know. It is number 68. I’m sorry I do not have it here in the English translation. Number 68. Here, within this very long aphorism, he says, “These people,” meaning the Jews, “which has driven the fantasy of moral sublimity higher than any other nation and which alone has succeeded in creating a holy God together with the thought of sin as a . . .<sup>xiii</sup> transgression of that holiness.” So the Jews created the holy God, the Jews alone. That is an important point, and that is an important point not only in Nietzsche. The creation of the holy God, that is the distinctive mark of the Old Testament, in contradistinction also and especially to the Greeks, because the Greek gods were not holy; some were sometimes called with a word which one can translate “holy,” but not . . . whereas in the Old Testament, key passages . . . I regard this as very important.

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<sup>viii</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

<sup>ix</sup> By “interruption,” Strauss means the holiday from which students just returned.

<sup>x</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

<sup>xi</sup> There is a break in the tape.

<sup>xii</sup> There is a break in the tape.

<sup>xiii</sup> Strauss appears to briefly consult a student about the best English word to use.

Someone drew my attention to a book by a German theologian, about one hundred thirty or forty years ago, Nägelsbach, *The Theology of Homer*, in which he speaks of the fact that the Homeric gods, of course, are not holy.<sup>xiv</sup> But he does not reflect on the fundamental question of whether the conception of the holy God existed at all within the Greek order, which it did not. That Zeus, Hera, and Apollo, and so on are not holy, you can say, but they were not holy for Homer. I mean, in Homer's own mind, they were not holy. Nietzsche knew that. I think that is a very important point.

Now what Nietzsche says in this aphorism—I think it is 52, if I am not mistaken—is this: “Quote The great style, unquote”—also an important term in Nietzsche—“the great style” of the Old Testament, meaning . . . shows forth the greatness—of what? Read the beginning.

**Reader:**

In the Jewish “Old Testament,” the book of divine justice, there are human beings, things, and speeches in so grand a style that Greek and Indian literature have nothing to compare with it. With terror and reverence one stands before these tremendous remnants of what man once was— (*BGE*, 52)

**LS:** And so on. “What man once.”<sup>4</sup> Everything is contained in that. The grand style of the Old Testament shows forth the greatness not of God, but of man, of what man once was. The holy God no less than the holy man are creatures of the human will to power. So that is a strange vindication of God, and we must dig much deeper before we can understand it. And in order to prepare us for that, Nietzsche begins the next aphorism with a question. We can perhaps read the whole aphorism 53.

**Reader:**

Why atheism today?—“The father” in God has been thoroughly refuted; ditto, “the judge,” “the rewarder.” Also his “free will”: he does not hear—and if he heard he still would not know how to help. Worst of all: he seems incapable of clear communication: is he unclear?

This is what I found to be causes for the decline of European theism, on the basis of a great many conversations, asking and listening. It seems to me that the religious instinct is indeed in the process of growing powerfully—but the theistic satisfaction it refuses with deep suspicion. (*BGE*, 53)

**LS:** So if Nietzsche vindicates God, this vindication will be atheistic. What can this mean? Is this not insanity? What does it mean? Why atheism today? That means there was a time when theism was possible or necessary, but in the meantime “quote God died unquote,” and therefore everything is necessary. This does not merely mean that men have ceased to believe in God. For men's unbelief does not destroy God's life or being. It does mean however that even while God lived, he never was what the believers in him thought him to be, namely, deathless. Deathless. He always could die, and therefore he

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<sup>xiv</sup> Karl F. Nägelsbach, *Die nachhomerische Theologie des griechischen Volksglaubens bis auf Alexander* (Nürnberg: Conrad Geiger, 1857).

was surely not the God of the Old Testament, nor of the New Testament for that matter, because the death of God in the New Testament, if you take the object of the first interpretation, the death of the human side of the second person.

Theism, as it understands itself, was always wrong according to Nietzsche. Yet for a time it was true in the sense of being powerful and life-giving. Now here in the aphorism which we just read, Nietzsche gives less *his* reasons for atheism today than the reasons swaying some of his contemporaries, hopefully the better among his contemporaries. That seems to verge on the frivolous, what Nietzsche says here about atheism. Apart from other things, are these reasons directed against natural theology or revealed theology? I suppose you know the distinction between natural and revealed theology. Natural theology or rational theology is that which man possesses or may possess by his own power, whereas revealed [theology] is the one which comes from the Word. Now the main point I think he has in mind—Nietzsche does not make the distinction here—he is concerned chiefly, not to say exclusively, with revealed theology . . . The main point is here accordingly the obscurity of revelation, of God speaking to man. That has made theism wholly out of the question. There is an infinite history in there, a history which Nietzsche knew very well, the history of biblical criticism of the Old and New Testament. One of his closest friends, Franz Overbeck, the famous theologian and biblical critic in Basel, and of course his first work in a way was an attack on David Friedrich Strauss, the famous critic of the Gospels.<sup>xv</sup> And Nietzsche knew these things; every truly educated man knew them at the time and I believe also today. So at any rate, atheism is inalienable, yet—and now we come to Nietzsche’s turn—despite the decay of European theism there is a powerful growth of the religious instinct of what we can call “quote religiosity unquote,” in contradistinction to religion. That Nietzsche also observes and that is also important for him. So if there is such a thing as a religious instinct, which is mightily or powerfully growing, is then atheism pure and simple, atheism divorced from all religiosity, only a transitional phase? Does atheism belong to the free mind, as discussed in chapter 2, and a certain kind of nonatheism belongs to the philosopher of the future? A question which I believe is inevitable but which is not answered.

Now Nietzsche will make it a bit clearer in the sequel. In the next aphorism, 54, Nietzsche illustrates in a provisional manner what he means by a nontheistic religiosity. After all, he had suggested that he must give us some inkling of what he means here; and the specimen is the Vedanta philosophy, Hindu philosophy, of which every one of you knows much more than I do. But it is obviously not theistic and it is also, I believe—sometimes I read in the *Washington Post* and other places of certain things going on in the young generation, in campuses; whether the word Vedanta never occurred, but some Hinduism . . . So whether there is some connection between the peace movement and

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<sup>xv</sup> Overbeck’s *How Christian Is Our Present-Day Theology?*, trans. Martin Henry (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2005) (*Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie* [1873]) was a critical response to David Friedrich Strauss’s *The Old and New Faith (Vom alten und neuen Glauben)* (1872). Nietzsche’s own *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* [1873]) includes as one of its four studies, “David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer” (“David Strauss, der Berkenner und der Schriftsteller”).

Vedanta, I don't know. I would have to ask the authorities about it, because I believe they know all the details. Good. But this illustration is entirely provisional because Nietzsche does not want, anticipate, or wish a representation of Vedanta philosophy as a religion of the future. He wants something else. And that is much more interesting, much more Nietzschean, in a way. And that we see in number 55, which you will be so good to read. You see what Nietzsche does: one really doesn't know when you begin an aphorism why it comes here. We have to understand it to understand its place. Now what does he say?

**Reader:**

There is a great ladder of religious cruelty, with many rungs; but three of these are the most important.

Once one sacrificed human beings to one's god, perhaps precisely those whom one loved most: the sacrifices of the first-born in all prehistoric religions belong here, as well as the sacrifice of the Emperor Tiberius in the Mithras grotto of the isle of Capri, that most gruesome of all Roman anachronisms.

**LS:** I have read somewhere that this is probably not true.

**Reader:**

Then, during the moral epoch of mankind, one sacrificed to one's god one's own strongest instincts, one's "nature"—

**LS:** Nature in quotation marks.

**Reader:**

*this* festive joy lights up the cruel eyes of the ascetic, the "anti-natural" enthusiast.

Finally—what remained to be sacrificed? At long last, did one not have to sacrifice for once whatever is comforting, holy, healing; all hope, all faith in hidden harmony, in future blisses and justices? didn't one have to sacrifice God himself and, from cruelty against oneself, worship the stone, stupidity, gravity—

**LS:** "Heavy," "heaviness," in German it is the same word, "*schwere*."<sup>xvi</sup>

**Reader:**

the stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, the nothing? To sacrifice God for the nothing—this paradoxical mystery of the final cruelty was reserved for the generation that is now coming up: all of us already know something of this.— (*BGE*, 55)

**LS:** <sup>xvii</sup>Here we get the first inkling of the religion of the future, and again in a very enigmatic way. Sacrificing God preparatory to adoring the stone, stupidity, and the other things, the nothing. The stone, that will remind those of you who have ever heard anything of Anaxagoras, who said that that famous god, the Sun, is a stone. And of

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<sup>xvi</sup> Strauss retranslates the last word of the line just read.

<sup>xvii</sup> Newly transcribed material begins.

course every materialism is such a kind of replacing God by the stone or stupidity. It may be a very complicated stupidity (how did Churchill call the policy of Baldwin and Chamberlain . . . the depth policy of the tradition in American . . . ) complicated idiocy. So whether the idiocy is simple or complicated does not matter to Nietzsche, it is the same.

**Student:** Here, when he talks about sacrificing God for the sake of worshiping the stone brings to mind Sinai, when they sacrificed God for the sake of worshiping the golden calf.

**LS:** No, no. Nietzsche did not . . . the golden calf.

**Same Student:** The golden calf had the characteristic of—

**LS:** Yes—but, no, no. Nietzsche meant something else. Anaxagoras, I believe, is more revealing here.<sup>xviii</sup> So what Nietzsche says here is this: the better among the contemporary atheists, with whom Nietzsche is to some extent in agreement, will come to know what they are doing. They do not know it now. Now they are perfectly self-satisfied and think that they are free thinkers. They will come to realize that there is something infinitely more terrible, depressing, and degrading than religion or theism. To use the old terms of Lucretius, who spoke of *pudore* religion, disgusting religion, or Voltaire's *l'enfant*, these are all wonderful things compared with atheism. You have no idea what you are letting yourselves in for. The utter senselessness, the irrelevance of man which is implied in that atheism, and you fools don't see it.

I read to you a passage from an unpublished writing of the very young Nietzsche. It is very strange. Nietzsche died in a way very young; I mean, he became insane, as you know, when he was forty-four, and so many things which he might have elaborated he did not elaborate and we have only posthumous papers. And there is one which he wrote in 1873, that is to say fifteen years before he goes insane, and which is called here—I have it in Kaufmann's translation of the *Zarathustra* on page 42, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," which begins as follows. I believe you will recognize contemporary conceits in this statement written a hundred years ago.

"In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever beasts invented knowledge. That was the haughtiest and most mendacious minute of 'world history'—yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever beasts had to die."<sup>xix</sup>

That is what Nietzsche means an atheist would have to consider if he is to be a respectable human being. The new breed of atheists whom he announces, the men of the religion of the future, cannot be fobbed off anymore—like Engels, Marx's friend—by the prospect of a most glorious future, the realm of freedom, which will indeed be terminated by the annihilation of the human race—as Engels admits—and therewith the annihilation

<sup>xviii</sup> Newly transcribed material ends.

<sup>xix</sup> *Portable Nietzsche*, 42. Where Strauss reads "beasts," Kauffmann has "animals."

of all meaning, but which will last for a very long time, for a millennium or so. Imagine. Fortunately, that is what Engels says, we find ourselves still on the “quote ascending branch of world history.” So we don’t have to worry about the descending branch which will come, but that is far away. And how did Keynes say [it]? “In the long run.” Nietzsche does care for the long run; that’s the difference between him and Marx. The realm of freedom—and that is a key implication, if I apply it to Engels—the realm of freedom: destined to perish. That Engels admits. It necessarily contains within itself the seeds of its annihilation and will therefore, even while its glory lasts, abound in so-called contradictions as much as any earlier age. I think that is one of the strongest points implied in Nietzsche. We have to think about the future, and Nietzsche is a visionary in a way as much as Marx and more than Marx. But he isn’t this [LS taps the book on the table] kind of superficiality. From that he is free, I must say.

Now what is the time, and what are your plans? If you don’t mind, we will read one more aphorism, although it is already six [o’clock], because that is the end of a section. Then we will discuss the rest of the chapter next time if that is all right with you. But if some wonderful dinner waits for you at home, I do not wish to keep you waiting. Go ahead. 56.

**Reader:**

Whoever has endeavored with some enigmatic longing, as I have—

**LS:** Did he break out the expression, “for a long time?” <sup>xx</sup>Yes, “for a long time,” that he omits. <sup>xxi</sup>

**Reader:**

Whoever has endeavored with some enigmatic longing, as I have for a long time, to think pessimism through to its depths and to liberate it from the half-Christian, half-German narrowness and simplicity in which it has finally presented itself to our century, namely, in the form of Schopenhauer’s philosophy; whoever has really, with an Asiatic and supra-Asiatic eye, looked into, down into the most world-denying of all possible ways of thinking—beyond good and evil and no longer, like the Buddha and Schopenhauer, under the spell and delusion of morality—may just thereby, without— (*BGE*, 56)

**LS:** “As perhaps.”

**Reader:**

may just thereby, as perhaps without really meaning to do so, have opened his eyes to the opposite ideal: the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo*—not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle, and not only to a spectacle but at bottom to him who needs precisely this spectacle—and who makes it necessary because again and again he needs himself—and makes himself necessary—— What? And this wouldn’t be—*circulus vitiosus deus*? (*BGE*, 56)

<sup>xx</sup> The reader repeats part of what he read.

<sup>xxi</sup> Strauss points out an omission in the Kaufmann translation from the line just read.

**LS:** *Circulus vitiosus* means “a vicious circle.” Now Nietzsche alludes here to his doctrine, which he does not develop, of the eternal return: everything comes back. And then he says as kind of objection to himself that is this not a vicious circle, vicious in the sense that it is an attempt to restore God. But, you see that is one of the few other references to Nietzsche’s strange, nontheistic religion.

Well, the context. Nietzsche of course does not mean to sacrifice God for the sake of the nothing, for he aims at transforming the deadly truth of God’s death into a life-inspiring one; or rather to discover in the depths of the deadly truth its opposite. He started from pessimism—well, he was originally, as you find in every schoolbook, a Schopenhauerian, and Schopenhauer is the father of pessimism. Schopenhauer coins the term “pessimism,” which means originally not what it means today, that you are apprehensive or think that something is going wrong in Vietnam or whatnot, or with Phase 2,<sup>xxii</sup> that is today all called pessimism. But it means that the world is the worst of all possible worlds. And it’s opposed to an older doctrine which was called by its opponents “optimism,” meaning the world is the best of all possible worlds. Now Nietzsche started all that, and Nietzsche calls this pessimism also “world-denying,” and there is a certain complicated relation between world-denying and god-denying into which we cannot go here. But Nietzsche says he tried to think that through and liberate it from its narrowness, partly Christian, partly German. The narrowness is fundamentally moralistic, meaning a denial of the world on [the grounds that] what we call the world is not moral enough. And there are plenty of reasons for denying the world on that ground, but Nietzsche thought these were not good enough reasons.

So, beyond good and evil. And thinking with some enigmatic desire, as he called it, prompted him for a long time to think of the most world-denying view possible. In other words, one much more world-denying than Schopenhauer and even Buddha. Thus his eyes were opened for the opposite ideal, for an ideal not of world-denying, of saying “no” to the world, but of saying “yes” to the world, and this is the doctrine of eternal return. This ideal, new ideal, this world-affirming ideal as Nietzsche understands it, that is the ideal belonging to the religion of the future.

Well, we have of course in no way exhausted this paragraph. Again, I think it is very strange; as in the case of aphorism 37, it ends with a question, and there is a question mark. Why Nietzsche does this, why does he turn to eternal return, saying “yes” to everything that is and was, that is a question which we will take up next time if it is all right with you.

Now may I then suggest that next time we discuss the rest of this book? We don’t have to read the following aphorisms, you can read them at home, which are an appraisal of religion in general. We will also try to discuss some of the most pregnant aphorisms of book 4. At first they remind of La Rochefoucauld’s *Maxims and Reflections*, but they are

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<sup>xxii</sup> Probably a reference to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreements (SALT I and SALT II). Negotiations between the former Soviet Union and the United States took place from 1969-1972 to implement the second phase of the arms limitation treaty.

very different. And if we had more time and more knowledge, it would be interesting to make a thorough comparison of the fourth chapter with La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims and Reflections*,<sup>5</sup> I mean the themes which occur there, starting with his most easily accessible ones—you have enough to do, I know that, but it would be good if you were to read at least chapter 4 and see where you think—<sup>xxiii</sup>

Good. And we begin then next time with some formal remarks on aphorism 56.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "I mean."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "and."

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "that which allegedly is."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "what does that word."

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "I mean the themes which occur there, starting with his most accessible ones—you have enough to do, I know that but."

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<sup>xxiii</sup> There is a break in the tape.

### Session 10: April 24, 1972

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —external consideration of the way in which Nietzsche builds up the whole book. It appears that religion is in a way the most important subject of this work, which doesn't mean that Nietzsche is a religious man. As for this chapter itself, as we have seen, it consists of three parts. First he discusses religion hitherto, then the religion of the future, and finally he gives his appraisal of religion. We have discussed what he has to say about religion hitherto. He measures Christianity, the reigning religion in the world, by the standards of Greeks on the one hand, and the Old Testament on the other, and paying the highest homage to the Old Testament—to the Jewish Old Testament, as he says—which doesn't mean of course that he believes in the Old Testament or in the divine origin, but he regards it as a document of what man once was and what, according to what he says here, surpasses anything we find in Hindu and Greek religion.

And then he turns to the religion of the future. That begins in aphorism 53. First, the question: Why atheism today? And this is a key note. Atheism is an indispensable condition for the religion of the future. The reasons seem to verge on the frivolous, but we have learned by now that beneath Nietzsche's frivolities, there are seriousnesses, and vice versa. Then he elaborates this more fully in the sequel. And the key event for him—one point I must not forget: in this paragraph, 53, theism is out but the religious instinct is mightily growing. So atheism, but religious atheism. What that means we must see.

Some light is thrown on this in aphorism 55 when he speaks of the great event which is imminent, of which some contemporaries are aware: the high point of religious cruelty, the sacrificing not of men to God or of man's nature to God, but the sacrificing of God to the stone, stupidity, the nothing. This is the development in aphorism 55. And now of course Nietzsche does not mean to sacrifice God for the sake of nothing, for he aims at transforming the deadly truth of God's death into a life-inspiring one, or rather to discover in the death of the deadly truth its opposite. <sup>1</sup>In the sequel, at the beginning of 56, he refers to some enigmatic desire which prompted him for a long time to think the most world-denying view possible. Thus his eyes were opened for the opposite ideal—for the ideal belonging to the religion of the future, to the most unbounded "yes," the eternal yes-saying to everything that was and is. That is diametrically opposite to the world denial, to the world-affirming, and not only to affirming part of what was but to affirming everything that was and is. Now by saying "yes" to everything that was and is, Nietzsche may seem to reveal himself as radically antirevolutionary or conservative beyond the wild dreams of any other conservatives, who all negate some of the things that were or are as you can see from the daily papers.

Nietzsche occasionally criticizes ideals and idealists as such. This may remind us of a saying of Goethe to Eckermann, according to which "quote everything ideal-like"—in

German, “*jedes Ideale*”—“is serviceable for revolutionary purposes.”<sup>i</sup> If we take these utterances of Nietzsche<sup>2</sup> too literally, there is no place for revolutionary action in any way. But let us leave this open and see how he concludes his suggestion regarding the eternal repetition of what was and is. He concludes it with the words, “and this would not be—*circulus vitiosus deus?*” in [aphorism] 56. This final ambiguous question shows again that his atheism is not unambiguous, for he has doubts whether there can be a world, any world, whose center is not God, as you would see from aphorism 150 in this book.

The conclusion of this present aphorism, 57, reminds us as regards its form of the theological aphorism occurring in the first two chapters, namely, number 37, in which Nietzsche brings out the fact that in a manner the doctrine of the will to power is a vindication of God, if an atheistic vindication of God. I think you remember that statement: “has God been refuted and the devil not?” And Nietzsche says, “On the contrary, my friends, on the contrary. But who compels you to speak popularly?” But now we are confronted with the fact that the vindication of God is only the inversion of, or at any rate presupposes, the sacrificing of God to stupidity or to the nothing. What is it that suddenly, if after a long preparation, divinizes the nothing? Is it the willing of eternity which gives the world, or recourse to it, its worth which is denied by the world-denying ways of thinking? Or is it the willing of eternity which makes atheism religious? Is beloved eternity, as eternity, divine? If it had to say that it must be in itself lovable in order to deserve to be loved, would we then not become guilty of a relapse into Platonism and its teaching of the Good in itself, which Nietzsche has rejected, as you will remember in the very preface?

But can we avoid such a relapse altogether? For the eternal, to which Nietzsche says “yes,” is not the stone, the stupidity, the nothing, which even if eternal or sempiternal cannot arouse an enthusiastic life-inspiring “yes.” The transformation of the world-denying way of thinking into the opposite ideal is presumably connected with the realization that the stone or the nothing to which God is being sacrificed is, in its “quote intelligible character unquote,” the will to power. See aphorism 36. So it seems then that the realization that the essence of reality is the will to power, that explains the religious character of Nietzsche’s atheism, or should explain it if we understand it properly.

Now I reminded you I believe last time of the beginning of Nietzsche’s never-published<sup>3</sup> fragment, “On Truth and Lies from an Extra-Moral Point of View.” You read it—the first paragraph, page 42 in Kaufmann.

### **Reader:**

In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge. That was the haughtiest and most mendacious minute of “world history”—yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever animals had to die.<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*, trans. John Oxenford (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>ii</sup> *Portable Nietzsche*, 42.

**LS:** So world history—which he puts in quotation marks, of course—the whole history of man, everything that man did and suffered, that is only a passing minute surrounded on both sides by infinitude. Inhuman, manless, mindless infinitudes. But if eternal return is believed in or is true, life, human life ceases to be a passing accident that lasts only for a minute, which is preceded and followed by an infinite time during which the human race was not and will not be. The human race has been infinitely open and will be infinitely open. Man is then not a passing accident but akin to the in-itself of things, to use a phrase which Nietzsche uses in the *Genealogy of Morals*, third essay, number 22.

Divinity is beloved eternity, something which man can never outgrow, overcome, get tired of. Now let us read number 57.

**Reader:**

With the strength of his spiritual eye and insight grows distance and, as it were, the space around man: his world becomes more profound; ever new stars, ever new riddles and images become visible for him. Perhaps everything on which the spirit's eye has exercised its acuteness and thoughtfulness was nothing but an occasion for this exercise, a playful matter, something for children and those who are childish.

**LS:** <sup>iii</sup>—which could as well be translated by “mind.” Yes?

**Reader:**

Perhaps the day will come when the most solemn concepts which have caused the most fights and suffering, the concepts “God” and “sin,” will seem no more important to us than a child's toy and a child's pain seems to an old man—and perhaps “the old man” will then be in need of another toy and another pain—still child enough, an eternal child! (*BGE*, 57)

**LS:** That is in quotation marks, the “old Adam.” Ya? Perhaps even the most solemn concepts, like the concept of God, will at some time appear to us as playthings for children, which are quite unimportant for an old man. Then the old man, the old Adam, will perhaps need another plaything, for he is always still a child, an eternal child. Man can overcome God; he cannot overcome eternity. So this is the last of the aphorisms devoted to the religion of the future, and we are left with many riddles.

**Student:** I have a question. The eternal return is to the man living on this planet near his star. The star goes out. The human race dies. Millions and millions of years go by, and then suddenly life begins again on some other star, completely different, thousands of light years away, and then maybe something like man develops again—

**LS:** No, not “like man,” “man.”

**Same Student:** Man develops again and then life goes out. But the continuity is broken, you know, after millions of years, so it is possible to say that in some way man

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<sup>iii</sup> There is a break in the tape here. Part of the passage has been supplied from the text.

participates in being because of this recurrence. He is part of the fabric of the cosmos. But it is very difficult to understand the essential ingredient, which is continuity, that which makes the difference for human life, that which would be life-giving in a religion would be the concept of continuity, and once that is broken, there is not very much which is consoling—<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** But perhaps Nietzsche doesn't wish to warm the hearts in the way in which you understand "warm the heart." But man ceases to be an accident. That is the key point. <sup>4</sup>Human life is not, to use an expression which he uses, an accident which happened once—someone particular conquered a nation, or so on, which circumstances or conditions make impossible, and this situation would never rise again. <sup>5</sup> Necessarily, in every world there will be man, if only for a part of the life of that world, but that part of the life of this world for the sake of which this world has any claim to being a world.

**Same Student:** I don't see what's life-giving about that idea, especially when it is understood in combination with his other idea, which is that a whole nation, a whole species is just nature's lavish . . . way of getting several great man.

**LS:** Yes, all right. You can make the proportion that the subhuman, that is to say, the product of everything that we do, to the human, equal to the human, to the few highest individuals.

**Same Student:** Both sides of that proportion are deadening.

**LS:** Ya, that could be, but on the other hand, it could be true.

**Same Student:** Well, then I might agree with Nietzsche insofar as he claims that he is seeking the truth, if I thought that were true. But I could never agree with him that that has a life-giving quality. That's where it becomes, where he begins to discuss—

**LS:** I don't know whether this makes any impression on you, but this thought in itself, which is so out of touch with you, was after all not an invention of Nietzsche's. That was held by all those philosophers in antiquity who did not believe in the eternity of the visible universe.

**Same Student:** This is . . . life-giving.

**LS:** Sure they did, sure they did, that was the divinity, so to speak. The first use of the term "divinity," modified by certain other considerations, but surely . . . But for our present purposes we can also include . . . Intelligent life is the exception, and the men who cultivate their intellect properly, which meant philosophers, are again the exception in the human race. So from the point of view of bulk, of quantity, the highest is very little.

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<sup>iv</sup> There is a break in the tape here.

**Same Student:** But that isn't the point which I am making in my criticism. The part that I'm most . . . is the break in continuity and that was the assertion that life—

**LS:** But the continuity is not guaranteed by the fact that the ingredients which stirred up this present world are also the ingredients of any future world.

**Same Student:** Yeah, Nietzsche would say that the compounds come together and they fall apart, but when I think of it, all I can say is—

**LS:** Well, let us see whether we can get a better understanding, or greater sympathy, from what follows. We have reached now the end of what Nietzsche has to say about religion of the future and the last five aphorisms will contain his appraisal of religion in general.

**Student:** . . . aphorisms 53 and 55 . . . I asked myself what could be the conflict that Nietzsche sees there. At it seems to me that we find Nietzsche's answer in 55, where he says . . .

**LS:** I did not hear, simply acoustically, what you quoted from number 53.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, it depends on what kind—for Nietzsche that truth is always in primitive religion and all religion.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, well, that is for Nietzsche not so simple. That is the question what is behind the religious . . . As for the argument here and the concatenation of ideals here, it is this: What is in the offing which was never in the past? And that is answered in number 55: the adoration—the sacrificing of God to the nothing. That this may be categorized as cruelty is not unimportant, but that is subordinate to the other consideration. That religious instinct, which is no longer theistic, has sacrificed or will sacrifice God to nothing. The question is, Why can this be religion? And the ultimate answer is: eternal return. The answer is given in 56.

**Same Student:** So the answer is . . .

**LS:** Ya, but not quite, because the cruelty is according to Nietzsche present in *all* human life.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** But Nietzsche admits cruelty was always effective; that is the meaning of the will to power. The view which Nietzsche opposes and which was very powerful before him—at least since the days of Rousseau, but up to the present day [it] exists, that the characteristically human emotion is pity or compassion. Nietzsche polemically again

says, “No, cruelty.” And the proof which he gives later on is this. Think through the logic of compassion, say, in the way in which, for example, Albert Schweitzer tried to do it, and see whether human life is possible on that basis, whether you can have reverence for life unqualifiedly. That is what Schweitzer and in a way also Gandhi claim. So if you admit that this is impossible, you admit the ingredient of cruelty, if cruelty is indeed the opposite of compassion. Nietzsche prefers the extreme formula, as you know, and therefore he speaks of cruelty. And he would say that cruelty is present—and that is the implication of 55—in all religions, but not only in religion: everywhere. There is also cruelty in art: of the artist toward himself, toward his public, toward his predecessors, drivers and so on and so on. One could make the objection to Nietzsche, that cruelty is only a mirror image of compassion and therefore doesn’t go to the root of the matter.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** But if the premise is—the thesis attacked is [that] a human life fully merciful, fully compassionate, is the good life. And if this is impossible, if human life must have another ingredient to be life, then in reply you isolate that X which limits compassion. And you call it cruelty, whereas compassion is a wish to inflict good things upon fellow men, cruelty is a wish to inflict bad things. And probably both things are ingredients of man, at least for man as we know him, in all ages from which we have empirical knowledge.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** That is not only in German, that is from the Hindu. Whether Nietzsche uses—

**Same Student:** . . . war was a representation of, an image . . .

**LS:** Now let us first return to something less grave, namely, the last five aphorisms of the chapter.

**Another Student:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, but is this not an empirical fact?

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** All right, say we are atheists—as many contemporaries of Nietzsche would have said—and we have replaced the otherworldly bliss by happiness on earth, popularly called progress. So we have replaced God by progress. But if you look at progress critically, then you see really it is not progress, and it deserves perhaps to be called nothing.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Nietzsche is speaking here of something else, and therefore I exaggerated when I said empirical fact. Nietzsche is speaking here of what is about to come in the next

generation—i.e., what was not yet there in 1886 or so—and that is the realization that what modern man has done was to replace God by nothing. The first reaction to that or the feeling that accompanied it was liberation. Liberation. How fine will human life be if we are rid of these awful delusions? And then Nietzsche was one of the first who, without becoming a theist, said: You are very great fools: what you get is not liberation, not bliss, but absolute emptiness, and you can call that nothing.

Of course there is also allusion to other phenomena which we know, namely, when he used first his example of the stone, where the stone can stand for the inanimate in general, and every materialism is in this way a sacrificing God to the stone. But in addition, and I think I mentioned that last time, that was Anaxagoras's thesis: the sun is a stone, only a stone, nothing but a stone. That is a short step, from stone to nothing. That is from the point of view of the question with which we are concerned here.

So now if I have my way we turn to the next five aphorisms, because I think we should try to finish our cursory reading of *Beyond Good and Evil* in the present academic year. And we have only a few more meetings since we are already at the end of April. Now in the next aphorism, he speaks first, that religion is incompatible with an ethics of work, of labor. <sup>6</sup>That is contrary to what people say nowadays, following Max Weber's statements about Puritanism.<sup>v</sup> And Nietzsche develops that and shows in particular how the more people become infatuated with the *ethos* of work, of labor, the less are they able to understand the leisure which is absolutely essential for a religious life. As a particularly striking example he gives—the one which was particularly interesting to him, but probably also to us—the scholar: the modern scholars who become ever more men of labor and call it research, and their complete incomprehension of religion.

It is too long to read, but let us read only toward the end of this aphorism, when it begins “each time.” Do you have that? Ya.

**Reader:**

Every age has its own divine type of naïveté for whose invention other ages may envy it—and how much naïveté, venerable, childlike, and boundlessly clumsy naïveté lies in the scholar's faith in his superiority, in the good conscience of his tolerance, in the unsuspecting simple certainty with which his instinct treats the religious man as an inferior and lower type that he has outgrown, leaving it behind, *beneath* him—him, that presumptuous little dwarf and rabble man, the assiduous and speedy head- and handiworker of “ideas,” of “modern ideas”! (*BGE*, 58)

**LS:** “Each age has its own divine kind of naïveté,” he calls it. And that is true even of this particularly ridiculous naïveté of the modern scholar which Nietzsche is here characterizing. That is, I think, connected with some things we have read before. Saying “yes” to everything that is and was means of course also saying “yes” to every historical period. This would not be reasonable if every historical period did not possess within itself something divine. For instance, even the contemptible feeling of superiority to

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<sup>v</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1930). [Originally published *Die Protestantischer Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1905).]

religion and the incomprehension of it so characteristic of the contemporary scholar is the divine, venerable kind of naïveté. So there is some connection with what went before. But the main point of the whole argument [is] the inferiority of the so-called modern ideas to religion, and this is the first point which Nietzsche makes.

And then he develops his theme more fully in number 59, and he grants something: that the religious men, *homines religiosi*, more than any other artists have falsified life. But by doing this, by giving an untruly comforting image of life, [they] have divinized the image of life in order to make life bearable. Perhaps there was hitherto no stronger means for beautifying man himself than piety. So although a man like Nietzsche has to abandon piety, he cannot but be very grateful to what we owe to piety.

He develops his thought more fully, more clearly, more simply in number 60, which we shall read.

**Reader:**

To love man *for God's sake*—that has so far been the noblest and most remote feeling attained among men. That the love of man is just one more stupidity and brutishness if there is no ulterior intent to sanctify it; that the inclination to such love of man must receive its measure, its subtlety, its grain of salt and dash of ambergris from some higher inclination—whoever the human being may have been who first felt and “experienced” this, however much his tongue may have stumbled as it tried to express such *délicatesse*, let him remain holy and venerable for us for all time as the human being who has flown highest yet and gone astray most beautifully! (*BGE*, 60)

**LS:** In other words, the peak of mankind up to now was religion, [but] not every religion, and religious man. The example which Nietzsche gives is the love of mankind for the sake of God, love of man without such “for the sake of” is an absurdity in his opinion. I mean, it’s as reasonable as love of dogs or cats or birds, as the Greeks would therefore use the word “*philanthropia*,” love of human beings, more or less as “*philocria*,” you know, some people love dogs. All right. One can love human beings, but there are also reasons for not loving them. There must be something transhumanitarian in order to justify that, and the most powerful formula for that is to love man for the sake of God, to love man as a creature of God. But as Nietzsche says here again, as in the preceding aphorism, it was hitherto the highest; it was an erroneous thought but hitherto the highest. Let us say a few words on the last two aphorisms. Yes?

**Student:** I just want to ask a quick question. He seems to be really oversimplifying and very unfair that this was the highest thing that came before, in light of the case that the highest thing that came before had something to do with loving men, because in loving men there was an approach to God—that somehow God was involved in ‘s loving each other, but that is not the same thing as saying to love one’s fellow men for God’s sake. That seems to be an oversimplification and in a way that’s very unfair. It’s okay if he radicalizes it, but when he radicalizes it to the point of—

**LS:** What Nietzsche means is clear, I think, but what do you mean by your “loving man and somehow God enters into it”?

**Same Student:** God has something to do with the love that men have for—

**LS:** But what does it mean?

**Same Student:** Well, that “something” is obscure, of course. But what I’m trying to say is that whatever it is is more complicated than simply saying to love man for God’s sake.

**LS:** Ya, but is not God to be an ingredient—but not the dominating ingredient—in that love of man, that is the point. But Nietzsche would then say: If it is such an ingredient, then it can only be understood as a dominating [ingredient], not merely as one among many.

**Same Student:** Would that make his formulation susceptible then to love man for God’s sake? Why not think of it as loving man, because through loving man God shines through that relationship.

**LS:** Yes, but would not God be the end and the initiating cause?

**Same Student:** He may be the final discovery in a long life of loving man.

**LS:** All right, would then the love of man not receive its stamp, its venerability, from the relation to God?

**Same Student:** But that would mean that his formula would really . . . because it would be not to love man for God’s sake, it would be to love man for man’s sake.

**LS:** No, no, that is not—what Nietzsche simply rejects, as he makes clear. That would not be in itself any more respectable than that a cockroach loves cockroaches.

**Same Student:** Oh, I see, he doesn’t want to make a value judgment about the difference between man and a cockroach.

**LS:** Oh, Nietzsche is not afraid of value judgment; he is not a scientist, but that is not the point. But he would say that men love men under certain conditions is perhaps understandable from the fact that they belong to the same species. They have crudely the same enemies—crocodiles and other things of this kind. You know that statement of Douglas—Lincoln to this effect,<sup>vi</sup> but that is not what he calls loving human beings, and this must have something which cannot be justified by man as we know him. The

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<sup>vi</sup> Abraham Lincoln claimed that Stephen Douglas made the following remark many times “in the canvass in Illinois”: That in a conflict between a negro and a crocodile, he would side with the negro; in one between a negro and a white, he would side with the white. Speech at Indianapolis, IN, September 19, 1859, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 3:470.

traditional formula is “for the sake of God.” Nietzsche says “for the sake of the superman,” for man who transcends that . . .

Now let us first finish this chapter. Now Nietzsche looks at the other side of the picture, not for what we have to be grateful to religion but for the other things. The first consideration is this. For the true philosopher, all religion—that is to say, of the past or of the future—can only be [a] means for his work of breeding and educating the human race; in particular, asceticism and Puritanism. And Puritanism must not be understood merely as the historical phenomenon of the seventeenth century, of course, and all the strict moral abolition are almost indispensable means for education and ennobling the race which wishes to become master over its origins from the rabble and gutter. And he gives a long list of the other immensely useful and high purposes served by religion, and only then in the last paragraph does he speak of the legacy.

While religion has many salutary effects if it is in the hands of the philosopher, if it is ministerial—sovereign religion, as he calls it—[it] belongs to the chief cause which kept the type man from the highest flight of which he is capable, and in particular worsened or degenerated the European type, the European race. Here he has of course in mind especially Christianity. But the key point is the distinction between ministerial religion, [and ministerial religion] if administered by the right kind of people. The distinction which Nietzsche makes here reminds us of the distinction implied in Plato’s critique of poetry in the *Republic*. Poetry is of course not objectionable if it is in the service of philosophy. What Plato directs his criticism against is a sovereign poetry, poetry not ministerial. This is then the main point which Nietzsche discusses in chapter 3.

Then we should at least devote some time to the fourth chapter, which is very hard to discuss in class—there are many<sup>7</sup>, about one hundred twenty-three or twenty-two short aphorisms, all very short. And there does not seem to be any order; there doesn’t seem to be any rhyme or reason. There is one, as we have seen, if we consider the function of this chapter in the whole: he divides the whole book of *Beyond Good and Evil* into two parts, chapters 1 to 3, and chapters 5 to 9. That is clear, but that is of course not a sufficient explanation of the individual aphorisms, and he does not give us any inkling as to the order. Perhaps we read the beginning. Will you read the first?

**Reader:**

Whoever is a teacher through and through takes all things seriously only in relation to his students—even himself. (*BGE*, 63)

**LS:** Ya. So that has a certain implication, I believe, at least that it assumes that Nietzsche thinks one should not take oneself seriously only with a view to the pupil or with a view to other people in general. Ya? So this would be then a certain being oneself, being for oneself; or to use an expression he used earlier, in number 41, “preserving oneself.” That is the overriding consideration, not independent . . . Now if you turn to the second aphorism, number 64, you see that this thought is continued.

**Reader:**

“Knowledge for its own sake”—that is the last snare of morality: with that one becomes completely entangled in it once more. (*BGE*, 64)

**LS:** Ya, here is again the sacrifice of the self for something else: here, not for the sake of the pupil, but for the sake of knowledge. This beginning makes sense. Now knowledge cannot be good for its own sake. It is justifiable only as self-knowledge. Being oneself means being honest with oneself, going the way to one’s own ideal. This is a thought which comes to the surface in the sequel. But it seems that this thought has some atheistic<sup>vii</sup>—there occur in the chapter altogether nine references to God, and only one of them points to Nietzsche’s own theology. We might take this up first, because it is very . . . number 150.

**Reader:**

Around the hero everything turns into a tragedy; around the demi-god, into a satyr play; and around God—what? perhaps into “world”?— (*BGE*, 150)

**LS:** Ya, the world. A thought to which I referred before<sup>viii</sup>—reference to what one can call, with a certain blasphemous expression, Nietzsche’s theology. Number 67. Yes?

**Reader:**

Love of *one* is a barbarism; for it is exercised at the expense of all others. The love of God, too. (*BGE*, 67)

**Student:** That seems to be the same comment that he made before when he talked about loving man for the sake of God.

**LS:** But that means loving man. It doesn’t mean that loving men for the sake of God—

**Same Student:** Loving man for the sake of God would not be loving man at all.

**LS:** No, no, that is not what he means. According to the Bible, love God with all thy heart, all thy might, and all thy soul; and under that, love thy neighbor like thyself.

**Same Student:** But what he said in this earlier part here is to love man for the sake of God. I thought you said that what he was doing there was talking about loving God, and because men in themselves are not loveable according to you; there is no reason to love them.<sup>8</sup>

**LS:** Yes, but on the other hand, one can love them—it is all right to love them, but then you need a higher justification. And what Nietzsche opposed, at least in number 67, is a love to God which does not leave room for love of human beings.

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<sup>vii</sup> There is a break in the tape.

<sup>viii</sup> There is a break in the tape.

**Same Student:** Oh, so I guess if one could love both God and man then one could see those things as being in some way connected to each other, and not necessarily the one justifying the other, or the one serving as the excuse of the other.

**LS:** Not the excuse, but justifying could very well be—there could be an order of rank without denying the indispensability of the loved one.

**Same Student:** I see.

**LS:** Perhaps this doesn't make sense—when I counted the references to God, I looked [to see] if there are any references to nature. There is only a single one; that is quite remarkable. But instead we have nine references dealing with woman and man, and that is a way of talking about nature. If you do not believe me, you will see later on that I am probably . . . because that is the most massive example for Nietzsche of the presence of nature, of the natural order of rank among human beings, because Nietzsche did not believe in what the women's lib movement believes, so you will not be surprised by that sort of thing. And to follow the thread of the argument to the extent which is possible, let us look at number 71.

**Reader:**

The sage as astronomer.— As long as you still experience the stars as something “above you” you lack the eye of knowledge. (*BGE*, 71)

**LS:** Ya, “of the knower.” So the knower whom Nietzsche has in mind has not, like Kant, the starry heaven above himself—and to that one could say the moral law within him—because he is beyond good and evil. Yes. But precisely because he is a knower in this sense he has a very exacting morality, a morality indeed beyond good and evil, there is no question. And to this, <sup>9</sup>let us read number 74 first. 74, 75, 76.

**Reader:**

A man with spirit—

**LS:** With “genius.”

**Reader:**

A man with genius is unbearable if he does not also have at least two other things: gratitude and cleanliness. (*BGE*, 74)

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Well, there's a little bit of a disparity between the elements that he considers to be essential.

**LS:** Why?

**Same Student:** I guess that spiritedness is on a different plane from cleanliness.

**LS:** Yes, well, “spirit” is not the word; “genius.” He says a man of “genius.”

**Same Student:** Well, genius, but it’s hard to understand how cleanliness—

**LS:** Well, precisely because it is possible that there are geniuses who are indecent fellows. What Nietzsche is trying to point out here in his way is that the two things are not identical, knowledge and nature, but there is a kinship between them. And he uses these two examples, minimal examples. He says, “if he does not also have *at least* two other things: gratitude and cleanliness.”<sup>ix</sup> I hope you don’t understand by cleanliness bad smell, deodorants—you don’t mean that, of course.

**Same Student:** Well, I took the most simple word.

**LS:** Yes, well, if you don’t think of perfumes or so, that’s another matter. But it has nothing to do with cleanliness.

**Same Student:** I think of it as an absence of dirt. I guess I don’t go so far as to think about deodorants.

**LS:** Yes. Good, all right. And that can also be understood in a slightly more subtle sense.

**Same Student:** As decency.

**LS:** Yes, and not imposing one’s inner dirt on others, not talking about it to others.

**Same Student:** A kind of refinement and a lack of vulgarity.

**LS:** Ya, something of this type. All right. Perhaps also such things as plagiarism and so can also be called lack of cleanliness and so on.

**Same Student:** Maybe that would be lack of gratitude.

**LS:** All right, but that would only conserve it. Now let us see—yes?

**Another Student:** What about 119?

**LS:** 119? Yes, that is a good point. Read it.

**Reader:**

The disgust with dirt can be so great that it keeps us from cleaning ourselves—from “justifying” ourselves. (*BGE*, 119)

**Same Student:** The unbearable being dirty.

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<sup>ix</sup> Strauss’s emphasis.

**LS:** No, that is<sup>10</sup> a different aspect of that, where cleanliness is so great that you do not remove the dirt because you don't wish to have anything to do with the dirt, not even to clean it away. Now the next one, which I think is today trivial and taught in second grade, in elementary school. Number 75.

**Reader:**

The degree and kind of a man's sexuality reach up into the ultimate pinnacle of his spirit. (*BGE*, 75)

**LS:** "Of his mind."<sup>x</sup> One couldn't say it more briefly, could one? And infinite consequences can follow it, and there are people who are obliged, of course, especially to Nietzsche. There is a whole literature on Nietzsche's sex life, by a man called Podach<sup>xi</sup> who wrote about that—you remember him—and who found out everything, and that is a sad story. Pardon?

**Student:** I was just thinking—

**LS:** Of Kant, of course, you would think.

**Student:** Right after 74, Nietzsche begins to become a little bit unbearable according to his own standards. I mean, if we agree that cleanliness is—

**LS:** Very well. But is it not more simple to assume that Nietzsche wants to make it perfectly clear—a very demanding morality but not asceticism, not Puritanism. They are impossible. Because one must take together, I believe, numbers 75 and 76, which you will be so good to read.

**Reader:**

Under peaceful conditions a warlike man sets upon himself. (*BGE*, 76)

**LS:** So just as one cannot reject sex, one cannot reject war—or as they say today, aggressivity. They are ingredients of the only human virtue which is possible and desirable. There is one which Nietzsche will explain later on in a different context, but which we will nevertheless read. There is only one point, and I do not know whether this comes out in the translation, if you turn number 83. This is the first aphorism which has an italicized heading in the German original, the "instinct," a word which will play a very great role in the next chapter.

**Reader:**

*Instinct.*— When the house burns one forgets even lunch.— Yes, but one eats it later in the ashes. (*BGE*, 83)

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<sup>x</sup> Strauss retranslates the end of the line just read.

<sup>xi</sup> Erich F. Podach, *Der Kranke Nietzsche* (Wien: Bermann-Fischer, 1937).

**LS:** Then there come a few aphorisms about men and women, a theme which will be taken up later on. We will not read that because it might be construed as unfriendly to the fair sex. Let us turn to number 87.

**Reader:**

*Tethered heart, free spirit.*— If one tethers one’s heart severely and imprisons it, one can give one’s spirit many liberties: I have said that once before. But one does not believe me, unless one already knows it— (*BGE*, 87)

**LS:** I think that is absolutely crucial, and it is a subject which Nietzsche takes up again and in a less concise way in number 188, which I hope we will read next time. Now that also, as you see, has an italicized heading. There are four such aphorisms altogether in this chapter. “A bound heart, free mind.” I would have [translated] it “mind,” not “spirit.” There are people, and today they are particularly noticeable and noisy, who think a free heart and a free mind go together. Nietzsche rejects that. He wants a free mind, otherwise he would be an obscurantist; but there is a price that has to be paid for that, and that is a bound heart. A bound heart.

**Student:** When he refers to “heart,” does that have any relation to what is going on in 75?

**LS:** No, not particularly. He must not have believed that . . . Much closer I believe is the connection with number 107, if we want to read that.

**Reader:**

Once the decision has been made, close your ear even to the best counterargument: sign of a strong character. Thus an occasional will to stupidity. (*BGE*, 107)

**LS:** And the bound heart must. A heart is that in us by virtue of which we feel and will.

**Student:** *Thumos*?

**LS:** No, that’s not quite the same. It is of course reducible from here and the Latin core, but no, it is not identical with *thumos* because *epithumia*, after all, also belongs to the heart. Yes?

**Another Student:** Is this sentiment or is that going too far?

**LS:** Yes, but I believe willing and feeling—all right, in contradistinction to thinking, sentiment reminds us of the Latin “*sentire*,” which may refer precisely to thinking. One can state this in a proxy, in . . . as follows, and perhaps not altogether alien to Nietzsche. I mean, that is the way in which I always, when I still was a teacher, said to my students: the first rule is to be a good boy, meaning docile, and do your homework and all the other things. And if you have been a good boy for a long time, then you acquire gradually the right also to be a naughty boy, which implies of course that what one wants to be is to be naughty. <sup>11</sup>We desire that somehow, but we have no natural right to that. That right must

be acquired. The freedom of the mind: we have no right to that by nature. That must be acquired, and it is acquired by the opposite: by unfreedom, by obedience. Read 188, which we cannot read now—a long, very important aphorism in the next chapter.

Pardon?

**Student:** In the number 90 he seems to make a distinction between the ones who are below hatred and love, who are the heavy spirited people, and then the ones who are way above hatred and love and who are the free spirits.

**LS:** You cannot link up—I mean, this is not a mathematical book. In the others on many levels are a great variety of phenomena.

**Same Student:** It seems at least that he's got three positions here. He says the heavy spirited people become lighter precisely through that which makes the others heavier.

**LS:** Yes, but that does not necessarily mean that the one is inferior to the other. It does imply a value judgment, as you call it—in 88, for example, when he says, “One begins to distrust very intelligent persons when they become embarrassed.” Ya?

**Same Student:** What does that mean?

**LS:** Because you expect them never to be embarrassed—not only to keep their cool but also to have an answer. And then you wonder, are they perhaps not as intelligent as you thought. Can you trust them in the way in which you thought you could trust them?

**Same Student:** When I read that I thought it kind of referred to politicians, because in the English translation it uses the word “clever people,” which we associate now in large parts of the West with politicians: “clever,” “devious,” “slick.”

**LS:** But that is not implied in the German world “*klug*.” It means “prudent.” “Prudent” would probably be the best translation, “prudent” as distinguished from “wise.”

**Another Student:** Is there another aphorism . . . to impress someone favorably . . .

**LS:** There is something to that, but you present yourself as inferior to him, don't you?

**Same Student:** Yes, but for a reason. You would perhaps distrust the person who does that for a reason but . . .

**LS:** I believe it amounts to the same thing. If that is so, then it is the rule of prudence. I wonder whether that is not . . . to present yourself as embarrassed and then you will no longer appear to be so prudent, so clever, to the other. But there is one point only regarding this very important point, which you have mentioned, number 87—freedom of one's mind is not possible without a dash of stupidity. One can put it this way. And then of course we have read number 8, near the beginning: “At the bottom of every philosophy, the conviction of the philosopher enters the stage like the ass in a mystery

play: *Adventavit asinus, Pulcher et fortissimus*” [BGE, 8]. He has arrived, the donkey, beautiful and very strong. That is the . . . of this whole thought.

There is a point which comes up in the rest of this chapter. Self-knowledge is not only very difficult but impossible to achieve if you take it strictly enough. Man could not live with perfect self-knowledge. Let us read 80 and 81.

**Reader:**

A matter that becomes clear ceases to concern us.— What was on the mind of that god who counseled: “Know thyself!” did he mean: “Cease to concern yourself! Become objective!”— And Socrates?— And “scientific men”?— (BGE, 80)

**LS:** Yes. So there seems to be a question whether “Know thyself” is an unqualifiedly valid rule, but perhaps it is arranged in the nature of things that that rule can never be fully practiced. Yes?

**Student:** Even if it were impossible to attain self-knowledge, that still would mean that the argument to that could be based on this premise, namely, that to become one, you need to concern one. Would that still be possible by the conclusion he reached given that he throws out the premise?

**LS:** Well, there is another point: look at number 73. Read it.

**Reader:**

Whoever reaches his ideal transcends it *eo ipso*. (BGE, 73)

**LS:** Is this not pertinent to what he says here? The ideal is achieved: everything has become clear not only theoretically but practically. But are we not by this very fact beyond the ideal, as by this very fact it ceases to be the ideal? Has it not ceased to be of any concern to us? The next one, 81, has also to do I believe with the same question.

**Reader:**

It is terrible to die of thirst in the ocean. Do you have to salt your truth so heavily that it does not even—quench thirst any more? (BGE, 81)

**LS:** That is to say, a degree of self-knowledge in which man could no longer live. I believe that is the meaning in the context.

**Student:** Didn’t he say in one of the earlier aphorisms in one the earlier books that the stature of a man could be determined by how much truth he could stand?

**LS:** Yes, sure, but there are limits. There<sup>12</sup> is no contradiction between the two.

**Same Student:** No, this is perfectly compatible with what he is saying here.

**LS:** Ya. Regarding the same subject, there are two aphorisms later; let me see if I can find them. Number 249, a very short one. 249.

**Reader:**

Every people has its own Tartuffery and calls it its virtues.— What is best in us we do not know—we cannot know. (*BGE*, 249)

**LS:** Ya, and if this is too horrific, you can look at number 231.

**Reader:**

Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does which does not merely “preserve”—as physiologists know. But at the bottom of us, really “deep down,” there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions. Whenever a cardinal problem is at stake, there speaks an unchangeable “this is I”; about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only finish learning—only to discover ultimately how this is “settled in him.” At times we find certain solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in *us*; some call them henceforth *their* “convictions.” Later—we see them only as steps to self-knowledge, signposts to the problem we *are*—rather, to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual *fatum*, to what is *unteachable* very “deep down.” (*BGE*, 231)

**LS:** Yes, so our fundamental stupidities<sup>13</sup> are our peculiar limitation, without which we would not be who we are and without which we would not be able to understand anything.

**Student:** This reminds of something in, I think, Pindar, who said, “We become ourselves.”

**LS:** No, that does not necessarily help with the implication.

**Same Student:** But here it’s as if you have some *fatum*, something—

**LS:** Oh, in this way, ya. But the emphasis in Nietzsche is the limitation, or as he says, the stupidity.

**Same Student:** Yes, I guess Nietzsche would say in answer to Pindar, “you can only become yourself,” emphasizing the limitation.

**LS:** Well, that is not quite true, because Nietzsche knew and speaks frequently of the many people who are disloyal to themselves, so it is necessary to have such a maxim like “Become who you are.”

**Same Student:** I thought when that maxim was given, it meant “Become at least what you are.”

**LS:** I do not know Pindar enough to interpret that.

**Student:** Yes, don't fault the low one.

**LS:** You see this in 231. If you still have it in front of you, read the end of this paragraph.

**Reader:**

After this abundant civility that I have just evidenced—

**LS:** Namely, an admission of his own fundamental stupidity. Yes.

**Reader:**

I shall perhaps be permitted more readily to state a few truths about “woman as such”—assuming that it is now known from the outset how very much these are after all only—*my* truths. (*BGE*, 231)

**LS:** It seems is a tiny little bit too clumsy for Nietzsche, this transition, this kind of *excusatio*, which he makes here. At any rate, now there follows a section in the rest of this chapter on men and women. Well, I believe he would be called today by some people—

**Student:** A male chauvinist pig.

**LS:** No, a sexist, they call it. But in the context of the whole work, there is the question of nature. Is there a hierarchy in nature, or is there not? And the lines were clearly drawn fundamentally, as clearly as they are now, between the radical egalitarian, if only with the prospect of future egalitarianism, that doesn't make sense . . . an egalitarian now and the Greek anti-egalitarianism. And Nietzsche is the greatest of the latter.

**Student:** You said that this paragraph here with this *excusatio* was a little bit inappropriate . . .

**LS:** It's a bit clumsy.

**Same Student:** But he's always been willing to be totally offensive before.

**LS:** Exactly, that's the reason—

**Same Student:** Well, why now we begin to see it, I don't see the reason for it, because his statements concerning women are *so* offensive that they are at the very point upon—

**Another Student:** Amusing.

**Student:** Amusing? Well, it depends how seriously one takes Nietzsche, but—

**LS:** Well, the charming words that he uses here, “*Schwarz Gewand und Schweigsamkeit kleidet Weib—gescheidt*,” “A Black dress and taciturnity gives every wife the appearance of—nobility.”<sup>xii</sup>

**Same Student:** As an example of his offensive taste, of which that’s one—but he seems to have a justified fear that the rational men who are reading his works may really depart from him when he becomes offensive in that way.

**LS:** No, no, not at that time. That was the age of—how did Max Weber call it, who was not particularly in favor of it, of this extremely—of the man, you know, with the beard and the tobacco smell. Weber had a beautiful description of him, and he found it on one of his American trips when he saw how among civilized people in this country the men treated their wives and contrasted that with the way this was being done in Germany, and he liked it much better here than in Germany. He had a beautiful expression for this kind of maleness, which was absolutely predominant. And that had nothing to do with political parties . . . old-fashioned, but<sup>14</sup> he speaks of the . . . patriarchal ground—well<sup>xiii</sup> . . .<sup>xiv</sup>

**Student:** I don’t know.

**LS:** You know when the sun rises in the morning.

**Student:** The dew that comes off the grass.

**LS:** Yes, something like, but patriarchal . . . Well, that is out—although of course not quite, because when you look around, with a few exceptions, like India and Israel, this is still a man’s world, politically—I mean, in spite of . . . Yes, Indira Gandhi, she rules India, doesn’t she?

**Same Student:** Did you say a man’s world? Indira Gandhi is a woman. [Laughter]

**LS:** That was . . . Golda Meier, but in the main, what did Muskie<sup>xv</sup> say that was so resented—that a black man would not be electable?

**Same Student:** As vice-president. You couldn’t put a black man on the ticket.

**LS:** Well, of a woman he didn’t even say it, because that went without question.

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<sup>xii</sup> *BGE*, “Seven Epigrams on Woman,” 3. Strauss’s translation.

<sup>xiii</sup> In her biography of Weber, Marianne Weber includes passages from Max Weber’s letters to friends during their American trip in 1904, yet passages of the sort that Strauss refers to are not in her account. See “The New Phase,” in Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. Harry Zohn (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), chapter 9.

<sup>xiv</sup> There is a brief exchange with a student about a German expression.

<sup>xv</sup> Edmund Muskie, US Senator from Maine (1959-1980); he was the Democratic party nominee for vice-president in 1968 (with Hubert Humphrey as the presidential candidate).

**Same Student:** Shirley Chisholm<sup>xvi</sup> doesn't feel that way.

**LS:** But she will learn it. So now next time I hope we can discuss chapter 5, and I believe it is of some help for the understanding of chapter 5 if you look at the heading of the chapter. It is called "Toward Natural History of Morality," and is the only place where the word "nature" occurs in a chapter heading.<sup>xvii</sup> I wonder whether this is a key to chapter 5 and maybe the whole . . . Nature had been mentioned, naturally, but it had not been the theme in any way in the preceding chapters. And the word "nature" occurred only a single time in this fourth chapter, and that was not a very revealing—<sup>xviii</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "as he says."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "literally."

<sup>3</sup> Changed from fragment "never published by him."

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "the."

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "of" and added "which."

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "because."

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "about how many, simple arithmetic."

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "sort of—only loving."

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "certain particularities which we may."

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "something different."

<sup>11</sup> Moved "that."

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "are limits."

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "which."

<sup>14</sup> Deleted "that old-fashioned."

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<sup>xvi</sup> Congresswoman from New York (1969-1983). Chisholm, who was the first African-American congresswoman, sought to be nominated the Democratic party presidential candidate in 1972.

<sup>xvii</sup> Strauss says here "The Natural History of Morality," and not "Natural History of Morals."

<sup>xviii</sup> The recording ends here.

### Session 11: May 4, 1972

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —and he develops that more fully perhaps in two aphorisms of the *Dawn of Morning*, number 318 and number 454. It is very hard for me to translate this beautiful German into a decent English. And I suppose we don't have translations of the *Dawn of Morning* here, because Mr. Kaufmann, however useless he may be from other points of view, gives at least an approximation to the German better than I could. For example, in 318, there is a role-acting of the systematicians: Why they tried to fill a system and to make the horizon around it round; they must try to present their weaker qualities in the style of their stronger ones; they wish to present complete and homogeneous strong natures. Now what he has in mind I believe is, for example, this. If someone writes a part of the system of philosophy nineteenth-century style, [it] was of course aesthetics. And the aesthetician had to deal with all arts. If he didn't have any sense for music, still it was his duty as the orderer of the system of aesthetics to write a chapter or chapters on music, and there was a certain swindle in that, and the same would apply to other things which the systematician had to do.

In 454 in the same writing, he says a book like this is not for reading through and reading aloud, but to [be] open to it especially when one takes a walk and when one is on a journey. One must put one's head into it and always again take it out, and never find anything usual, anything customary around one. <sup>1</sup>[With] an ordinary book you enter the book and stay in that, and you may lose all contact with the world, and here the contact must be constantly restored. And yet the radical difference between the world around us and the thoughts presented in the aphoristic book must be real.

Yet in spite of the aphoristic character of Nietzsche's presentation, especially in *Beyond Good and Evil*, as we have seen in a number of cases, the aphorisms have a lucid order which reveals itself once one reads them with the necessary degree of care. They seem to be disconnected and desultory but this character is more pretended than real. I think perhaps the best example of this kind we had was aphorism 35—I don't know whether you remember it, which begins “O Voltaire!, O humanity!, O blößen”—what is blößen? Stupidity?

**Student:** Nonsense.

**LS:** Nonsense is not—well, it doesn't matter. Well, let us see where it is, number 35.

**Reader:**

O Voltaire! O humaneness! O nonsense! There is something about “truth,” about the search for truth; and when a human being is too human about it—“*il ne cherche le vrai que pour faire le bien*”—I bet he finds nothing. (*BGE*, 35)

**LS:** Ya. This seems to have [been] just inserted. I don't know why; for no reason. But if one understands the preceding aphorism, in which Nietzsche speaks of the world which is of any concern to us in tacit contradistinction to the world in itself. Now the world of concern to us, he says, is a fiction: it is our work, and it means the world of concern to us is anthropocentric. But that needs a qualification, a warning, and that warning is given by aphorism 35. The anthropocentrism must not be moralistic, Voltairean. So that shows how lucid the order is. And I think the same is true in all other cases, although I can't claim to have discerned it clearly in all cases, especially in chapter 4, which we considered briefly last time.

Now we turn to chapter 5, "Toward Natural History of Morality." This is the central chapter of the book and is the only one whose heading refers to nature. Question: Could nature be the theme of this chapter or even of the whole rest of the book? The term "nature," to say nothing of physiology, physics, naturalists, had been mentioned more than once in the first four chapters. Let us consider briefly the most important or striking of these mentions of nature. In aphorism 9, Nietzsche discusses the Stoic imperative to live according to nature, and in that context he makes a distinction between nature and life. He does the same<sup>2</sup> in aphorism 49, the aphorism devoted to Greek religion: the Greeks stood in gratitude before nature and life.

On another occasion, in 22, he makes a distinction between nature and us. The opposite of life is of course death, which is or at least may be no less natural than life. The opposite of the natural is the unnatural, and that may be the artificial, the domesticated, the misbegotten, the antinatural, of which he speaks on a few occasions. In other words, the unnatural may very well be alive.

Now in the introductory aphorism, number 186, Nietzsche speaks of the desideratum of a natural history of morality, and he does this in a manner which reminds us of what he said in the introductory aphorism of the chapter on religion, number 45. But in the case of the chapter on religion, he led us to suspect that the true science of religion—that is to say, the empirical psychology of religion—is for all practical purposes impossible. For the psychologist would have to be familiar with the religious experience of the most profound religious man, *homines religiosi*, and at the same time be able to look down from above on these experiences. Now some exist apart for all practical purposes, and therefore we cannot hope to get it, and we wouldn't find it, say, in William James's *Variety of Religious Experience*.<sup>1</sup> Yet when stating the case for an empirical study, a description of the various moralities as he does here, he states a case against the possibility of a philosophic ethics, a science of morals which teaches the only true morality. And he doesn't leave any doubt in our minds that an empirical study of the various moralities is possible. It could seem that Nietzsche makes higher demands on the student of religion than on the student of morality, and that would not be absurd on the face of it. This is perhaps the reason why he did not entitle the third chapter "The Natural

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<sup>1</sup> William James, *The Variety of Religious Experience* (New York: Library of American Paperback Classics, 1990).

History of Religion,” a title with which he surely was familiar, because a very famous essay of David Hume is entitled *The Natural History of Religion*.<sup>ii</sup>

Now the philosopher’s science of morals with which he takes issue here claimed to have discovered the foundations of morals, and Nietzsche denies that. He gives here a single example in this chapter, and that is of Schopenhauer, who had said [that] to teach morality is easy because we all know what morality is, but to find its foundation, to lay its foundation, that’s the difficulty. What is that morality of which there is no problem? It is one which says: “Hurt no one; on the contrary, help all whom you can possibly help.” And Nietzsche thinks that this is a preposterous morality in a world whose essence is the will to power. One can reconstruct Nietzsche’s thought very simply, because assuming for a moment that this is a possible morality, an intrahuman morality, we have also to consider the other living beings in the way in which Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer and such people did it, and then one sees it doesn’t work out. Surely in that case the question remains: Is it even feasible among human beings? That is a very touchy question, the discussion of which we will perhaps postpone until we have more material.

Now at any rate, in the next paragraph he speaks briefly of Kant’s moral teaching without any special criticism, only raising a question which in Nietzsche’s opinion must be raised regardless of whether the categorical imperative as Kant understood it exists or does not exist. There is a psychological problem. What does it mean when a philosopher sets forth such a moral teaching? That can have moral motivations and it can have amoral motivations and it can have immoral motivations—a characteristically Nietzschean objection. The main point however which he makes here is this, and that becomes clear in the next aphorism: the philosophers have found the foundations of morality in two sources, either in nature or in reason. Both attempts . . . and . . . and that is developed in aphorism 188, one of the most important aphorisms, I believe, of the book. Let us read that.

**Reader:**

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. (*BGE*, 188)

**LS:** So in other words, it is a gratuitous assumption if one says that morality must or can be natural or common to nature or irrational. Morality is according to Nietzsche a kind of tyranny against nature, also against reason. Yes?

**Reader:**

What is essential and inestimable 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 so far has achieved strength and freedom—the metrical compulsion of rhyme and rhythm.

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<sup>ii</sup> David Hume, *Dialogues and The Natural History of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

How much trouble the poets and orators of all peoples have taken—not excepting a few prose writers today in whose ear there dwells an inexorable conscience—“for the sake of some foolishness,” as utilitarian dolts say, feeling smart—“submitting abjectly to capricious laws,” as anarchists say, feeling “free,” even “free-spirited.” (*BGE*, 188)

**LS:** No, this is not in quotation marks, you see, being free-spirited.<sup>iii</sup>

**Reader:**

But the curious fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and masterly sureness, whether in thought itself or in government, or in rhetoric and persuasion, in the arts just as in ethics, has developed only owing to the “tyranny of such capricious laws”— (*BGE*, 188)

**LS:** The “arbitrary laws.”

**Reader:**

and in all seriousness, the probability is by no means small that precisely this is “nature” and “natural”—and *not* that *laissez aller*.

Every artist knows how far from any feeling of letting himself go his “most natural” state is—the free ordering, placing, disposing, giving form in the moment of “inspiration”—and how strictly and subtly he obeys thousandfold laws precisely then, laws that precisely on account of their hardness and determination defy all formulation through concepts (even the firmest concept is, compared with them, not free of fluctuation, multiplicity, and ambiguity).

What is essential “in heaven and on earth” seems to be, to say it once more, that there should be *obedience* over a long period of time and in a *single* direction: given that, something always develops, and has developed, for whose sake it is worth while to live on earth; for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality—something transfiguring, subtle, mad, and divine. The long unfreedom of the spirit, the mistrustful constraint in the communicability of thoughts, the discipline thinkers imposed on themselves to think within the directions laid down by a church or court, or under Aristotelian presuppositions, the long spiritual will to interpret all events under a Christian schema and to rediscover and justify the Christian god in every accident—all this, however forced, capricious, hard, gruesome, and anti-rational, has shown itself to be the means through which the European spirit has been trained to strength, ruthless curiosity, and subtle mobility, though admittedly in the process an irreplaceable amount of strength and spirit had to be crushed, stifled, and ruined (for here, as everywhere, “nature” manifests herself as she is, in all her prodigal and indifferent magnificence which is outrageous but noble).

That for thousands of years European thinkers thought merely in order to prove something—today, conversely, we suspect every thinker who “wants to prove

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<sup>iii</sup> Strauss corrects Kaufmann’s translation, which has “free-spirited” in quotation marks.

something”—that the conclusions that *ought* to be the result of their most rigorous reflection were always settled from the start, just as it used to be with Asiatic astrology, and still is today with the innocuous Christian-moral interpretation of our most intimate personal experiences “for the glory of God” and “for the salvation of the soul”—this tyranny, this caprice—

**LS:** “This arbitrariness,” I would translate that.

**Reader:**

this arbitrariness, this rigorous and grandiose stupidity has *educated* the spirit. Slavery is, as it seems, both in the cruder and in the more subtle sense, the indispensable means of spiritual discipline and cultivation, too. Consider any morality with this in mind: what there is in it of “nature” teaches hatred of the *laissez aller*, of any all-too-great freedom, and implants the need for limited horizons and the nearest tasks—teaching the *narrowing of our perspective*, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition of life and growth.

“You shall obey—someone and for a long time: *else* you will perish and lose the last respect for yourself”—this appears to me to be the moral imperative of nature which, to be sure, is neither “categorical” as the old Kant would have it (hence the “else”) nor addressed to the individual (what do individuals matter to her?), but to peoples, races, ages, classes—but above all to the whole human animal, to *man*. (*BGE*, 188)

**LS:** So this can also be read as commentary on this aphorism in chapter 4, on a bound heart, free mind. I forgot now which number that was. 87, thereabouts. Read this again, please.

**Reader:**

*Tethered heart, free spirit.*— If one tethers one’s heart severely and imprisons it, one can give one’s spirit many liberties: I have said that once before. But one does not believe me, unless one already knows it— (*BGE*, 87)

**LS:** Now this is here developed at much greater length, and especially in connection with the concept of nature. The opponents, the men whom Nietzsche opposes, especially the anarchists, oppose every subjection to arbitrary laws—and all laws are arbitrary in their opinion, even those which were traditionally regarded as the most sacred. Well, I believe in our age we don’t have to illustrate it, because we read every day of new freedom given by the law courts, high or low, and which are of course all conceived in this spirit of freedom. Everything of value, every freedom, arises from a compulsion of long duration that was exerted by arbitrary, unreasonable laws. A simple example available in the nineteenth century, and probably to some people today: the three unities<sup>iv</sup> in tragedy as

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<sup>iv</sup> One of the features of Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in the *Poetics* was that there is a structural unity of the action in the work. In the sixteenth century, French classical tragedy adhered rigidly to a formula of three unities: unity of time, place, and action, and imposing, for example, the restriction that the drama have a single plot, that there be one setting for the action, and that the action take place within a period of twelve to twenty-four hours. See, e.g., Darnell

understood by French classicists, compared with the freedom of Shakespeare. But a foolish limitation of the poet's imitation. And yet Nietzsche said that precisely is the title to glory of men like Corneille or Racine. That compulsion has educated the mind to freedom over against the ruinous permissiveness of anarchism. Nietzsche says precisely that long obedience to unnatural and unreasonable *nomoi*, if I may use the Greek word, is "quote the moral imperative of nature unquote." *Physis* calls for *nomoi* while preserving the distinction—nay, the opposition—of *physis* and *nomos*. That is the paradox.

Throughout this aphorism Nietzsche speaks of nature only in quotation marks except in one case, in the final mention of nature when he speaks of the moral imperative of nature. Nature, and not only nature as the anarchists understand it, has become a problem for Nietzsche. Therefore the quotation marks. And yet he cannot do without it, and therefore the omission of the quotation marks at the end of this paragraph.

This much about the natural morality. The natural morality, if we may say so, is precisely unnatural, antinatural. Arbitrary compulsion. What about rational morality? After all, since the days of Kant nature has ceased to supply the standard of morality. You know nature, one can say, was the standard of morality before, prior to Kant; and then Kant found that this was incompatible with moral freedom. Man must not stick to the apron strings of nature if he wants to be free: he must set his ends himself and not merely follow the ends imposed on him by nature. And there is a very plausible reason for this Kantian decision, because the traditional view presupposes that nature is good. How do we know that? If the goodness of nature must be justified, and therefore not nature but something else [must] supply the foundation of morality, and as matters stand that something else can only be reason.<sup>3</sup>

Now what is the characteristic of the rationalistic morality? You see, Nietzsche begins here again in aphorism 189 with some apparently desultory remark about the English Sunday, and what this did to the English. In Greece, their love of the weekday because of its dullness is a kind of fasting. And that brings in too other phenomena of the same kind. For example, the Stoic morality in the time of antiquity is a fasting against the aphrodisiac character of Hellenistic culture. And another example, what happened to love in the Christian age, in the middle ages: *amour passion* as distinguished from mere sexuality, that is only a further illustration of what he said in number 181 about the need of compulsion. And then he turns to rationalistic morality, and let us read 190, which is very readable anyway.

**Reader:**

There is something in the morality of Plato that does not really belong to Plato but is merely encountered in his philosophy—one might say, in spite of Plato: namely, the Socratism for which he was really too noble. "Nobody wants to do harm to himself, therefore all that is bad is done involuntarily. For the bad do harm to themselves: this they would not do if they knew that the bad is bad. Hence the bad are bad only because of an error; if one removes the error, one necessarily makes them—good."

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Roaten, *Structural Forms in the French Theater 1500-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960).

This type of inference smells of the *rabble* that sees nothing in bad actions but the unpleasant consequences and really judges, “it is *stupid* to do what is bad,” while “good” is taken without further ado to be identical with “useful and agreeable.” In the case of every moral utilitarianism one may immediately infer the same origin and follow one’s nose: one will rarely go astray.

Plato did everything he could to read something refined and noble into the proposition of his teacher—above all, himself. He was the most audacious of all interpreters and took the whole Socrates only the way one picks a popular tune and folk song from the streets in order to vary it into the infinite and impossible—namely, into all of his own masks and multiplicities. In a jest, Homeric at that: what is the Platonic Socrates after all if not *prosthe Platōn opithen te Platōn messē te Chimaira*. (BGE, 190)

**LS:** He says the herd instinct of obedience is transmitted by inheritance at the expense of the art of commanding. Now while this herd instinct was very powerful throughout history, it has become simply predominant in contemporary Europe,<sup>4</sup> where it destroys at least the good conscience of those who command and are independent, and where it successfully claims to be the only true morality.

More precisely,<sup>5</sup> in its earlier, healthier form, the herd morality implied already that the sole standard of goodness is a utility for the herd, that is to say, for the common good. Independence, superiority, inequality are esteemed and recognized to the extent to which they were thought to be subservient to the common good or indispensable for it and not for their own sake. The common good was understood of course as a good of a particular society or tribe, and it demanded therefore hostility to the tribe’s external and internal enemies, and in particular to criminals. That was part of the original herd morality. But this has completely changed in contemporary Europe. When the herd morality draws its ultimate consequences, as it does now, it takes the side of the very criminals and becomes afraid of inflicting punishment. It is satisfied with making the criminal harmless, which is something very different from disarming the criminal, something very different from inflicting punishment. And it is satisfied with making the criminal harmless. By abolishing the fear,<sup>v</sup> even fear of the criminal, this is all justified by the identification of goodness with compassion.

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<sup>2</sup> Moved “he does.”

<sup>3</sup> Moved “that can supply the foundations of morality.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “and.”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “there was.”

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<sup>v</sup> The tape is scrambled at this point; it is impossible to know if words were lost.

**Session 12: May 11, 1972**

**Leo Strauss:** [In progress] —from Mr. Sitte, which is of interest to the class, I believe. I read to you: “According to aphorism 201, under certain conditions the herd instinct is able to draw its conclusion, that is to say, develop into slave morality. The Jews, however, do not seem to have acquired or had these conditions in order to initiate the slave revolt in morality. This draws our attention to the stress in chapter 5 on morality as timidity, and to its almost complete silence concerning the spirit of revenge. Why does Nietzsche apparently give *ressentiment* less prominence here than in some of his other analyses of the history of morality?” That’s your question—I think a very sensible question. What’s the answer? You don’t have the answer, I know that. But how to go about getting the answer? What is the book about?

**Student:** The whole book?

**LS:** Ya, the whole book.

**Same Student:** An attempt to revalue all values.

**LS:** Ya, that all his books do in a way, at least the later books. But it’s very simple: the title is *Beyond Good and Evil*. [The] subtitle?

**Same Student:** “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.”

**LS:** “Prelude to a *Philosophy* of the Future.” So the book deals with philosophy, and therefore a natural limitation that does not fall directly under the heading of philosophy is reasonably excluded. Now if we want to have a full account of morality, we would have to take into account a phenomenon which has nothing to do with philosophy, such as Judaism and Christianity. Therefore in the *Genealogy of Morals*, they occupy a very large role, and here Nietzsche limits himself in this book to other phenomena. Now he has indicated right at the beginning, in the preface, that Christianity is Platonism for the people. Plato and everything that name implies, that is the critical target here, not Platonism for the people.

**Student:** Someone like Socrates or Plato would somehow not bring out . . .

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

**Same Student:** Why would timidity be philosophical then . . .

**LS:** Because the philosophers as philosophers have frequently been under the spell of it. For example—to take his examples: Spinoza’s so-called vivisections of the affects, or Aristotle’s morality of the mean, of mediocrity; these are also forms of the morality of

timidity. In a speech of Zarathustra near the beginning, “Of the Chairs of Virtue”—did you ever read that?—<sup>1</sup>Nietzsche speaks obviously of philosophers and not of theologians. And they have one big goal, namely, to give men a pleasant sleep—you know?—meaning quieting passion. That is characteristic of the philosopher. He means of course the famous philosophic schools of late antiquity in the first place, but to some extent I believe also Socrates. <sup>2</sup>In trying to answer your question I would start from the fact that *Beyond Good and Evil* is not meant to give [a] coherent and in principle [a] complete analysis of morality, but a critique of philosophy and the moral teaching of the philosophers. That complete, or in principle complete analysis of morality is given in the *Genealogy of Morals*. But it leads accidentally to the consequence that *Beyond Good and Evil* is a more beautiful book, I think, than *Genealogy of Morals*, which he calls a “*Streitschrift*”—what is that in English?

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, a polemical book. *Beyond Good and Evil* is not in the same way polemical.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** The very important strands of Nietzsche’s analysis of morality—what he says about *ressentiment*, the spirit of revenge and such things—are practically absent from *Beyond Good and Evil*. And I think it has to be understood in the light of the whole purpose of [the book.]<sup>3</sup> I can’t say more at the moment.

Now last time we discussed chapter 5, “The Natural History of Morality.” Let us remind ourselves of a general point of which we spoke last time, namely, the aphoristic character of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Aphoristic, written in aphorisms. These aphorisms are apparently disconnected and Nietzsche’s thought seems to be desultory, but if one reads him carefully, I think, one sees the hidden connection and a hidden lucid order. I gave as an example (I don’t know whether I did this last time) aphorisms 34 and 35, which is to me at least the most telling example. Someone suggested that it is a system in aphorisms. <sup>4</sup>Nietzsche admittedly is not a systematic thinker, but on the other hand these are not simply maxims and reflections like La Rochefoucauld’s.<sup>5</sup> Can one say that [it is a system in aphorisms]? I believe one should not say that, because one should respect Nietzsche’s disclaimer of having a system. He himself uses the term “experiment” [in] aphorism 42, and the German word, “*versuch*,” “*versuchung*”—experiment, temptation. That is what Nietzsche does. A profound ambiguity. The greatest example: his atheism is religious, but we must always remember that what he calls his religious instinct is a God-forming instinct, not an instinct to worship a God pre-existing his activity.

Now this theme is alluded to in *Beyond Good and Evil* but not discussed there. The ambiguity is articulated in what Nietzsche says there on nature. Now this seems to be *the* difficulty here. We have seen last time what Nietzsche demands or expects of the philosophers of the future is the subjugation of the rule of nonsense and chance and [to] replace it by the rule of reason, we would assume. Subjection of chance: that reminds us of Machiavelli’s notion of conquering chance in chapter 25 of the *Prince*. Chance must

be subjugated and she can be subjugated because she is a woman. And therefore, according to the sexist notion which Machiavelli felt as most people did in former times, there is no problem. And I don't have to apologize for it because [it] is antiquated.

Behind this formula of Machiavelli is this: the book as a whole<sup>i</sup> presents the art of ruling as a prince [as] a *techne*. But every *techne* has its limit in chance. Chance cannot be controlled. *Techne* controls its material<sup>6</sup> and so on; and *techne* knows what it is doing, but at its outer limits it is surrounded by chance. Now men in their irrationality had of course always tried to get a *techne* for controlling chance. If I may use a simple example taken from one of the classical writers, there is an art of finding a mate, a spouse—and you know there is now today marriage counseling, and today it is much more of an art than it was in former times. [Laughter] But still, this art cannot guarantee success and therefore all wise men will, in addition to marriage counseling, go to an expert in the control of chance in this subject, and that means practically soothsaying. So soothsaying, *mantiké*, is the art of controlling chance. And now the great question is whether that is a genuine art or a pseudo-art.

At any rate,<sup>7</sup> for Machiavelli this problem has disappeared. Chance itself can be controlled—that is at least the suggestion of the *Prince*. Nietzsche truly goes much beyond Machiavelli and demands that an end should be put once and for all to the rule of chance and nonsense. But as becomes clear from parallels, this subjugation of chance as he means it is at the same time the subjugation of nature. The conquest of nature had been the goal for many people prior to Nietzsche, as you know. But<sup>8</sup> the peculiarly Nietzschean difficulty is this: the subjugation of nature can be achieved or even expected only from men of a certain nature, so complete subjugation of nature cannot be expected. You need men of a certain nature to subjugate nature. We have come across this ambiguity of nature before, especially in aphorism 188, you remember, where nature is always used in quotation marks except at the last mention where the quotation marks are dropped.<sup>9</sup> I take [that] to mean that nature is problematic but one cannot do without it. We must see what this implies.

<sup>10</sup>First we must follow Nietzsche's own argument and that means we must turn to chapter 6, "We Scholars." Now the German word "scholars" has a broader meaning than the English word; it includes also scientists, like French "*savant*." The German is like the French "*savant*." Now why does Nietzsche turn to "[We]<sup>11</sup> Scholars" after chapter 5? By the way, it is the only case where "we" occurs in a chapter heading. Now the previous chapter had culminated in the desideratum for new philosophers. Thus Nietzsche is naturally led to a critique of the contemporary philosophers who are, to put it bluntly, a contemptible lot according to Nietzsche.<sup>12</sup> They are not philosophers in the serious sense of the word but professors of philosophy; and, as one can rightly say, it is as absurd to expect that a professor of philosophy is a philosopher as it is that a professor of art should be an artist. These are entirely different things. Or as Nietzsche says, philosophic laborers—or as they came to call themselves long after Nietzsche's death, men who do philosophy, like an admission that they are not philosophers—they are in the best case, Nietzsche asserts, scholars or scientists. In the best case: that means only in rare cases,

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<sup>i</sup> That is, *The Prince*.

[otherwise they are merely] competent and respectable specialists, and that is not sufficient.

The emancipation of the scholar or scientist from philosophy is understood by Nietzsche as part of the democratic movement of which he had said quite a bit in the preceding chapter, namely, of the movement of the emancipation of the low from subordination to the high. Now if we read this chapter almost a hundred years after it was written, we must say that it is helpful for understanding the present situation in the world, especially at the universities—whether among faculty or students it doesn't make such a great difference. Nietzsche's diagnosis has been confirmed, I think, by what we have witnessed. I mentioned two points which Nietzsche did not know. Under the influence of Nietzsche, but partly against Nietzsche, the sciences of man, the social sciences, were proclaimed to be value free. Value free. And that meant of course, although it is not admitted, that before the tribunal of reason all values are equal. All values are equal. That is an extreme form of democracy, much more extreme than to speak of the equality of men, which was always understood with some reasonable qualifications.

Another example. The greatest and most passionate attempt to restore philosophy to its rightful place and to its commanding position was made in our century by Husserl. Husserl claimed—and that is unique—that by restoring philosophy to its rightful place and to its commanding position, he would actualize for the first time the character of philosophy as rigorous science.<sup>ii</sup> He thought of Plato when he wrote these sentences. Yet Husserl had to admit that for the foreseeable future—in principle, for all future—philosophy as [a] rigorous science which establishes the standards of knowledge and of action has to live in an uneasy companionship with what he called philosophy as *weltanschauung*, worldview, which is admittedly unscientific. The hybrid, consisting of philosophy as rigorous science and philosophy as worldview, could not possibly give the human race that unitary and unifying guidance which Nietzsche expects from the new philosophers. I suppose you all know other examples. To me these two are the most striking ones, that nothing has fundamentally changed, and if something was wrong in that emancipation of the scholars and scientists from philosophy, it has surely not been remedied after Nietzsche.

Nietzsche gives in aphorism 204 a number of reasons or forms which this emancipation from philosophy or the revolt against philosophy takes. He<sup>13</sup> speaks of the naïveté of arrogance which he has heard on the part of young natural scientists and old physicians about philosophy and philosophers, not to speak of the most educated and most conceited of all scholars, the philologists and schoolmen, who are both most educated and most conceited by virtue of their profession. Naturally, a teacher has to be educated and has to be conceited. He means of course high school teachers. Well, the background of this is simply the German educational system: the high schools being *gymnasias*, classical high

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<sup>ii</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Leo Strauss, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," in Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 29-37.

schools, and the men who control them were classical scholars. The representatives of the sciences and of modern languages, they are marginal men in these institutions.

Now these two things—natural scientists and physicians here, philologists, i.e., classical philologists and schoolmen there—that is what they call today the two cultures. But the names, the terms which Nietzsche uses remind us of the two big organizations which had yearly conventions: one of natural scientists and physicians; and the other the classical scholars and school. So he has this concrete phenomenon in mind. Ya.

Well, we don't have to—it would be nice to read, but we cannot read all these things. In the next aphorism Nietzsche speaks of another cause of the emancipation of science from philosophy, which is to be found in modern science itself, that is to say, in contradistinction to the democratic movement. Simply the enormous extent of <sup>14</sup>this tower of Babel, which no single individual can find his way in, and therefore it is impossible to subordinate this to philosophy in any practical way. Here there is a point which we might read, a very short point. Near the beginning—the third sentence. Do you have that, in aphorism 205?

**Reader:**

It may be precisely the sensitivity of his intellectual conscience that leads him to delay somewhere along the way and to be late: he is afraid of the seduction to become a dilettante, a millipede, an insect with a thousand antennae; he knows too well that whoever has lost his self-respect cannot command or *lead* in the realm of knowledge—unless he would like to become a great actor, a philosophical Cagliostro<sup>iii</sup> and pied piper, in short, a seducer. This is in the end a question of taste, even if it were not a question of conscience. (*BGE*, 205)

**LS:** Ya, let us stop here. So self-respect—the German word is somewhat stronger: “reverence for oneself.” Now this reverence for oneself is an important point for Nietzsche, as you will find later. Crucial, even. The question is: Since ultimately every phenomenon has to be understood in the light of the will to power, what does reverence for oneself have to do with the will to power? To say nothing of that tropical man of whom Nietzsche spoke in the preceding chapter. Well, the will to power surely would have something to do with pride, and pride as distinguished from vanity. And the connection between pride and reverence for oneself is perhaps not too difficult to establish. To have reverence for oneself is inseparable from pride. Lack of such reverence for oneself is not characteristic of the scholar or scientist, but of the charlatan, the charlatan scholar.

Nietzsche makes here also a distinction in this passage, which Mr. Engeman read, between taste and conscience. Taste and conscience. Both lead in this case to the same result: to be a swindler is a sign of bad taste and it is also against conscience. But the point of view is different, whether you look at it from the point of view of taste or from the point of view of conscience. I have been told they are making now a distinction between shame and guilt culture. I think that has something to do with what Nietzsche

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<sup>iii</sup> Here the student hesitates and Strauss provides the pronunciation.

means. People who omit certain actions because it is shameful to do them, and others who omit them because if they were to do it, they would feel guilty—it's a different approach, a different point of view.

**Student:** Does this not again imply some kind of, for lack of a better word, objective or natural standard, even for these men? That is, what is the basis of good taste?

**LS:** A very necessary question to raise. But do we not, in practical taste or practical terms, observe the distinction in many cases between an individual who has taste and people who lack this, [those] who know what can be said and done in [certain]<sup>15</sup> circumstances and those who do not sense it? In other words, someone does something and you wince. You have had that experience? Good, that is against the taste. And there are other cases where one becomes indignant: this is something different, is it not? Could one not say the distinction between taste and conscience corresponds to that between wincing and becoming indignant?

**Same Student:** In some way, both for me would raise the same question; I mean, one could say either it's in response to something that is the result of convention or intuition, or else there is something beyond that.

**LS:** But why must one always raise questions of principle, especially in practical matters? There is an old, I think an Arabic proverb: One does not speak of a rope in the house of a man who hanged himself. Now if someone speaks of a rope under such conditions, one winces. It's a fact, and what is behind it of course are certain considerations like considerations for the sensitivity of other people. Why are we concerned with the sensitivity of other people leads to a great question. Nietzsche would say we only know a negative answer: Don't come with altruism as an ultimate explanation. It has something to do with a refined egoism—that would be Nietzsche's very general answer. How this refinement of the egoism takes place is a long question, but Nietzsche surely speaks to people who, thanks to fortunate circumstances, have this refined egoism; <sup>16</sup>they have this kind of wincing to which I alluded. For Nietzsche, what you seek is his highest principle: the ultimate justification is in the future, not in the past. That is where the philosophers of the future come in. Let us wait a minute. Good.

Now we turn to number 206, and here he speaks about the character of the scholar or scientist as a whole. Perhaps we should read that. He tacitly extends the verdict on the scholar's charlatanism to scholars as such. Scholars as such lack that reverence for themselves because of their inner dependence, their inner distrust, their lack of self-sufficiency, their awareness of their insufficiency—which can of course be compensated [for] easily by glibness or brashness, but the compensation proves the existence of the primary phenomenon. And this is what Nietzsche calls the lack of nobility. We always have to use this inadequate English translation. The German word is *Vornehmheit*, and the adjective, *Vornehm*, which I would translate by “patrician” or “aristocratic” rather than by “noble.” We spoke of that last time. He feels the inferiority of his nature, as he says somewhat later on in this chapter. That is necessarily so, according to Nietzsche, and [it] is a proof of the necessity of philosophy that the scholar or scientist points without

knowing it to the philosopher and therewith admits his subservience to the philosopher. He may very well dislike it, but that is so.

Now Nietzsche goes over to a more comprehensive theme, a more fundamental theme. This lack of reverence for oneself is due to a lack of self, to self-forgetting. The scholar is to be selfless. The term for that is “objective.” The pride of the scholar or scientist is objectivity. The next subject therefore of Nietzsche is a critique of objectivity. In the meantime, this has had terrific success and what they call existentialism is elaboration of this theme, but we are not concerned with existentialism but with Nietzsche. Now let us read aphorism 207.

**Reader:**

However gratefully we may welcome an *objective* spirit—and is there anyone who has never been mortally sick of everything subjective and of his accursed confounded ipsissimosity?— (*BGE*, 207)

**LS:** That comes from the Latin word, “*ipsis*,” “self,” and that is superlative. How should we translate this in English? Just “ipsissimosity.” After we know what *ipsis* is, it shouldn’t be that difficult.

**Reader:**

in the end we also have to learn caution against our gratitude and put a halt to the exaggerated manner in which the “unselfing” and depersonalization of the spirit is being celebrated nowadays as if it were the goal itself and redemption and transfiguration. This is particularly characteristic of the pessimist’s school, which also has good reasons for according the highest honors to “disinterested knowledge.”

The objective person who longer curses and scolds— (*BGE*, 207)

**LS:** Why does he<sup>iv</sup> say “person?” This term from Roman law. Nietzsche says “the objective man” or “the objective human being.”

**Reader:**

The objective human being who no longer curses and scolds like the pessimist, the *ideal* scholar in whom the scientific instinct, after thousands of total and semi-failures, for once blossoms and blooms to the end, is certainly one of the most precious instruments there are; but he belongs in the hand of one more powerful. He is only an instrument; let us say, he is a *mirror*—he is no “end in himself.” The objective man is indeed a mirror: he is accustomed to submit before whatever wants to be known, without any other pleasure than that found in knowing and “mirroring”; he waits until something comes, and then spreads himself out tenderly lest light footsteps and the quick passage of spiritlike beings should be lost on his plane and skin.

Whatever still remains in him of a “person” strikes him as accidental, often arbitrary, still more often disturbing: to such an extent has he become a passageway and reflection of

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<sup>iv</sup> That is, the translator.

strange forms and events even to himself. He recollects “himself” only with an effort and often mistakenly; he easily confuses himself with others, he errs about his own needs and is in this respect alone unsubtle and slovenly. Perhaps his health torments him, or the pettiness and cramped atmosphere of wife and friend, or the lack of companions and company—yes, he forces himself to reflect on his torments—in vain. Already his thoughts roam—to a *more general* case—

**LS:** Because that is not interesting, the individual, you know. Even he himself is not interesting. But what is pain: that is interesting.

**Reader:**

and tomorrow he knows no more than he did yesterday how he might be helped. He has lost any seriousness for himself, also time: he is cheerful, *not* for lack of distress, but for lack of fingers and handles for *his* need. His habit of meeting every thing and experience halfway, the sunny and impartial hospitality with which he accepts everything that comes his way, his type of unscrupulous benevolence, of dangerous unconcern about Yes and No—alas, there are cases enough in which he has to pay for these virtues! (*BGE*, 207)

**LS:** “For these virtues of his.”

**Reader:**

And as a human being he becomes all too easily the *caput mortuum* of these virtues.

If love and hatred are wanted from him—I mean love and hatred as God, woman, and animal understand them—he will do what he can and give what he can. But one should not be surprised if it is not much—if just here he proves inauthentic, fragile, questionable, and worm-eaten. His love is forced, his hatred artificial and rather *un tour de force*, a little vanity and exaggeration. After all, he is genuine only insofar as he may be objective: only in his cheerful “totalism” he is still “nature” and “natural.” His mirror soul, eternally smoothing itself out, no longer knows how to affirm or negate; he does not command, neither does he destroy. “*Je ne méprise presque rien*,” he says with Leibniz: one should not overlook and underestimate that *presque*.

Neither is he a model man—

**LS:** Because that’s *presque*. Otherwise, the *je ne méprise rien*; but knowing his inability, <sup>17</sup>he adds “*presque*.”

**Reader:**

he does not go before anyone, nor behind; altogether he places himself too far apart to have any reason to take sides for good or evil. When confusing him for so long with the *philosopher*, with the Caesarian cultivator and cultural dynamo, one accorded him far too high honors and overlooked his most essential characteristics: he is an instrument, something of a slave though certainly the most sublime type of slave, but in himself nothing—*presque rien*! The objective man is an instrument, a precious, easily injured and clouded instrument for measuring and, as an arrangement of mirrors, an artistic triumph

that deserves care and honor; but he is no goal, no conclusion and sunrise, no complementary man in whom the *rest* of existence is justified, no termination—and still less a beginning, a begetting and first cause, nothing tough, powerful, self-reliant that wants to be master—rather only a delicate, carefully dusted, fine, mobile pot for forms that still has to wait for some content and substance in order to “shape” itself accordingly—for the most part, a man without substance and content, a “selfless” man. Consequently, also nothing for women, *in parenthesis*.— (BGE, 207)

**LS:** <sup>v</sup>—in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, when he describes the theoretical man.<sup>vi</sup> Well, Thales of course was the old example: the man who fell in the ditch because he looked at the stars. He was not concerned with himself but with the stars. And when Socrates describes the life which this man leads, he mentions among other things that he doesn’t even know<sup>18</sup> who his neighbor is, and he doesn’t even know what kind of a being he is—whether he is a human being or some other animal—because he is concerned, let us say, with the eternal. That’s the man of objectivity. That’s the theoretical man.

Now Socrates was used by Kierkegaard independently of [and] before Nietzsche as a weapon against objectivity: Socrates the objective thinker against Hegel as an incarnation of objectivity. But Socrates is a man who makes this praise of the objective man (to use this language) in the *Theaetetus*, in the passage to which I referred. Well, how can one explain that? I mean, Socrates’s praise of the objective man who doesn’t even know whether his neighbor is a human being—and Socrates is the representative of subjective philosophizing. Well, one must ask: Did Socrates not know what kind of being his neighbor was? Do not the Platonic dialogues, among other things, show that Socrates knew so to speak all the gossip of Athens about everyone? So this excursus can hardly be the last word of Socrates, of the Platonic Socrates on this subject. So this phenomenon which Nietzsche has in mind is surely not Socrates. This we can safely say, although Nietzsche<sup>19</sup> was aware of it and regarded it as an essential ingredient of a larger whole.

Here in this passage<sup>20</sup> he speaks of the serene totalism of the scientific or scholarly man who is open to everything, who says [neither] “yes” nor “no” to anything. He is a mirror of everything. There Nietzsche says he is genuine or authentic (I believe as they say now) only so far as he can be objective: only in his serene totalism is he still “nature” and not “unnatural.” Strictly speaking, he is not natural anymore because of his objectivity, but he still is genuine. So these are two different considerations: naturalness and genuineness. A man may be genuine without being natural.

With some exaggeration, one may perhaps say that originally “natural” and “genuine” meant the same. To be genuine means “not fictitious.” For example, if someone<sup>21</sup> pretends to be something which he is not, that is spurious. But what he is and does not merely pretend to be, that is natural. What seems to have happened in the last few generations is that genuine and authentic and its opposites have taken the place of the natural for these deeper reasons which are behind the whole erosion of nature.

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<sup>v</sup> There is a break in the tape here.

<sup>vi</sup> *Theaetetus* 174a-175b

If I am not mistaken, Mr. Klein, in that enigmatic conclusion of his lecture on the concept of nature referred to this phenomenon. Is this correct?

**Mr. Klein:** The nature of nature.

**LS:** You referred more to routine, as an alternative to nature, but that is connected.

**Mr. Klein:** Yes.

**LS:** That's what I thought.

**Student:** There is one translation here which seems strange, "Caesarian cultivator and cultural dynamo." [BGE, 207]

**LS:** Men of violence or force.

**Another Student:** . . . the German.

**LS:** Oh, I see. That is probably the influence of journalism on the language of Mr. Kaufmann.

Now here he mentions also in the passage we read, a little bit toward the end of the thing, the philosopher as the complementary man in whom the rest of existence justifies itself. That is something which he had not said before. He developed in the preceding chapter a very grand picture of what the philosopher is, and we can easily see that he could be the complementary man, complementary for men, and what is incomplete in all other men is complete in him. But now we learn that he is the complementary man in whom the rest of existence—that is to say, also the nonhuman—justifies itself. The philosopher of the future is the justification of everything that is. And we must keep in mind: in one way or the other, Nietzsche must bring out this subject. We can say the philosopher of the future or the philosopher is the peak where no overcoming or transcending is necessary or possible.

In an earlier passage he had spoken, when characterizing the scholar, of his dangerous indifference to "yes" and "no" because he is open to everything. This leads naturally to the next subject, in aphorism 208: skepticism. The scholar or scientist is a skeptic. <sup>22</sup>He develops this theme of skepticism at great length in the next aphorism, which is too long to read. He speaks of the contemporary function of skepticism to counteract the real denial of life: the denial of life by deed. Skepticism, in a word, is weakness of the will, paralysis of the will, the consequence of the sudden mixture of races or classes. This is a universal phenomenon which has happened in other places too. But it is also found in our Europe today, where however the mixture of classes and hence of race was senselessly sudden. Now this disease of the will which stems from that mixture is not equally pronounced in all European countries. The two extreme poles are France and Russia: France, where the paralysis of the will is the greatest; and Russia, where it is nonexistent. And then he speaks of the danger which Russia constitutes to Europe because of the

tremendous will which it is, and therefore the consequence for Europe. If it wants to preserve itself, Europe must be unified. Nietzsche is *the* proclaimer of the unified Europe more than anyone else.

There is a convergence or kinship of what the philosopher concerned with human excellence calls for, and of what a good European is concerned with, namely, the preservation of the future of Europe. For some reasons not explained here, these two demands—the philosopher of the future and the unity of Europe—belong together. And the philosophers of the future are, as it were, the invisible spiritual rulers of a unified Europe, but in such a way that they must of course never be the servants of Europe, because that would run counter to the principles stated earlier: it is a misunderstanding of the philosophers or of the higher men generally to understand them as servants of the common good. At any rate, Nietzsche's philosophy is in a strict sense consciously historical: belonging to a certain time: the disintegration of Europe, and a certain place: Europe. The question is whether this historical character of the philosophy is not a consequence of the erosion of nature—that history as it were takes the place formerly<sup>23</sup> taken by nature.

Now in the subsequent aphorism, Nietzsche continues the discussion of skepticism and speaks of another kind of skepticism, which he finds as it were represented in Frederick the Great, who also was a skeptic, but not a skeptic who suffered from paralysis of the will, as everyone who knows a bit of his history would admit. Nietzsche thinks—and that is not merely a claim, because we have solid evidence for that in Goethe, that Frederick the Great had a decisive influence on the German mind and against the influence of the Western, especially French, thought.

Now where does Nietzsche find this influence? This we should I believe read. In aphorism 209 he speaks first of his father (Frederick), William I, this famous martinet who made his son's life absolutely miserable; the terrible things he did. Macaulay has written a beautiful, very un-Nietzschean characterization of these two kings, and I believe the main sentence is this, that the father of Frederick the Great beat up everyone, everyone who appears . . . whereas Frederick the Great demanded—what did he demand? Something like reason in addition to proximity for beating people up.<sup>vii</sup>

But you have this passage where he says, “But in the meantime in his son, that more dangerous and harder new kind of skepticism grew up.”<sup>viii</sup>

**Reader:**

Meanwhile there grew up in his son that more dangerous and harder new type of skepticism—who knows *how much* it owed precisely to the hatred of the father and the icy melancholy of a will condemned to solitude?—the skepticism of audacious manliness which is most closely related to the genius for war and conquest and first entered Germany in the shape of the great Frederick.

<sup>vii</sup> Thomas B. Macaulay, *Life of Frederick the Great* (New York: John B. Alden, 1885).

<sup>viii</sup> Strauss translates this portion of aphorism 209 from the German text.

This skepticism despises and nevertheless seizes; it undermines and takes possession—  
(*BGE*, 209)

**LS:** You must compare it always with the soft skepticism of which he had spoken in the preceding paragraph. The former does not despise: “*Je ne méprise presque rien,*” as Nietzsche says. This one despises. Yes?

**Reader:**

it does not believe but it does not lose itself in the process; it gives the spirit dangerous freedom, but it is severe on the heart—

**LS:** Remember aphorism 87? You must keep your heart imprisoned, and then you can give your mind dangerous freedom. That’s it. Yes?

**Reader:**

it is the *German* form of skepticism which, in the form of a continued Frederickianism that had been sublimated spiritually, brought Europe for a long time under the hegemony of the German spirit and its critical and historical mistrust. Thanks to the unconquerably strong and tough virility of the great German philologists and critical historical (viewed properly, all of them were also artists of destruction and dissolution), a *new* concept of the German spirit crystallized gradually in spite of all romanticism in music and philosophy, and the inclination to virile skepticism became a decisive trait, now, for example, as an intrepid eye, now as the courage and hardness of analysis, as the tough will to undertake dangerous journeys of exploration and spiritualized North Pole expeditions under desolate and dangerous skies.

There may be good reasons why warmblooded and superficial humanitarians cross themselves just when they behold this spirit—*cet esprit fataliste, ironique, méphistophélique*, Michelet calls it, not without a shudder. (*BGE*, 209)

**LS:** Let us stop here. I think this is all we need for our present purposes. It is unfortunate that Nietzsche doesn’t give a single example of the great German philologists and critics of history who lived up to this standard, because they all seem to be tinged by romanticism—at least in retrospect, and I think also from Nietzsche’s own point of view. If you think of the connection of this critical movement with [an individual], whichever individual you might think—I would have been grateful if there had been a single name mentioned. Be this as it may, this is the higher possibility and it is interesting that these are the philologists and historical critics, not the natural scientists, and that has to do with the fact that the emphasis—Nietzsche is much closer to philology and historical criticism than to natural science.

In the next aphorism, he discusses another human possibility which we find among us scholars but which distinguishes us from the philosophers, and that he calls critics, in contradistinction from skeptics. Now the philosopher must probably be a skeptic in the sense defined in 209; he must also be a critic, but he must be more than both, than either. Now a critic in contradistinction to a skeptic is a judge who judges according to certain

firm standards, whereas the skeptic as skeptic does not judge according to firm standards. But even the critic is not a philosopher. And this is directed, especially as it appears from the end of 210, against Kant. He defines criticism negatively as opposed to a spirit of conciliation, insisting on the differences and on the irreconcilabilities of things such as people who try to reconcile Christian sentiments with ancient tastes, and perhaps even with modern parliamentarianism. That is incompatible with a critical discipline of which he speaks here. The critic is a man of the either/or, of cleanliness, and severity in matters of the mind.

Now in the next aphorism, 211, he summarizes what has preceded by making a distinction between the philosophic laborers and the scientific men on the one hand, and the philosopher on the other. The former are of course only the servants of the latter. Let us read 211. No, I think in 210. What is characteristic of philosophic laborers according to the noble model of Kant and Hegel? They too are not philosophers in the highest sense as Nietzsche understands it, and why? What is characteristic of the philosopher in the higher sense? As he says in the middle of 211, that he creates values, whereas men like Kant and Hegel merely formulated, articulated, justified values created by others. Do you have that, in the middle of 211?

**Reader:**

Those philosophical laborers after the noble model of Kant and Hegel have to determine and press into formulas, whether in the realm of *logic* or *political* (moral) thought or *art*, some great data of valuations— (*BGE*, 211)

**LS:** No, he has here “the political (the moral).”<sup>ix</sup> So these two things are inseparable, and <sup>24</sup>he said earlier at the beginning of aphorism 6, in order to understand a philosopher one should first find out what morality he aim[s] at. That gives us the key to the innermost thought—one can according to this explanation<sup>25</sup> replace “moral” by “political.” The two things are only different sides of the same thing.

So let us keep this in mind. The genuine philosophers, the true philosophers, are commanders and legislators, not merely interpreters. Think of the word of Marx in his *Communist Manifesto*: Hitherto the philosophers had tried to interpret the world, but what has to be done is to change it. Nietzsche goes even beyond that, one could say. But that is one of the many [dis]agreements between Nietzsche and Marx. Nietzsche is the antagonist of Marx, although apparently he had never read Marx. I am not aware that he ever mentions him. The socialists whom he mentions are all different from Marx and [are] people who played no role in the further history of Marxism.

Now let us turn to 211. <sup>x</sup>—if we have time. And the examples which he gives, as he interprets them, of Socrates and the others shows that. The philosopher, as Hegel put it, is the son of his time. Nietzsche makes only a very important correction of Hegel. He says the stepson of his time, meaning he does not simply belong to his time. In a way, the whole relation between Nietzsche and Hegel is concentrated in this difference. <sup>26</sup>The

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<sup>ix</sup> Strauss draws attention to the parenthesis in the line just read.

<sup>x</sup> There is a break in the tape.

view which Nietzsche suggests here is known under the name of historicism, which is the view that philosophy, homogeneity, truth, is a function of the time—and in particular, virtue is a function of the time. Different virtues, different times. There are no eternal standards. The term which people ordinarily use is relativism. This Nietzsche accepts but tries to overcome. We must see in which way he does this. You see the way in which he distinguishes the ideal of a philosopher today as distinguished from the ideal of a philosopher in the sixteenth century, and on the other hand the ideal which Socrates followed.

But still we must consider for one moment the end of the preceding aphorism, after he had described the philosopher in the true sense, the philosopher who creates values and does not merely formulate or articulate values created by others. And then he says at the very end of aphorism 211—

**Reader:**

Are there such philosophers today? Have there been such philosophers yet? *Must* there not be such philosophers?— (*BGE*, 211)

**LS:** Have there ever been such philosophers? An important question. Now Nietzsche makes a great distinction between the professors of philosophy and men like Kant and Hegel. But there is another type whom Nietzsche admires still more and whom he had mentioned, I think in aphorism 204, where he spoke of Heraclitus, Plato, and Empedocles. Now were they philosophers in the highest sense? The very question, “Were there ever such philosophers?” seems to indicate that for Nietzsche it’s by no means certain that they were men who created values. The philosopher in the strict and highest sense seems to be altogether a phenomenon of the future, and Nietzsche is as it were, at least [as] the author of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the John the Baptist of the future philosopher.

I think then we should also have a look at the last paragraph, aphorism 213.

**Reader:**

What a philosopher is, that is hard to learn because it cannot be taught: one must “know” it, from experience—or one should have the pride *not* to know it. But nowadays all the world talks of things of which it *cannot* have any experience, and this is most true, and in the worst way, concerning philosophers and philosophical states: exceedingly few know them, may know them, and all popular opinions about them are false.

That genuinely philosophical combination, for example, of a bold and exuberant spirituality that runs *presto* and a dialectical severity and necessity that takes no false step is unknown to most thinkers and scholars from their own experience, and therefore would seem incredible to them if somebody should speak of it in their presence. They picture every necessity as a kind of need, as a painstaking having-to-follow and being-compelled. And thinking itself they consider something slow and hesitant, almost as toil, and often enough as “worthy of the *sweat* of the noble”—but not in the least as something light, divine, closely related to dancing and high spirits. “Thinking” and taking a matter

“seriously,” considering it “grave”—for them all this belongs together: that is the only way they have “experienced” it.

Artists seem to have more sensitive noses in these matters, knowing only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything “voluntarily” but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming reaches its peak—in short, that necessity and “freedom of the will” then become one in them.

Ultimately, there is an order of rank among states of the soul, and the order of rank of problems accords with this. The highest problems repulse everyone mercilessly who dares approach them without being predestined for their solution by the height and power of his intelligence.<sup>xi</sup>

**LS:** Intelligence is not “*Geistigkeit*.” According to his usage, you would have to say “spirituality.”<sup>xii</sup>

**Reader:**

What does it avail when nimble smarties or clumsy solid mechanics and empiricists push near them, as is common today, trying with their plebeian ambition to enter the “court of courts.”

**LS:** I wonder why he puts this in quotation marks? It must be a quotation. Do you know where this comes from? I mean that philosophy is of course meant by the “court of courts,” but I do not know whoever called it this.

**Reader:**

Upon such carpets coarse feet may never step: the primeval law of things takes care of that; the doors remain closed to such obtrusiveness, even if they crash and crush their heads against them.

For every high world one must be born; or to speak more clearly, one must be *cultivated* for it: a right to philosophy—taking that word in its great sense—one has only by virtue of one’s origins; one’s ancestors, one’s “blood” decide here, too. Many generations must have labored to prepare the origin of the philosopher; every one of his virtues must have been acquired, nurtured, inherited, and digested singly, and not only the bold, light, delicate gait and course of his thoughts but above all the readiness for great responsibilities, the loftiness of glances that dominate and look down, feeling separated from the crowd and its duties and virtues, the affable protection and defense of whatever is misunderstood and slandered, whether it be god or devil, the pleasure and exercise of the great justice, the art of command, the width of the will, the slow eye that rarely admires, rarely looks up, rarely loves— (*BGE*, 213)

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<sup>xi</sup> Kaufmann has “his spirituality.”

<sup>xii</sup> Strauss corrects the translation of “*geistigkeit*” as “intelligence” and suggests it is “spirituality.”

**LS:** I would like to point out only one thing which is important for the general argument of this book, especially of this part of the book, and that has to do with the question of nature. In a way, Nietzsche only restates the old view that philosophizing presupposes a certain nature, *physis*. You have read this all in Plato's *Republic*, especially in books 5 and 6, where lists are given of the ingredients of that nature.

But Nietzsche does not say exactly the same. He makes an important change. He says [that] for this high world one must be born. To express it more clearly: one must have been bred for it. Now "bred," the word in German, "*gezüchtet*" is of course also [the word] you use for beasts, to breed cattle or horses or dogs or whatever it may be. And he does not refer to the breeding one receives as a young human being, as a child. Now what is behind that? One must be bred for it. That means one must have the right kind of origin—of ancestors, of "blood." But the change which Nietzsche makes from classical philosophy is this: the nature to which Plato and Aristotle referred is acquired by former generations; it is not simply given. Plato and Aristotle do not go beyond that. Some people are born for this activity and others are not. And the genesis of this *physis* is of no interest to them. The human race produces men of various kinds and that has not too much to do with inheritance because we know that sometimes very stupid parents generate very bright children and vice versa. But at any rate, these desired natures are given; how they are produced is of no interest. There is a passage in Nietzsche's *Dawn of Morning*, which I believe is helpful for understanding that, and that is aphorism 540. Michelangelo saw in Raphael the study; in himself, the nature. There, in the case of Raphael, the learning; in himself, the gift. But this is a pedantism, which I say with all reverence for this great pedant, namely Michelangelo. What then is giftedness but a name for an older kind of learning—experiencing, training, appropriating, incorporating, be it on the stage of our fathers or still earlier.

So all gifts are acquired, not strictly speaking given. And that ultimately, if I understand this correctly, all [means that] everything that is must be understood in terms of its genesis, and this genesis must be ultimately understood in terms of production. And to use the extreme formula which we find in Locke, nature furnishes only the almost worthless materials—everything which is of any value acquires that value through human activity, through human acquisition. I believe that is the ultimate reason for this change of orientation.

I brought quite a few books with me today but there was so much to read. I would like to read you only one passage which might be of interest, and that is from Heidegger in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* about *physis*, nature.<sup>xiii</sup>

"Being as such on the whole, the Greeks called *physis*. Only in passing may it be mentioned that already within Greek philosophy a narrowing down of the meaning of the word soon began, but this narrowing down of *physis* in the direction of the physical did not take place in the way which we people today fancy. We oppose to the physical, the psychical, the *soulich*—in German they are two different words, *psychischem*,

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<sup>xiii</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), 17.

*seelische*—the living, all these things belong for the Greeks even later still to *physis* as distinguished from it, appears what the Greeks call *thesis*, positing, or *nomos*, law, rule in the sense of the—”<sup>xiv</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “here he.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “so in other words.”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted *Beyond Good and Evil*.”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “since.”

<sup>5</sup> Moved “suggested that it is a system in aphorisms.”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “and so on.”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “here.”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “the difficulty is this.”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “and which.”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “but.”

<sup>11</sup> Changed from “Us.”

<sup>12</sup> Moved “a contemptible lot.”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “says there among other things he.”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “the tower.”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “these.”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “that.”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “he says.”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “his neighbor.”

<sup>19</sup> Changed from “Socrates.”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “when.”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “plays something.”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “and he.”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “being.”

<sup>24</sup> Deleted “when.”

<sup>25</sup> Deleted “here.”

<sup>26</sup> Deleted “now this of course.”

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<sup>xiv</sup> The tape recording ends here.

**Session 13: May 17, 1972**

This lecture, on the beginning of chapter 7, was not recorded.

### Session 14: May 24, 1972

**Leo Strauss:** As things look now, we will not be able to finish our reading of *Beyond Good and Evil* next time. But instead of the free-for-all which I had envisaged for the seventh of June, we will have to study chapter 9. I don't know what the schedule [is], but we have to bow to the dictates of fate.

Now we read last time the larger part of chapter 8, but we have still to discuss at least two passages in chapter 8. May I remind you of the context? We saw that from chapter 5 to the end of the work, the subject is somehow “quote nature unquote.” Chapter 5 was entitled the “Natural History of Morality.” The discussion led up to the call for the complementary man in whom the rest of existence is justified—aphorism 207—and that is supposedly the philosopher of the future. In order to make clear what the philosopher of the future is, Nietzsche contrasts him in chapter 6 with the class of beings who may be mistaken for philosophers, the scholars or scientists. So it is called “We Scholars.”

Chapter 7, entitled “Our Virtues,” deals with the virtues not of the philosopher, and still less of the philosophers of the future, but with the virtues of the free mind, who as we know is only the precursor of the philosophers of the future and does not belong to that class himself. Now this great virtue of the free mind is the historical sense, as we have heard, and this is at the same time his great vice—or at any rate, it is an expression of his fundamental defect, namely, his dissatisfaction with himself, with his age. And therefore the urge to escape into the alien and the past because—well, he is, as they say, alienated.

Another description of “Our Virtues” is given in the expression “We Immoralists.” The only aphorism which has an italicized title here, namely, 226, has the title “We Immoralists.” And it appears from that aphorism that immoralism is the reverse side of probity, of intellectual probity. That is a favorite theme of Nietzsche, to show that morality, if it takes itself seriously, leads to the destruction of morality. And morality taking itself seriously, that means intellectual probity, not behaving immorally towards the principles of morality by simply accepting them on trust.

The contemporary moral teaching which Nietzsche singles out for special criticism thereafter is English utilitarianism, which he regards as particularly boring, and stupid, and narrow. Utilitarianism accepts egoism as the basis of morality, and that is all right with Nietzsche, but it asserts at the same time that egoism rightly understood leads to the espousal of the common welfare. In other words, from Nietzsche's point of view the Utilitarians are men who wish to eat the cake and have it, which is always a sign of lacking intellectual probity. While recognizing men's fundamental egoism, the Utilitarians do not realize the fact that egoism is will to power, and not merely will to live and to live comfortably. And hence, since egoism is will to power, it includes cruelty, for which there is no place in utilitarianism. Think especially of John Stuart Mill, and—I

always forget the name of his lady, Henriette Taylor, his god substitute.<sup>i</sup> Well, after he had escaped from the clutches of his father, the puritan utilitarian James Mill, he fell into the arms of, I think Henrietta Taylor was her name, and he regarded her as a god. Read his autobiography if you don't believe me. I am using . . . I believe. At any rate, there is no place for cruelty there.

Cruelty, Nietzsche makes here clear in passing, if turned against oneself, is effective in intellectual probity—in the cruelty of the intellectual conscience, as he calls it here. Now it is necessary to recognize that cruelty is indispensable if the basic eternal text, *homo natura*, is again to be recognized. We did read that passage toward the end of number 230, but we should read these few lines again. Will you do that, please?

**Reader:**

But we hermits and marmots have long persuaded ourselves in the full secrecy of a hermit's conscience that this worthy verbal pomp, too, belongs to the old mendacious pomp, junk, and gold dust of unconscious human vanity, and that under such flattering colors and make-up as well, the basic text of *homo natura* must again be recognized.

**LS:** The “terrible text,” “the terrible fundamental text.”

**Reader:**

the terrible fundamental text of *homo natura* must again be recognized.

To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, “you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!”—that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task*—who would deny that? Why did we choose this insane task? Or, putting it differently: “why have knowledge at all?”

Everybody will ask us that. And we, pressed this way, we who have put the same question to ourselves a hundred times, we have found and find no better answer— (*BGE*, 230)

**LS:** Well, the answer will be given in a way in the next aphorism. Let us first consider this passage which we read. The basic eternal text, *homo natura*, is again to be recognized. Men must be retranslated into nature. One must get rid of the many vain and enthusiastic interpretations which hitherto have concealed that basic text. Now from this passage it is not quite clear whether the retranslation of man into nature has been achieved now and then in the past, or whether it is altogether a task for the future—of course, for the philosophers of the future. But I think from other passages in Nietzsche one can say it has never been achieved in the past. We read in his *Will to Power*, number

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<sup>i</sup> Strauss means Harriet Taylor.

101, there was never yet a natural humanity. Hitherto humanity, we can say in the language which Nietzsche does not use, was always deflected from naturalness by *nomos*, by arbitrary and unreasonable laws without which man would never have been able finally to see that basic text, but still he was not natural hitherto.

In *The Gay Science*, aphorism 109, Nietzsche speaks of the task to—the German word, “*vernätürlichen*”: I don’t know how to translate it; “to naturalize man” would be an approximation, but it is somewhat more, to change man, and in a way to deflect man from what he is and from what he always was by making him natural. To do that with man together with the pure, newly found, newly redeemed nature.

Now in this work, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 62, we have read [that] man is a not-yet-fixed brute, the not-yet-established brute, “*das noch nicht festgestellte Tier*.” That fixation is, I believe, the same as what he calls elsewhere the “*vernätürlichen*,” making men natural. For the very good reason—of which we do not yet know whether it is a reason Nietzsche would recognize—the nature of a being is its end, its completion, its completed state, its peak. That is what Aristotle says, and we have of course no right to assume that Nietzsche meant the same.

Do you have this book here? There is a passage here on page 552, that is in *Twilight of the Idols*, in number 48. Read the beginning, please.

**Reader:**

*Progress in my sense*. I too speak of a “return to nature”—

**LS:** Listen, that’s “*vernätürlichen*.”<sup>ii</sup>

**Reader:**

although it is really not a going back but an *ascent*—up into the high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness where great tasks are something one plays with, one *may* play with. To put it metaphorically: Napoleon was a piece of “return to nature,” as I understand the phrase—<sup>iii</sup>

**LS:** Yes, but only a piece because he was not a philosopher of the future. So it is not strictly speaking a return to nature, but nature is arrived at for the first time. Man reaches his peak through and in the philosopher of the future as a truly complementary man, in whom not only man but the rest of existence is justified. Aphorism 207. This complementary man is the first man who consciously creates values on the basis of his understanding of the will to power as the fundamental phenomenon. His action completes the highest form of the most spiritual will to power, and that means the highest form of the will to power pure and simple.

By this action he puts an end to the rule of nonsense and chance which was hitherto history. Aphorism 203. Now as the act of the highest form of man’s will to power, this

<sup>ii</sup> Strauss points out that “return to nature” in the line just read is “*vernätürlichen*” in German.

<sup>iii</sup> *Twilight of the Idols*, 48; *Portable Nietzsche*, 552.

naturalization, this *vernätürlicher* man, is at the same time the peak of the anthropomorphization of nonhuman nature, of the nonhuman. For the most spiritual will to power consists in prescribing to nature what or how it ought to be, as we have seen in aphorism 9. It is in this way that Nietzsche abolishes the distinction between the world of appearance or fiction, or the interpretations on the one hand, and the true world, the text, on the other. The world of appearance and the true world coincide eventually, in that owing to that final interpretation, the true interpretation.

Now it was the history of man hitherto—that is to say, the rule of nonsense and chance—which was the necessary condition for the subjugation of nonsense and chance. I believe that is more or less the accepted opinion today, generally speaking: evolution or however you call it (which is not a guide to action, at any rate), there is no rhyme or reason, but it so happens that the outcome of it is a being which eventually can reasonably use nonsense or chance.

This means, if we apply that to Nietzsche's case, Nietzsche's understanding, the naturalization, the *vernätürlichen* of man presupposes and brings to its completion the whole historical process; and this completion according to Nietzsche is of course by no means necessary but requires a new free creative act. Still, in this way history, the complete historical process, can be said to be integrated into nature, because it leads to, it culminates in the *vernätürlichung* of man. Man therefore cannot say "yes" to the philosophers of the future without saying "yes" to the past, because that past made possible the project of the philosophers of the future. Yet there is a great difference between this "yes" to the past and the unbounded "yes" to everything that was and is—that is to say, the affirmation of eternal return.

Why then the eternal return? If we had only *Beyond Good and Evil*, I believe we would be driven to the following explanation. Instead of explaining why it is necessary to affirm eternal return, Nietzsche indicates that the highest achievement, as all earlier high achievements, is in the last analysis not the work of reason but of nature. In the last analysis, all thought depends on something unteachable deep down—that he says in the following aphorism, 231, on a fundamental stupidity, as he does not hesitate to call it.

The nature of the individual, the individual nature, not evident and universally valid insights, it seems is the ground of all worthwhile understanding or knowledge. So that seems to be the pure chaos. Yet there is an order of rank of the natures, and at the top of this hierarchy is the complementary man. His supremacy is shown by the fact that he solves the highest and most difficult problem. And we must identify that problem if we want to see Nietzsche's way out the chaos, out of the intellectual chaos.

Now that problem which is solved is posed by the conquest of nature, a conquest which has no assignable limits. Therefore men can dream, as they began to dream in the seventeenth century, of the abolition of suffering, including perhaps the abolition of death, and more particularly, the abolition of inequality. All men could become equally supermen in Nietzsche's sense of the term. That would be the true realm of freedom. But that way is excluded because the highest development of man would require suffering,

require inequality. Now when Nietzsche takes up the question of eternal return for the first time in the *Zarathustra*, in the section “Of Redemption,” he gives some explanation. Perhaps you read it, on page 250. Read first this paragraph.

**Reader:**

When Zarathustra had spoken thus to the hunchback and to those whose mouthpiece and advocate the hunchback was, he turned to his disciples in profound dismay and said: “Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings.”

**LS:** Ya. So “limbs” meaning isolated limbs—an ear, a leg, no whole human being. And let us see on the next page, second paragraph from the top, “And you too.”

**Reader:**

“And you too have often asked yourselves, ‘Who is Zarathustra to us? What shall we call him?’ And, like myself, you replied to yourself with questions. Is he a promiser? or a fulfiller? A conqueror? or an inheritor? An autumn? or a plowshare? A physician? or one who has recovered? Is he a poet? or truthful? A liberator? or a tamer? good? or evil?”<sup>iv</sup>

**LS:** And then another passage, page 253, the second paragraph from the top.

**Reader:**

“I led you away from these fables when I taught you, ‘The will is a creator.’ All ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I willed it.’ Until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.’”<sup>v</sup>

**LS:** That is the eternal return. Now what does it mean? Men are hitherto defective, incomplete, and therefore suffering and unequal. But these defects and these inequalities are the prerequisites of human greatness. Therefore the transformation of the human race into a race of supermen would be fatal to greatness. Hitherto these defects and inequalities were taken for granted as given or imposed. Now owing to man’s conquest of nature, they are in danger of being abolished; therefore they can no longer be taken for granted as given. Henceforth they must be willed. Nature<sup>1</sup> henceforth owes its being to human will, to human postulation. Something of this kind had been said by Fichte at the end of the eighteenth century, but in Fichte of course the willing was the pure ego, and therefore that was perfectly outside. But in Nietzsche’s case, that’s the difficulty: the willing being is the whole individual, Friedrich Nietzsche, that caused everything. The whole man, the individual nature. So I believe then that the primary motive, the most intelligible motive of the doctrine of eternal return in Nietzsche is to make intelligible nature as humanly willed and not given. And the whole difficulty of Nietzsche’s philosophy, I believe, is concentrated in this point. Yes?

<sup>iv</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2.20, “On Redemption,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 250-51.

<sup>v</sup> *Zarathustra*, 2.20, “On Redemption,” *Portable Nietzsche*, 253.

**Student:** I have a question about Nietzsche's judgment concerning a certain point. You spoke before about the idea of naturalizing man, which seems to mean to me, as far as I can see it, means putting man in harmony with nature. In some way that would be—

**LS:** In making him natural.

**Same Student:** Yeah, in making him natural, but that might mean destroying his particular nature, which is to have a *nomos*.

**LS:** No. Then if *nomos* is understood in contradistinction to nature, then the *nomos* must be abandoned.

**Same Student:** Yeah, that's the way I see it. So then the next thing that he talked about was the idea of preserving the hierarchy, the distinction between those who are more, somehow elevated and those who are lower, and it seems to me that the mistake in Nietzsche's judgment is to think that as the *nomos* is abandoned, the hierarchy will be preserved. I mean, I'm even thinking about something as temporal as twentieth-century America, where the *nomos* is being abandoned, and rather than—

**LS:** No, it's not abandoned. It's only replaced by another one. I mean, long hair instead of short hair, and what the other characteristics of that subculture are; say, marijuana instead of aspirin, or whatever. [Laughter]

**Same Student:** When I said America today, I was thinking that the subculture represents not another *nomos* but an anti-*nomos* completely, and that—

**LS:** Ya, but they are not such awe-inspiring people that we have to accept their own view of themselves as authoritative, and it is rather obvious that while they oppose the prevailing *nomos*, they replace it by another *nomos*. If they said in former times, in the forties or whenever, that in America everyone can do what he wants, everyone can pursue happiness in his own fashion, but every Sunday you see all of them . . . using a certain type of car to go to certain kind of places to eat a certain kind of dinner, and so on and so on. So while you have the extreme individualism as principle, in practice we have an amazing conformity. Now this is how Europeans looked at it, but I think if a European, if I can still imagine how a European thinks, would see the younger generation of American subculture, he would say they are exactly the children of their parents. They have conformism, a new conformism.

**Same Student:** I guess what I am trying to say is that the new conformism seems to be a conformism of complete equality, and to the extent that it is a break with the former *nomos* and it *claims* to be a break with *nomos* simply—

**LS:** It claims.

**Same Student:** It seems to me, though, that possibly Nietzsche is mistaken about this. Possibly the removal of the *nomos* does not provide for the possibility of a real hierarchy, but it provides for the possibility only of complete equality and complete uniformity.

**LS:** Yes, well that Nietzsche was not unaware of this possibility becomes most clear from the speech on the last man near the beginning of the *Zarathustra*. He saw that there could be a possibility—you know, there is no hierarchy anymore, no striving, no longing anymore. You have read that speech?

**Same Student:** Yes, I have.

**LS:** That is the point, surely.

**Same Student:** That seems to be a good hedge.

**LS:** Ya, but with minor changes. Because these people say, if I remember well, if someone thinks differently he goes voluntarily into the insane asylum. Today you would have to say he goes just to the psychoanalyst; he doesn't have to be institutionalized. But some other minor changes would have to be made. But he has seen that possibility very clearly. Nevertheless I think it is the *nomos*, because the very extirpation, the intended extirpation of the natural differences—I mean, of the natural hierarchy, is an attack on nature and therefore an act of the *nomos*. There was a criticism of this written millennia ago but it is usually not considered, and that is in Aristophanes's *Assembly of Women*, where they try to establish a fully egalitarian society. And the women do that, and for this purpose the women must rule. So this kind of inequality of the two sexes must prevail, just as the women's lib movement would also lead in practice to gynecocracy, not to equality. All right, and then we have this beautiful situation: everyone is equal and the women are the mothers who feed their children, the males. And a part of this, the feeding, is of course also sexual gratification. And here there comes in the difference between women who are attractive and women who are not attractive: a natural inequality. Therefore the legislator has to make a special law in order to equalize that inequality, so that—if I may be so crude, but since Aristophanes has done it before me, I have some excuse—a young man cannot sleep with a young girl before he has slept with an ugly one. So you see there is a privilege given to the inferior to equalize people. That is the problem. As far from its solution today as it was in the past, you have only to replace the somewhat unseemly Aristophanean example by a more elevated one, then you have the statement of—

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** Ya, good.

**Another Student:** I have a question. I can understand why in the future one might have to say “yea” to everything that has happened and indeed will happen, but doesn't the doctrine of eternal return state something even more that I don't understand the reason

for, namely, that everything will recur? That seems to be an extra fact that Nietzsche brings in, and I see no reason for it. Did he just happen to believe that or—

**LS:** I think the point is if you make the experiment and say “I will,” you cannot leave it by merely willing it. You must assert it, you must wish it.

**Same Student:** To wish it is not simply to wish *it* but its eternal return.

**LS:** Ya, ya, sure.

**Same Student:** I don’t see the logic of that.

**LS:** If it is to be nature—if this hierarchy of which Nietzsche thinks in the first place is natural, and if man is not, and this whole history merely to be an accident—a few seconds, and millions and billions of years before without man, and millions and billions of years afterwards—there must be the eternity of the human race. Now in the literal sense it is impossible, because Nietzsche “quote knew unquote” that the visible universe will perish, and therefore Aristotle’s solution is out of the question.

**Same Student:** I thought he subscribed to some mathematical notion that everything—

**LS:** Ya, but that is the consequence only; but he knew therefore that what was possible was only what we may call in historical terms the Lucretian solution: this visible universe to which we belong will perish. But another visible universe will come again and may already be there, a place to which we have no contact by astronauts or otherwise. You know?

**Same Student:** Yes.

**LS:** So I think there is only the Aristotelian and the Lucretian way out if you want to preserve the sempiternity of the human race: Either a strict sempiternity, a continuous sempiternity, Aristotle; or a discontinuous one, Lucretius.

**Same Student:** I was under the impression that Nietzsche subscribed to some third one in which, if you will, in infinite time the same configuration must recur.

**LS:** Ya, that is one of the arguments which he uses in order to support it. But the fundamental thesis is not bound up with it. In other words, let me put it this way. Eternal return could mean eternal return of the human race in general. It could also mean eternal return of you: each individual, with his particular life fate . . . And Nietzsche selected the latter on grounds which have nothing to do with what I said today, namely, as he called it, as a substitute for the belief in immortality of the soul, to give the individual the highest sense of responsibility for his action; that a man must say to himself, “Whatever I do now I will have to repeat infinitely over.” That is true; that is an important point for Nietzsche. But that is not brought up here, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why *Beyond Good and Evil* is more attractive to me [LS laughs] than some other writing.

**Student:**<sup>vi</sup> You were about to say that the problem for Nietzsche's philosophy lies in that man has to will nature.

**LS:** Yes, because—let us take the crucial example: what he calls order of rank, the hierarchy, which was always regarded as a fact. Well, you know it from the discussions in the daily papers, where people speak of IQs, higher and lower ones, and then today we hear that it is all nonsense, apart from all other reasons, because these IQs are of conventional origin. By nature all men would have the same IQ. But some have poor home backgrounds and others have a better home background—and if you extend it to the genes, well, the genes can also be influenced. You know that is the rule of nonsense and unreason hitherto. That is not natural in any awe-inspiring sense. So that is indeed superficially given, but radically questionable. But if for one reason or the other, be it for reasons of mere prejudice, someone wants to preserve the natural inequality, he must first have willed nature. It is not simply given. The conquest of nature, whether technologically or theoretically, has made this appeal to nature the tradition—appeal to nature of which we may. . . —we ourselves, questionable. And Nietzsche's <sup>2</sup>very problematical way out is to make it a postulation of the will. I do not know whether I have made it somewhat clearer to you.

**Same Student:** I have so many questions now that . . .

**Another Student:** What about Nietzsche's thought about death? Could we will . . .

**LS:** No, no, death must be.

**Same Student:** "Must be." Why?

**LS:** Because man could not reach his highest stature without dying.

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** For most men, yes, if these cripples and fragments, as he calls them—

**Same Student:** . . .

**LS:** No, no, I mean, immortality is out. It's absolutely out. I believe as a reason he would give you perhaps what Swift gives as a reason in the third part of *Gulliver's Travels*. You know, the immortals there. I forgot their names. Figure it out, how it would be if we were immortal—I mean, in the body. And the soul: that is out of the question for other reasons, that a disembodied soul would survive.

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<sup>vi</sup> The student makes a comment which is largely inaudible and which Strauss could not hear; the student then summarizes it.

**Another Student:** There is no nature of man before being, now nature means becoming . . .

**LS:** All right, that is a formula which Nietzsche would accept. No, he would say becoming there is, but the highest approximation of becoming to being is exactly eternal return, namely, there becoming, the change, is eternal, is always; therefore, is.

**Student:** . . . And becoming would be will to power . . .

**Another Student:** It seems that when you think about Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return, the only way to appreciate it is to think of Nietzsche as some kind of poet, not as a serious investigator of the way things are or the way things are ever likely to be. This seems to be a mythical doctrine which is stated, as you say, partly for the sake of making men feel a certain responsibility for the things that they do. But even if it were taken as a useful story, a likely story, or maybe an unlikely story that is invented by this poetical man, it seems to fall apart, because a man could say, "Well, the things that I'm doing now, I've already done many times over. There is not much that I can do that is going to affect what I'm going to do in the future because it's already determined."

**LS:** But then one doesn't understand it as Nietzsche wants to be understood. You presuppose you know that you will always return, and then you act on that. But here the knowledge follows the will.

**Same Student:** But that means that it has to be understood as a kind of poetry; it has to be understood as a kind of lyric poetry in which a man has a certain inspiration. He sees the will to power as the highest force in the universe, the highest truth, and from that he generates all kinds of things which he considers to be good consequences that would be consistent with the idea of the will to power, no matter how ridiculous they are, even the idea that a person's individual life is going to be eternally repeated, no matter how ridiculous—

**LS:** Let me say only one more thing on this subject. You apparently have completely forgotten or have been completely unimpressed by what Nietzsche says about the problem of science. You said there, a serious investigation of that, that was the term you used, and contrasted it with poetry.

**Same Student:** His poetry.

**LS:** All right, but the very notion of serious investigation which you use has been questioned by Nietzsche, especially in the first chapter—in fact, throughout.

**Same Student:** Sure.

**LS:** Ya, ya. And perhaps he has some reasons; perhaps you'll see there is no—in the nineteenth century they used the expression, especially in Germany but I believe also in other countries, "presuppositionless science." Did you ever hear that?

**Same Student:** I've always understood that to be an objective science.

**LS:** Yes, but at that time they used that expression, “presuppositionless science.” And that was exploded, not only by Nietzsche, but I think by Nietzsche’s special vigor. And if that is so, if science is as much based on questionable “quote poetic assumptions” as poetry in your sense, one cannot well apply that distinction.

But let us next read aphorism 231.

**Reader:**

Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does<sup>vii</sup> which also does not merely “preserve”—as physiologists know. But at the bottom of our souls, quite “down below,” there is certainly something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined, chosen questions.”

In each cardinal problem there speaks an unchangeable “I am this,” a thinker cannot learn anew about man and woman, for instance, but can only learn fully—he can only follow to the end what is “fixed” about them in himself. Occasionally we find certain solutions of problems which make strong beliefs for us; perhaps they are henceforth called “convictions.” Later on—one sees in them only footsteps to self-knowledge, guide-posts to the problem which we ourselves are—or more correctly to the great stupidity which we embody, our spiritual fate, the unteachable in us, which I have just paid myself, permission will be more readily allowed me to utter some truths about “woman as she is,” provided that it is known at the outset how literally they are merely—my truths.<sup>viii</sup>

**LS:** Deep-down—you remember that is a reference to what we read in the first chapter, the beautiful, strong donkey, which is at the bottom of every philosophy and of course also for nonphilosophies.

Regarding the last sentence: that is for Nietzsche a rather clumsy transition to a discussion of men and women, but this transition fulfills a function. That is not merely a flattery, a gesture of conciliation towards the friends of women’s emancipation, although it would seem to be no more than that. It is interesting that Nietzsche is about to continue the theme of nature—that is to say the natural hierarchy, in full awareness of the problematic concept of nature. Man-woman is an outstanding example about which everyone I believe has some experiential knowledge, which gives him some inkling of what is meant by nature.

Now we can of course not read it, and not only for reasons of gallantry, what Nietzsche says about this subject. He even makes some [. . .] I assume in number [. . .]

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<sup>vii</sup> The audio recording ends at this point. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript.

<sup>viii</sup> This passage as read deviates from Kaufmann’s translation in several particulars. For Kaufmann’s translation, see aphorism 231, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 162.

**Student:** [. . .]

**LS:** [. . .]

[The tape is quite inaudible at this point.]<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Moved “owes.”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “way out.”

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<sup>ix</sup> As noted by the transcriber.