such as social justice or sane economic order.[29] If the media proponents of 'ethical living' succeed over time (directly or indirectly) in raising this insight to full consciousness, they will have made a solid contribution to the advancement of public discussion.

[29] Not that the rewards of virtue in this area should be pictured as unproblematically available to all persons of good will. As Adorno says: 'Wrong life cannot be lived rightly' (*Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (1974), 39).

Essay 12

Selflessness and Other Moral Baggage

1. In the concluding section of *Beyond Selflessness*, Christopher Janaway speculates that 'most people who admire Nietzsche and wish to study him at any length feel themselves in some way personally addressed and uplifted by his writings'.[1] I think this is true, and it provides a natural starting-point for the remarks I want to make here.

Stylistically, as we all know, Nietzsche is a very distinctive writer. He is a self-consciously seductive writer—in a literary and intellectual sense, though as he himself would be the first to agree, this is not radically distinct from the sexual.[2] His appeal sometimes finds an uninhibited response: 'How I should love you', writes Luce Irigaray, 'if to speak to you were possible'.[3] Because his prose is so arresting and so personal, it easily prompts the belief in anyone reading it that he—or even she—is one of the 'friends' whom Nietzsche wishes to select as his audience.[4] Yet on reflection there seems to be ample reason to question this belief: at any rate, the constituency of Nietzsche's present-day admirers does not look particularly well equipped to withstand his strictures on the stupidity of 'modern ideas'.[5] For as Janaway points out, 'Nietzsche pushes his anti-egalitarianism to a shocking pitch' (BS, 66) (he aspires, as he himself puts it

[1] Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (2007) (hereafter 'BS'), 266.

[2] See *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1973) (hereafter 'BGE'), §75; and cf. *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1967) (hereafter 'EH'), 'Why I Write Such Good Books', §5: 'They [women] all love me—an old story—not counting "abortive" females, the "emancipated" who lack the stuff for children.'

[3] Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (1991), 3.

[4] *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1974) (hereafter 'GS'), §381: 'All the nobler spirits and tastes select their audience when they wish to communicate.' In GS, section numbers 343 and above are from Book V, the part of the text that was added in the second edition of 1887.

[5] See BGE §239 (and elsewhere).

elsewhere, to be 'anti-liberal to the point of malice'[6]); and '[w]hich of us would be influenced [by a reading of the *Genealogy*, hereafter 'GM'] to send our children to a school where they were taught that all human beings are not equal?' (BS, 245).

Where do we (meaning, for example, present company[7]) stand in relation to Nietzsche's anti-moral polemic in GM and elsewhere in his later writings? Non-religious readers may warm to the debunking of values identified as 'Christian or post-Christian', thinking chiefly of the pointless asceticism denounced by Hume over a century earlier ('[c]elibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues'[8]) and more thoroughly dissected in GM, Essay III. To take sides against something characterized as 'the attitude of negation towards life, an anti-corporeal, anti-sensual, anti-sexual orientation' (BS, 199) is (in a liberal, secular context) a bit like coming out against sin. But to be 'post-Christian', in the sense of inheriting and preserving something from the Christian ethical tradition, is not just a matter of sexual guilt. It is also, and in the end (I think) more importantly, a matter of commitment to the rationalist and egalitarian political ideal of the European Enlightenment—an ideal that finds its classic formulation in the ethics of Kant, which invites us to picture ourselves alongside the rest of humanity (despite obvious empirical differences) as fellow-members of a law-making 'kingdom of ends'. As Janaway correctly observes, our ambitions towards *disinterestedness* and *universality* (among other values) 'all stem from deep-seated valuations that are of a piece with morality itself' (BS, 265), 'morality' here being understood specifically as the target of Nietzsche's attack in GM. And although the 'moral' phenomena which take centre-stage in GM are on the whole those of resistance to antisocial instincts in general (whether sexual or aggressive), there are also occasional references to the way in which, according to Nietzsche, the 'impoverishment of life' manifests itself politically:

> Observe the ages... when the scholar steps into the foreground: they are ages of exhaustion, often of evening and decline; overflowing energy, certainty of life and of the *future*, are things of the past. A predominance of mandarins always means something is wrong; so do the advent of democracy, international courts in place of war, equal rights for women, the religion of pity, and whatever other symptoms of declining life there are.[9]

[6] *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1968) (hereafter 'TI'), 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', §39. See also Essay 13, §4.

[7] This essay was first presented at a workshop at the University of Southampton in December 2008, in connection with the research project carried out there in 2007–10 on 'Nietzsche and Modern Moral Philosophy'.

[8] Second *Enquiry*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edn (1975), 270.

[9] *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (1969), Essay III, §25.

So we know that the 'symptoms of declining life' are meant to include some central achievements of Enlightenment universalism, and that the 'morality' which Nietzsche hopes the human race can outgrow incorporates these achievements.

2. At a conference in Oxford devoted to BS shortly after its publication,[10] several of the participants seemed to agree that Nietzsche, in and after GM, has 'no political agenda'. This view has apparently established itself as a widespread consensus, perhaps under the long-term influence of Walter Kaufmann's argument that Nietzsche 'opposed both the idolatry of the State and political liberalism because he was basically "antipolitical"... and moreover, loathed the idea of belonging to any "party" whatever.'[11] It seems to be echoed, for example, in Tracy Strong's claim that 'Nietzsche is available to a wide range of political appropriations, indeed perhaps to all', and that 'with the exception of what he says here and there on political themes, Nietzsche does not write about political matters'.[12] These readings strike me, however, as too respectful of Nietzsche's description of himself in EH I, §3 as 'the last *anti-political* German'—the context of those words being some rather untypical musings on his own lineage and his father's distinguished social connections, which have supposedly led Nietzsche to 'enter quite involuntarily into a world of lofty and delicate things' (in contrast to the banal existence of 'present-day Germans, mere citizens of the German *Reich*'). Nietzsche, we can agree, turns away in distaste from the 'cheerful fatherlandishness' (GS §357) of his immediate surroundings, and is far from wishing to involve himself in the formulation of any legislative programme. He does, on the other hand, have a vivid political fantasy-life whose main geographical point of reference is *Europe*, the continent which he thinks Napoleon has taught us to grasp imaginatively as a unified whole:

> We owe it to Napoleon... that we now confront a succession of a few warlike centuries that have no parallel in history... He should receive credit some day for the fact that in Europe the *man* has again become master over the businessman and the philistine—and perhaps even over 'woman' who has been pampered by Christianity and the enthusiastic spirit of the eighteenth century, and even more by 'modern ideas'... What [Napoleon] wanted was one unified Europe, as is known—as *mistress of the earth*. [GS §362]

And his contempt for German nationalism is displayed under the banner of a proudly European identity which he takes to have found its most advanced

[10] At St Peter's College, 8 March 2008.

[11] *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edn (1974), 412.

[12] 'Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation', in Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (1996), 138.

expression in those who, like himself, are 'entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honourable sense':

> We children of the future, how could we feel at home in this today?... We 'conserve' nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods; we are not by any means 'liberal'; we do not work for 'progress'; we do not need to plug up our ears against the sirens who in the market place sing of the future; their song about 'equal rights', 'a free society', 'no more masters and no servants' has no allure for us. We simply do not consider it desirable that a realm of justice and concord should be established on earth (because it would certainly be the realm of the deepest leveling and *chinoiserie*); we are delighted with all who love, as we do, danger, war, and adventures, who refuse to compromise, to be captured, reconciled, and castrated; we count ourselves among conquerors; we think about the necessity for new orders, also for a new slavery—for every strengthening and enhancement of the human type also involves a new kind of enslavement. Is it not clear that with all this we are bound to feel ill at ease in an age that likes to claim the distinction of being the most humane, the mildest, and the most righteous age that the sun has ever seen? [GS §377]

The rhetoric of passages like these could plausibly be described as 'anti-political' in so far as contemporary 'politics' can be regarded, as perhaps it is (hyperbolically) by Nietzsche, as a domain entirely under the sway of false ('progressive') thinking about the future—the kind of thinking that, in his view, reflects an attitude of negation towards 'life' in all its amoral splendour.[13] Yet it is not 'anti-political' in the sense of resisting association with any available political ideology, for it belongs clearly enough to the tradition of anti-Enlightenment reaction. Here as elsewhere, the lesson Nietzsche wishes to communicate is that Christianity—the moral system attributable, in all its perverse brilliance, to the 'wretched of the earth'—lives on in the guise of the modern, secular conviction that no one deserves any special esteem for their merely contingent 'good birth' or good fortune; whereas (in the words of Kant) 'to a humble plain man, in whom I perceive righteousness in a higher degree than I am conscious of in myself, *my mind bows* whether I choose or not, however high I carry my head that he may not forget my superior position'.[14] The target zone of Nietzsche's anti-Christian polemic extends, in other words, not just to belief in some version of God the Father issuing commandments of an ascetic or 'anti-corporeal' stripe, but to all modes of thought which demand respect for (universal) moral law. That is, the 'politics of declining life' condemned by Nietzsche comprises everything inspired by the idea that a human community can act collectively to protect its individual members from arbitrary violence or abusive treatment. Gilles Deleuze gets this right, I think, when he explicates

[13] See BGE §259, quoted in §3 of this essay.

[14] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (1956), 79.

Nietzsche's objection to Kant as a protest against the substitution for archaic forms of obedience (to 'God, the State, our parents'[15]) of a more subtle commitment to obey reason alone. And certainly if we want a philosophy that will exonerate us from the expectation of obedience, or voluntary submission, even to an abstraction such as the requirements of social order, Kant's ethics is not the place to look.

But then—don't we need to be on our guard against the narcissistically gratifying, yet fundamentally delusional, conception of ourselves (I mean the conception that a study of Nietzsche may foster in the individual reader) as creatures who refuse to be 'captured, reconciled, and castrated', and who have more to lose than to gain from the 'castration' supposedly in store for us if we consent to align ourselves ethically with the human race at large? Nietzsche would not be the first to flatter the vanity of his audience in this way, if we can trust the (implicit) testimony of Plato, who makes the sophistic anti-moralist Callicles assert that people only praise justice and self-restraint on account of their own *adunamia* and *anandria* ('impotence' and 'unmanliness': *Gorgias* 492a5, b1). (As E. R. Dodds argues in an appendix to his edition of this dialogue, 'there is... evidence that Callicles' speeches in the *Gorgias* had deeply impressed [Nietzsche's] imagination, although he seems not to have referred to him by name outside [some early] lectures on Plato'.[16]) Suppose, then, we make the experiment of saying: forget about 'castration' for a moment; would it really be so contemptible to enjoy, in the real world, the fruits of Enlightenment universalism? (To live under 'a constitution allowing *the greatest possible human freedom* in accordance with laws by which *the freedom of each is made to be consistent with that of all others*'?[17])

3. Of course we know that for Nietzsche, as an adherent of the sophistic 'natural justice' tradition,[18] the ideal just mentioned is a classic instance of 'herd' morality, permeated by lower-class anxiety about the risk of oppression by one's social superiors. Modern political principles designed to counter this risk are, in his view, no less 'anti-life' than the denial of the flesh associated with historical Christianity:

> To refrain from mutual injury, mutual violence, mutual exploitation, to equate one's own will with that of another: this may in a certain rough sense become good manners between

[15] *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (1983), 92.

[16] Dodds, *Plato, Gorgias: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (1959), 389 (Appendix on 'Socrates, Callicles and Nietzsche').

[17] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B373, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (1933), 312.

[18] 'Natural justice', the process by which the strong rise to the top and succeed in satisfying their desires, is contrasted in the same passage of the *Gorgias* with 'conventional justice', the thing Socrates and his friends—and other non-sceptics about morality—are referring to when they use the terms 'just' and 'unjust'.

individuals if the conditions for it are present (namely if their strength and value standards are in fact similar and they both belong to *one* body). As soon as there is a desire to take this principle further, however, and if possible even as the *fundamental principle of society*, it at once reveals itself for what it is: as the will to the *denial* of life, as the principle of dissolution and decay. One has to think this matter through thoroughly and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and, at the least and mildest, exploitation—but why should one always have to employ precisely those words which have from of old been stamped with a slanderous intention? ... 'Exploitation' does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect society: it pertains to the *essence* of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life. [BGE §259]

It is important to keep in clear focus this political aspect of Nietzsche's campaign against 'morality'—otherwise we may be drawn (once again through flattery) into a too easy identification with the figure of the non-'herd' animal, the individual or 'special one' who refuses to settle for cheap conviviality. How many students or practitioners of philosophy are likely to be immune to this approach? Yet we should remember that the target of Nietzsche's 'herd' rhetoric is not simply the kind of totalitarian togetherness that made Huxley and Orwell shudder in the first half of the twentieth century (community singing, hiking around in khaki shorts, etc.). These phenomena arguably form a recognizable (if obscure) part of the Enlightenment legacy, but are best regarded as local curiosities, an entirely detachable appendage to the main conception of a way of life based on '*unsocial* sociability'.[19] The idea here is that if you don't want to join in the hiking or singing, you can take advantage of your formal, bourgeois freedoms in order to steer clear of such activities: being part of the 'herd' of law-abiding taxpayers, and so contributing to the cost of your neighbours' hospital visits or their children's schooling, does not in itself commit you to any *Desperate Housewives*-style *Mitsein* with said neighbours. When fully appreciated, this modern, democratic (typically urban) vision of a *solitude* innocent of *hostility* to the social is adequate, I believe, to respond in a non-Nietzschean vein to our misgivings about 'herd' membership. (In short: if we think we need Nietzsche's help at this point, that is a sign that we are allowing ourselves to be drawn into an attack not just on the appendage but on the main conception of democratic social order.)

But what about the interpretation of 'morality' (whether at the personal or the political level) as a manifestation of *ressentiment* and redirected power-lust?

[19] See Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in Hans Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, 2nd edn (1991), 44.

Janaway provides a succinct account of the way this works in GM Essay I, §14 (the dialogue with 'Mr Rash and Curious'):

> I suggest (1) that Nietzsche here completes the transformation of his treatise from a past-directed enquiry into a critique whose focus is the here and now, the present attitudes of his reader; (2) that his emotive rhetoric aims at harnessing the reader's own disquiet over the untrammelled exercise of power by the overtly powerful ... and converting it into a still greater disquiet over the covert desire to exercise power that drives Christianity and the post-Christian moral attitudes which are likely to persist in the reader. [BS, 103–4]

I want to linger over the 'covert desire to exercise power'. An obvious question is: why should it necessarily be *covert*? Admittedly the 'vengefulness and hatred' attributed to the 'cellar rodents' busily manufacturing Christian or quasi-Christian ideals in their underground workshop are an embarrassment, a blemish, something one would naturally want to keep secret. But from the point of view of anyone well disposed towards universalist morality, these emotions are mere epiphenomena, our practical objective being to establish an appropriate real-world 'constitution' regardless of the contingent emotional accompaniments of that process in any given individual. 'Regardless ...'? Well, perhaps this is to oversimplify—I suppose a Kantian could welcome subjective pleasure in any real-world victory for the 'moral law', this being 'not a feeling *received* through outside influence, but one *self-produced* by a rational concept',[20] like the feeling of reverence for the moral law itself; and they might also recall Kant's own view that 'to insist on one's right beyond what is necessary for its defence is to become vengeful', and that '[s]uch desire for vengeance is vicious'.[21] But for present purposes these qualifications are of limited importance, since Nietzsche's point is that Kantians and other proponents of 'morality' do not understand themselves, and lack the authority to claim that the defence of justice is *ever* free from vengeful motivation. More important for the moralist (whether Kantian or, for example, Aristotelian) would be the thought that purifying our own motives is a long-term (though necessary) undertaking, which in any case we can never definitively complete (since our motives are not transparent to us). The aim of moral formation is to be able to do the right thing as the occasion arises, without obstruction by countervailing, anti-moral impulses (of which vengeful hatred would be one); but what we must require of ourselves immediately is simply to *do the right thing* (full stop)—our condition with respect to vice or virtue being responsive, over time, to our success or failure in fulfilling that requirement.

[20] Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton, *The Moral Law* (1948), 401 (Prussian Academy numbering), n. 16.

[21] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (1930), 214.

So the moralist can adopt an attitude of cool (though not complacent or indifferent) recognition of the mixed nature of our motives. But having said this, one can turn to a less defensive line of thought. If my desire to obtain justice from someone (say, in the form of an apology for injury) reflects an impure aggregate of motives (say, because it includes a sadistic wish to inflict humiliation on the offender), then my discreditable motives may well be 'covert'—that is, I will try to conceal them in so far as I am conscious, and ashamed, of them. But even if such unworthy motives are present, I may still remind myself that justice is on my side, and push ahead on that basis. My desire for justice per se, then, is *not* 'covert' but entirely public. And this (I would argue) is equally true, in certain contexts, of the 'desire to exercise power'. For example, I would not be embarrassed to admit to a desire to exercise the measure of power (such as it is) that comes with the right to vote, practise a profession, own property, travel and stay in hotels unaccompanied, and other benefits of female emancipation which we (meaning again present company) presumably take for granted. 'But that's different...!'—But if it does strike us as different (say, from the desire to inflict suffering on someone who has injured me, just for the pleasure of revenge), that will be because we are implicitly relying on the familiar, but thoroughly non-Nietzschean ('morality'-dependent) distinction between *legitimate* and *illegitimate* exercises of power. Nietzsche can be credited with a profound insight in his identification of this kind of distinction as belonging, characteristically, to the moral consciousness of subordinate social groups; but unless we are minded to accept the suggestion that membership of such a group is shameful, we can (legitimately!) consider the distinction to be still in play.

4. There is an interesting parallel here, I think, with something thrown up much later in BS in the course of a discussion of Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer (ch. 11, 'Disinterestedness and Objectivity'). Schopenhauer's notion of objectivity, argues Janaway, 'is a paradigmatic instance of the ascetic ideal's combined self-belittlement and self-transcendence. It presupposes that one can cease to acquiesce in one's preordained place as an individuated outlet for the world-will's self-expression, and rise above the disvalue of ordinary human existence towards a state of salvation or redemption.' (BS, 196)

On a quick reading, the last clause of this sentence ('and rise above', etc.) might give the impression that it is *only* at the prompting of an ascetic distaste for 'ordinary human existence' that one might 'cease to acquiesce in one's preordained place as an individuated outlet for the world-will's self-expression'. Such an impression would be misleading, however, in that *any* mental operation by which I may be led to refrain from indulging a desire or pursuing my own

perceived advantage can naturally be understood as a (local) instance of non-acquiescence in this 'preordained place'. For *all* civilized life depends on our having learned, as children, to withhold assent to the demands which the 'world-will' (so to speak) may express at any given moment through us as desiring or needy individuals, and 'outside the study' we do not find anything particularly scandalous in this fact, though there is plenty of material for non-metaphysical discussion concerning the *gratuitous* 'life-denying' tendencies of this or that historic social formation.

Nietzsche himself, of course, does not regard self-control per se as undesirable: on the contrary, it is an indispensable property of the 'sovereign individual'.[22] But there is certainly something in this neighbourhood that would be objectionable from a Nietzschean point of view—namely, the harnessing of our powers of self-control to the requirements of morality or justice. The offensive element would not be the mere cultivation of an ability to say no to one's impulses, but (once again) the idea that this ability should be mobilized in the service of a ('morality'-dependent) critical appraisal of those impulses, from moment to moment, as legitimate or illegitimate.

5. Let's return for a moment to the question of 'Nietzsche and woman', which connects with our present topic via the theme of virility, or 'manly virtue', already encountered in Book V of GS. Janaway notes that his interpretation of GM, Essay III 'contradicts neither Walter Kaufmann's once fashionable statement that Nietzsche's judgements concerning women are "philosophically irrelevant", nor Peter Burgard's more recently fashionable verdict that "He includes woman, accords the feminine a central role, in the articulation of his philosophy, even as his extreme sexism excludes woman"' (BS, 180–1). It seems to me that both the views mentioned are equally unsatisfactory. The second (quasi-Derridian) view is compromised by its apparent willingness to employ a conception of the 'feminine' accepted, as it were, on trust from a philosophical tradition stretching back to the Pythagorean Table of Opposites;[23] a willingness to *imagine* one's female fellow-humans, whether affectionately or otherwise, in the way (or in one or another of the ways) licensed by this tradition. While it may well be possible to devise a philosophy that would confer importance or positive value on the 'feminine' in this ideologically loaded sense, such a philosophy is unlikely to contribute anything useful to the rational understanding of female subordination, tending as it does to promote an uncritical endorsement of some version of the

[22] TI, 'What the Germans Lack', §6. For discussion of this passage see Essay 13 in the present volume, §2.

[23] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book I, 986a22 ff; also Essay 5, 110 ff.

'feminine' character-ideal—which after all has never been without its enthusiastic supporters among gender conservatives. (Hence Michèle Le Doeuff's memorable declaration of war on the 'feminism of difference' back in the mid-1970s—roughly contemporary, then, with Derrida's *Spurs*—'We will not talk pidgin to please the colonialists.'[24]) On the other hand, the first (Kaufmann-influenced) view is (to my mind) clearly not right either, and is perhaps symptomatic of a pre-feminist resistance to the recognition of sexual politics as an integral part of politics *überhaupt*; or, consequently, as integral to a politically motivated philosophy. As if to challenge this resistance—and to warn his implied (male) reader against repressing the topic of gender—we find Nietzsche maintaining to the last that 'Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*' (EH, Preface, §3), and that

> All 'feminism', too—also in men—closes the door [to understanding my writings]: it will never permit itself entrance into this labyrinth of audacious insights. One must never have spared oneself, one must have acquired hardness as a habit to be cheerful and in good spirits in the midst of nothing but hard truths. When I imagine a perfect reader, he always turns into a monster of courage and curiosity; moreover, supple, cunning, cautious; a born adventurer and discoverer. [EH, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', §3]

Nietzsche, in other words, envisages an epistemological application for his famous maxim 'Live dangerously!' (GS §283), and names courage, the (traditionally) masculine virtue *par excellence*, as the necessary means of access to what he calls 'his' truths.[25]

So my suggestion is that the main idea behind Nietzsche's attack on 'morality' is not that we should learn to love our bodies and embrace the human condition, but that in embracing that condition we should dissociate ourselves from the universalist (and hence, in Nietzsche's view, life-denying) values of post-Enlightenment modernity. His dislike of female emancipation (and of the '"feminism"... also in men' which has brought it about) falls into place within the dossier of evidence for this reading, but a more complete account would also need to draw upon the treatment of class—or indeed 'caste'—politics in the writings of Nietzsche's last intellectually active years (say, from BGE onwards),

[24] Le Doeuff, 'Women and Philosophy, trans. Debbie Pope et al., in Toril Moi (ed.), *French Feminist Thought: A Reader* (1987), 196; see also Essay 3, section on 'The Problem of Criteria'. The relevant text by Derrida is *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (1979).

[25] Cf. TI, 'What I Owe to the Ancients', §2: '*Sophist culture*, by which I mean *realist culture*, attains in [Thucydides] its perfect expression—this invaluable movement in the midst of the morality-and-ideal swindle of the Socratic schools which was then breaking out everywhere... *Courage* in the face of reality ultimately distinguishes such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in the face of reality—consequently he flees into the ideal...' And for some further commentary on '"his" truths', see Essay 13, §6.

a treatment that is by no means as sparse and perfunctory as Strong (quoted earlier) implies.

6. The other face of Nietzsche's hostility to the nationalism and militarism of his own day, as we have seen, is a pan-European ambition which prompts him to declare that despite the 'morbid estrangement which the lunacy of nationality has produced and continues to produce... *Europe wants to become one*'; and to speak of 'what is to me *serious*... the "European problem" as I understand it... the breeding of a new ruling caste for Europe' (BGE §§256, 251). Like Plato before him, Nietzsche takes the notion of politically motivated 'breeding' fairly literally,[26] and he naturally shares the Platonist view that '[a]ll higher education belongs to the exceptions alone', and that '[g]reat and fine things can never be common property'.[27] Far from operating merely at the level of metaphysical reverie, these ideas are mirrored in some (ostensibly) very practical maxims concerning the management of the working class:

> *The labour question*—The stupidity, fundamentally the instinct degeneration which is the cause of *every* stupidity today, lies in the existence of a labour question at all. About certain things *one does not ask questions*: first imperative of instinct... There is absolutely no hope left that a modest and self-sufficient kind of human being, a type of Chinaman, should here form itself into a class: and this would have been sensible, this was actually a necessity... The worker has been made liable for military service, he has been allowed to form unions and to vote: no wonder the worker already feels his existence to be a state of distress (expressed in moral terms as a state of *injustice*). But what does one *want*?—to ask it again. If one wills an end, one must also will the means to it: if one wants slaves, one is a fool if one educates them to be masters. [TI, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', §40]

Accordingly, 'Whom among today's rabble do I hate the most? The Socialist rabble, the Chandala apostles who undermine the worker's instinct, his pleasure, his feeling of contentment with his little state of being...'[28]

Nietzsche, then, is 'anti-political' with respect to party politics (for 'the party man necessarily becomes a liar': AC §55), but not with respect to 'grand politics', this being precisely the genre of action invoked by his more visionary pronouncements. On 'politics' in this latter sense, namely as a discipline concerned with the large-scale ordering of human society, his mature writings offer a wealth of reflection of which I have barely ruffled the surface. One famous passage that

[26] See also TI, 'The "Improvers" of Mankind', §3.

[27] TI, 'What the Germans Lack', §5; and see also Essay 13, §5.

[28] *The Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1968) (hereafter 'AC'), §57. The 'Chandala', or '"untouchables" excluded from the [Hindu] caste system' (Hollingdale's note), have been discussed at greater length in the TI passage on 'breeding' (see n. 26 in this essay and accompanying text).

deserves particular attention, though, comes near the end of GM: 'As the will to truth thus gains self-consciousness... morality will gradually *perish* now: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles' (GM Essay III, §27).

Given the previously noted interlocking of 'morality' with universality, disinterestedness, and other regulative principles of Enlightenment political thought, the spectacle envisaged here by Nietzsche will consist from one point of view in a reversal of the measure of progress (or rather, in his terms, of decline) towards democracy experienced by the Western world to date. And since we are a little over half way through the (unnervingly definite) period of two centuries specified by Nietzsche for the unfolding of this process, it is hardly premature to ask whether his prediction appears to be coming true.

Perhaps not premature, one may feel, but surely an unmanageably big question? Will anyone volunteer to pronounce on the general direction of world history in the twentieth century, with particular reference to the fate of 'morality' in the Nietzschean sense? Once commentator who has done so is Ishay Landa:

> On balance... there is no escape from admitting that our modern reality is compatible, in essence, with the prospect that Nietzsche, alongside his class companions, had in mind ...if we are permitted to substitute the third-world worker in general for Nietzsche's 'Chinaman', then the philosopher's advice to the capitalists was not completely ignored ... The millions of immigrants to the leading Western countries as well as the emigration of whole industries to the third world in search of cheap labour, all corroborate 'Nietzschean economics'... the political project lurking behind and finding justification in such philosophies as Nietzsche's is dominating the world of our day.[29]

Landa's perspective is that of a Nietzsche specialist, though he writes, obviously, not as a Nietzschean but as a socialist. But his perception is more widely shared. Not long ago, in a cheerier economic climate, *The Guardian* carried an article under the headline 'The bonus bonanza: A bumper year in the City means that banks will be paying out billions in bonuses. David Teather asks some of the top earners how on earth they manage to spend it.' In the course of this (substantial) article, Teather refers to Stewart Lansley, the author of *Rich Britain: The Rise and Rise of the New Super-Wealthy*,[30] whom he reports as holding that 'there is less embarrassment about flaunting wealth than in decades past. It is partly the Thatcherite revolution, partly the effect of globalization... and also because the

[29] 'Nietzsche, the Chinese Worker's Friend', *New Left Review* 1:236 (1999), 23.
[30] Stewart Lansley, *Rich Britain: The Rise and Rise of the New Super-Wealthy* (2006).

City, which has become a financial powerhouse on the global scene, has such strong political endorsement.' Then he quotes Lansley directly:

> There has been a dramatic shift in the political and cultural climate in the past 25 years ... These kinds of rewards simply wouldn't have been acceptable in the 50s, 60s or early 70s. The Americans called it the 'shame gene' that used to act as a kind of limit to the extent to which people could exercise their natural greed. But that's gone now. The gap will keep getting wider between the super-rich and the rest. *The egalitarian era was a blip.*[31]

7. To conclude, then: I believe that whereas much of the philosophical charisma surrounding Nietzsche, today as in the past, is due to his image as a radically oppositional figure, this image is at best partially accurate. We can give Nietzsche the benefit of the doubt as regards his claim not to want to 'return to any past periods',[32] but this has to be explained by pointing out that he is not so much a conservative as a *reactionary* thinker, whose allegiance is to the project—not his alone, of course—of reversing, in the long term, the anti-authoritarian achievements of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution. '*Ni dieu ni maître* says a socialist formula' (BGE §202). Well, Nietzsche is an atheist, so shouldn't the first half of this formula at any rate be congenial to him?—But that would be a shallow ('democratic') misinterpretation. It is not for all and sundry to reach up to the 'truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*' (GM Essay III, §27). 'Here and there', he complains, 'they even want to turn women into free-spirits and *literati*: as if a woman without piety would not be something utterly repellent or ludicrous to a profound and godless man!' (BGE §239). What 'they' forget is that '[a] church is above all a structure for ruling' (GS §358), and that as far as the 'herd' is concerned, emancipation from religion is of no inherent value and may well be harmful. (The remark about female 'free-spirits' shows that one form of potential harm from this quarter is supposed to be aesthetic: we may assume that Nietzsche would appreciate, for example, the light-hearted or 'shameless' aestheticization of female conscientiousness in Mozart and da Ponte's *Così Fan Tutte*, especially in the aria '*Per pietà, ben mio, perdona*'.)

'How I should love you if to speak to you were possible...' Our imaginary 'love' for Nietzsche is a complicated phenomenon. In relatively straightforward terms, it is likely (or so I have suggested) to owe something to the conviction—however misplaced—that Nietzsche's assault on 'morality' and 'ascetic ideals' is

[31] *The Guardian*, 4 November 2006 (emphasis added).
[32] See GS §377, quoted in §2 of this essay.

allied to our own 'impatience for liberty'[33] and that we, his readers, have been selected to join him among the 'heirs of Europe's longest and bravest self-overcoming' (GM Essay III, §27). But I suspect, with Landa, that Nietzsche's steadily growing intellectual prestige also has its darker side, being fed by the correct—though perhaps not fully conscious—intuition that as citizens of the rich world, we will stand taller and cut a better figure in our own eyes if we can be excused from paying our dues to 'morality', which has been agreed to be of a piece with the 'deep-seated valuations' that ground the Enlightenment (egalitarian) project. It is hard to avoid thinking that in societies like ours, old-style 'Christian' asceticism is less of an issue than forthrightly 'post-Christian' over-consumption. We may intermittently feel awkward about the latter, but help is at hand in the guise of a philosophy that seems to point the way 'beyond selflessness', and hence beyond the self-critical 'moral' consciousness that has traditionally '[acted] as a kind of limit to the extent to which people could exercise their natural greed'. Nietzsche is thus quite a plausible candidate for the role of iconic philosopher of (post-'moral') late capitalism. Our love for him is not simply a response to the intrinsic merit of his texts, but contains, also, something of the affection we may feel for the kind of friends or acquaintances whose arrival at a party contributes the necessary feel-good factor to a carnival of bad behaviour.

[33] See Michel Foucault, 'What Is Enlightenment?', in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (1986), 50.

Essay 13

Nietzsche on Distance, Beauty, and Truth

1. This essay attempts to clarify some of the elements of a Nietzschean taste and to see how these might be linked with the rest of Nietzsche's thought. It is not concerned with his 'official' philosophy of art in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but focuses mainly on three wide-ranging texts which he published in the 1880s: *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Twilight of the Idols*.[1] These texts articulate a self-conscious and highly self-assured aesthetic sensibility, which is disclosed in part through pronouncements on the excellence or otherwise of individual writers and composers[2] ('Goethe is the last German before whom I feel reverence' (TI, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', §51); 'Plato is boring' (TI, 'What I Owe to the Ancients', §2); George Eliot is a 'little blue-stocking' (TI, 'Expeditions', §5)). But Nietzsche's attitudes emerge just as vividly through the discourse of physical condition and bodily self-expression which supplies him with so much of his evaluative vocabulary. He notices, and finds a world of meaning in, the way people move; their gestures and demeanour; how much or how little they talk, and in what tone of voice; whether or not they are working up a sweat.[3] His preferences on these points are very consistent. They owe something, no doubt, to a vitalist or biologically reductive mode of thought, as reflected in the following passage:

> Reckoned physiologically, everything ugly weakens and afflicts man. It recalls decay, danger, impotence... Every token of exhaustion, of heaviness, of age, of weariness, every kind of unfreedom, whether convulsive or paralytic, above all the smell, colour and shape of dissolution, of decomposition, though it be attenuated to the point of being

[1] *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1974) (hereafter 'GS'); *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1973) (hereafter 'BGE'); *Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1968) (hereafter 'TI').

[2] Nietzsche has relatively little to say about the visual arts, but he refers frequently and in some detail to music; in fact, 'Without music life would be a mistake' (TI, 'Maxims and Arrows', §33).

[3] Bizet's *Carmen* seems perfect to Nietzsche because—in contrast to Wagner—it 'does not sweat' (*The Case of Wagner*, §1, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1967) (hereafter 'CW')).