



The Sun, Edvard Munch

*Selections from
Daybreak:
Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*

PREFACE (1886)

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In this book you will discover a 'subterranean man' at work, one who tunnels and mines and undermines. You will see him— presupposing you have eyes capable of seeing this work in the depths — going forward slowly, cautiously, gently inexorable, without betraying very much of the distress which any protracted deprivation of light and air must entail; you might even call him contented, working there in the dark. Does it not seem as though some faith were leading him on, some consolation offering him compensation? As though he perhaps desires this prolonged obscurity, desires to be incomprehensible, concealed, enigmatic, because he knows what he will thereby also acquire: his own morning, his own redemption, his own *daybreak*? . . . He will return, that is certain: do not ask him what he is looking for down there, he will tell you himself of his own accord, this seeming Trophonius and subterranean, as soon as he has 'become a man' again. Being silent is something one completely unlearns if, like him, one has been for so long a solitary mole
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And indeed, my patient friends, I shall now tell you what I was after down there — here in this late preface which could easily have become a funeral oration: for I have returned and, believe it or not, returned safe and sound. Do not think for a moment that I intend to invite you to the same hazardous enterprise! Or even only to the same solitude! For he who proceeds on his own path in this fashion encounters no one: that is inherent in 'proceeding on one's own path'. No one comes along to help him: all the perils, accidents, malice and bad weather which assail him he has to tackle by himself. For his path is *his alone* — as is, of course, the bitterness and occasional ill-humour he feels at this 'his alone': among which is included, for instance, the knowledge that even his friends are unable to divine where he is or whither he is going, that they will sometimes ask themselves: 'what? is he going at all? does he still have — a path?' — At that time I undertook something not everyone may undertake: I descended into the depths, I tunneled into the foundations, I commenced an investigation and digging out of an ancient *faith*, one upon which we philosophers have for a couple of millennia been accustomed to build as if upon the firmest of all foundations — and have continued to do so even though every building hitherto erected on them has fallen down: I commenced to undermine our *faith in morality*. But you do not understand me?

Book I

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Animals and morality. — The practices demanded in polite society: careful avoidance of the ridiculous, the offensive, the presumptuous, the suppression of one's virtues as well as of one's strongest inclinations, self-adaptation, self-deprecation, submission to orders of rank — all this is to be found as social morality in a crude form everywhere, even in the depths of the animal world— and only at this depth do we see the purpose of all these amiable precautions: one wishes to elude one's pursuers and be favoured in the pursuit of one's prey. For this reason the animals learn to master themselves and alter their form, so that many, for example, adapt their colouring to the colouring of their surroundings (by virtue of the so-called 'chromatic function'), pretend to be dead or assume the forms and colours of another animal or of sand, leaves, lichen, fungus (what English researchers designate 'mimicry'). Thus the individual hides himself in the general concept 'man', or in society, or adapts himself to princes, classes, parties. opinions of his time and place: and all the subtle ways we have of appearing fortunate, grateful, powerful enamoured have their easily discoverable parallels in the animal world. Even the sense for truth, which is really the sense for security, man has in common with the animals: one does not want to let oneself be deceived, does not want to mislead oneself, one hearkens mistrustfully to the promptings of one's own passions, one constrains oneself and lies in wait for oneself; the animal understands all this just as man does, with its too self-control springs from the sense for what is real (from prudence). It likewise assesses the effect it produces upon the perceptions of other animals and from this learns to look back upon itself, to take itself 'objectively', it too has its degree of self-knowledge. The animal assesses the movements of its friends and foes, it learns their peculiarities by heart, it prepares itself for them: it renounces war once and for all against individuals of a certain species, and can likewise divine from the way they approach that certain kinds of animals have peaceful and conciliatory intentions. The beginnings of justice, as of prudence moderation, bravery—in short, of all we designate as the *Socratic virtues*, are *animal*: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies. Now if we consider that even the highest human being has only become more elevated and subtle in the nature of his food and in his conception of what is inimical to him, it is not improper to describe the entire phenomenon of morality as animal.

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Pride in the spirit. —The *pride* of mankind, which resists the theory of descent from the animals and establishes the great gulf between man and nature — this pride has its basis in a *prejudice* as to what spirit is: and this prejudice is relatively *young*. During the great prehistoric age of mankind, spirit was presumed to exist everywhere and was not held in honour as a privilege of man. Because, on the contrary, the spiritual (together with all drives, wickedness, inclinations) had been rendered common property, and thus common, one was not ashamed to have descended from animals or trees (the *noble* races thought themselves honoured by such fables), and saw in the spirit that which unites us with nature, not that which sunders us from it. Thus one schooled oneself in *modesty* — and likewise in consequence of a *prejudice*.

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Drives transformed by moral judgments. —The same drive evolves into the painful feeling of *cowardice* under the impress of the reproach custom has imposed upon this drive: or into the pleasant feeling of *humility* if it happens that a custom such as the Christian has taken it to its heart and called it *good*. That is to say, it is attended by either a good or a bad conscience! In itself it has, *like every drive*, neither this moral character nor any moral character at all, nor even a definite attendant sensation of pleasure or displeasure: it acquires all this, as its second nature, only when it enters into relations with drives already baptised good or evil or is noted as a quality of beings the people has already evaluated and determined in a moral sense. —Thus the older Greeks felt differently about *envy* from the way we do; Hesiod counted it among the effects of the *good*, beneficent Eris, and there was nothing offensive in attributing to the gods something of envy: which

is comprehensible under a condition of things the soul of which was contest; contest, however, was evaluated and determined as good. The Greeks likewise differed from us in their evaluation of *hope*: they felt it to be blind and deceitful; Hesiod gave the strongest expression to this attitude in a fable whose sense is so strange no more recent commentator has understood it— for it runs counter to the modern spirit, which has learned from Christianity to believe in hope as a virtue. With the Greeks, on the other hand, to whom the gateway to knowledge of the future seemed not to be entirely closed and in countless cases where we content ourselves with hope elevated inquiry into the future into a religious duty, hope would, thanks to all these oracles and soothsayers, no doubt become somewhat degraded and sink to something evil and dangerous. — The Jews felt differently about *anger* from the way we do, and called it holy: thus they saw the gloomy majesty of the man with whom it showed itself associated at an elevation which a European is incapable of imagining; they modeled their angry holy Jehovah on their angry holy prophets. Measured against these, the great men of wrath among Europeans are as it were creations at second hand.

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'Pure spirit' a prejudice. Wherever the teaching of *pure spirituality* has ruled, it has destroyed nervous energy with its excesses: it has taught deprecation neglect or tormenting of the body and men to torment and deprecate themselves on account of the drives which fill them; it has produced gloomy, tense and oppressed souls — which believed, moreover, they knew the cause of their feeling of wretchedness and were perhaps able to abolish it! 'It must reside in the body! the body is still *flourishing* too well!' — thus they concluded, while in fact the body was, by means of the pains it registered raising protest after protest against the mockery to which it was constantly being subjected. A general chronic over-excitability was finally the lot of these virtuous pure-spirits: the only *pleasure* they could still recognise was in the form of ecstasy and other precursors of madness —and their system attained its summit when it came to take ecstasy for the higher goal of life and the standard by which all earthly things stood *condemned*.

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To think a thing evil means to make it evil. — The passions become evil and malicious if they are regarded as evil and malicious. Thus Christianity has succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite — great powers capable of idealisation — into diabolical kobolds and phantoms by means of the torments it introduces into the consciences of believers whenever they are excited sexually. Is it not dreadful to make necessary and regularly recurring sensations into a source of inner misery, and in this way to want to make inner misery a necessary and regularly recurring phenomenon *in every human being*! In addition to which it remains a misery kept secret and thus more deeply rooted: for not everyone possesses the courage of Shakespeare to confess his Christian gloominess on this point in the way he did in his Sonnets. — Must everything that one has to combat, that one has to keep within bounds or on occasion banish totally from one's mind, always have to be called *evil*! Is it not the way of *common* souls always to think an *enemy* must be *evil*! And ought one to call Eros an enemy? The sexual sensations have this in common with the sensations of sympathy and worship, that one person, by doing what pleases him, gives pleasure to another person — such benevolent arrangements are not to be found so very often in nature! And to calumniate such an arrangement and to ruin it through associating it with a bad conscience! — In the end this *diabolising* of Eros acquired an outcome in comedy: thanks to the dark secretiveness of the church in all things erotic, the 'devil' Eros gradually became more interesting to mankind than all the saints and angels put together: the effect has been that, to this very day, the *love story* is the only thing which *all* circles find equally interesting — and with an exaggeratedness which antiquity would have found incomprehensible and which will one day again elicit laughter. All our thinking and poetising, from the highest to the lowest, is characterised, and more than characterised, by the excessive importance attached to the love story: on this account it may be that posterity will judge the whole inheritance of Christian culture to be marked by something crackbrained and petty.

On the torments of the soul. — Everyone now exclaims loudly against torment inflicted by one person on the body of another; indignation is at once ignited against a person capable of doing it; indeed, we tremble at the mere idea of a torment which could be inflicted on a man or an animal, and suffer quite dreadfully when we hear of a definitely attested fact of this kind. But we are still far from feeling so decisively and with such unanimity in regard to torments of the soul and how dreadful it is to inflict them. Christianity has made use of them on an unheard-of scale and continues to preach this species of torture; indeed, it complains quite innocently of falling-off and growing lukewarm when it encounters those who are not in this state of torment — all with the result that even today mankind regards spiritual death-by-fire, spiritual torture and instruments of torture, with the same anxious toleration and indecision as it formerly did the cruelties inflicted on the bodies of men and animals. Hell has, in truth, been more than merely a word: and the newly created and genuine fear of Hell has been attended by a new species of pity corresponding to it, a horrible, ponderously heavy feeling of pity, unknown to former ages, for those ‘irrevocably damned to Hell’ — a condition, for example, which the stone guest gives Don Juan to understand he is in, and which had no doubt often before during the Christian centuries wrung tears even from stones. Plutarch gives a gloomy picture of the state of a superstitious man in the pagan world: this picture pales when contrasted with the Christian of the Middle Ages who *supposes* he is no longer going to escape ‘eternal torment’. Dreadful portents appear to him: perhaps a stork holding a snake in its beak but *hesitating* to swallow it. Or nature suddenly blanches or fiery colours flutter across the ground. Or he is approached by the figures of dead relatives, their faces bearing the traces of fearful sufferings. Or when he is asleep the dark walls of his room grow bright and there appear on them in a yellow exhalation the images of torture-instruments and a confusion of snakes and devils. Indeed, what a dreadful place Christianity had already made of the earth when it everywhere erected the crucifix and thereby designated the earth as the place ‘where the just man is *tortured* to death’! And when the powerful oratory of great Lenten preachers for once fetched into the light of publicity all the hidden suffering of the individual, the torments of the ‘closet’; when a Whitfield, for instance, preached ‘like a dying man to the dying’, now violently weeping, now stamping loudly, and passionately and unashamedly, in the most abrupt and cutting tones, directed the whole weight of his attack upon some one individual present and in a fearful manner excluded him from the community — then the earth really did seem to want to transform itself into the ‘vale of misery’! Whole masses then come together appeared to fall victim to a madness; many were paralysed with fear; others lay unconscious and motionless; some were seized with violent trembling or rent the air for hours with piercing cries. Everywhere a loud breathing, as of people half-choked gasping for air. ‘And truly’, says one eye-witness of such a sermon, ‘almost all the sounds to be heard were those of people *dying in bitter torment.*’ — Let us never forget that it was Christianity which made of the *death-bed* a bed of torture, and that with the scenes that have since then been enacted upon it, with the terrifying tones which here seemed to be realised for the first time, the senses and the blood of countless witnesses have been poisoned for the rest of their life and for that of their posterity! Imagine a harmless human being who cannot get over once having heard such words as these: ‘Oh eternity! Oh that I had no soul! Oh that I had never been born! I am damned, damned, lost for ever. A week ago you could have helped me. But now it is all over. Now I belong to the Devil. I go with him to Hell. Break, break, poor hearts of stone! Will you not break? What more can be done for hearts of stone? I am damned that you may be saved! There he is! Yes, there he is! Come, kind Devil! Come!’ —

Book II

There are two kinds of deniers of morality. — ‘To deny morality’ — this can mean, *first*: to deny that the moral motives which men *claim* have inspired their actions really have done so — it is thus the assertion that morality consists of words and is among the coarser or more subtle deceptions (especially self-deceptions) which men practise, and is perhaps so especially in precisely the case of those most famed for virtue. Then

it can mean: to deny that moral judgments are based on truths. Here it is admitted that they really are motives of action, but that in this way it is *errors* which, as the basis of all moral judgment, impel men to their moral actions. This is *my* point of view: though I should be the last to deny that *in very many cases* there is some ground for suspicion that the other point of view— that is to say, the point of view of La Rochefoucauld and others who think like him — may also be justified and in any event of great general application. — Thus I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises: but I do not deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises and acted in accordance with them. — I also deny immorality: *not* that countless people *feel* themselves to be immoral, but there is any *true* reason so to feel. It goes without saying that I do not deny — unless I am a fool — that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged — but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently* — in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently*.

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Self-mastery and moderation and their ultimate motive. — I find no more than six essentially different methods of combating the vehemence of a drive. First, one can avoid opportunities for gratification of the drive, and through long and ever longer periods of non-gratification weaken it and make it wither away. Then, one can impose upon oneself strict regularity in its gratification: by thus imposing a rule upon the drive itself and enclosing its ebb and flood within firm time-boundaries, one has then gained intervals during which one is no longer troubled by it—and from there one can perhaps go over to the first method. Thirdly, one can deliberately give oneself over to the wild and unrestrained gratification of a drive in order to generate disgust with it and with disgust to acquire a power over the drive: always supposing one does not do like the rider who rode his horse to death and broke his own neck in the process — which, unfortunately, is the rule when this method is attempted. Fourthly, there is the intellectual artifice of associating its gratification in general so firmly with some very painful thought that, after a little practice, the thought of its gratification is itself at once felt as very painful (as, for example, when the Christian accustoms himself to associating the proximity and mockery of the Devil with sexual enjoyment or everlasting punishment in Hell with a murder for revenge, or even when he thinks merely of the contempt which those he most respects would feel for him if he, for example, stole money; or, as many have done a hundred times, a person sets against a violent desire to commit suicide a vision of the grief and self-reproach of his friends and relations and therewith keeps himself suspended in life: — henceforth these ideas within him succeed one another as cause and effect). The same method is also being employed when a man's pride, as for example in the case of Lord Byron or Napoleon, rises up and feels the domination of his whole bearing and the ordering of his reason by a single affect as an affront: from where there then arises the habit and desire to tyrannise over the drive and make it as it were gnash its teeth. ('I refuse to be the slave of any appetite', Byron wrote in his diary.) Fifthly, one brings about a dislocation of one's quanta of strength by imposing on oneself a particularly difficult and strenuous labour, or by deliberately subjecting oneself to a new stimulus and pleasure and thus directing one's thoughts and plays of physical forces into other channels. It comes to the same thing if one for the time being favours another drive, gives it ample opportunity for gratification and thus makes it squander that energy otherwise available to the drive which through its vehemence has grown burdensome. Some few will no doubt understand how to keep in check the individual drive that wanted to play the master by giving all the other drives he knows of a temporary encouragement and festival and letting them eat up all the food the tyrant wants to have for himself alone. Finally, sixth: he can endure it and finds it reasonable to weaken and depress his *entire* bodily and physical organisation will naturally thereby also attain the goal of weakening an individual violent drive: as he does, for example, who, like the ascetic, starves his sensuality and thereby also starves and ruins his vigour and not seldom his reason as well. — Thus, avoiding opportunities, implanting regularity into the drive, engendering satiety and disgust with it and associating it with a painful idea (such as that of disgrace, evil consequences or offended pride), then dislocation of forces and finally

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

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The so-called ‘ego’ — Language and the prejudices upon which language is based are a manifold hindrance to us when we want to explain inner processes and drives: because of the fact, for example, that words really exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives; and where words are lacking, we are accustomed to abandon exact observation because exact thinking there becomes painful; indeed, in earlier times one involuntarily concluded that where the realm of words ceased the realm of existence ceased also. Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain — all are names for *extreme* states: the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play, elude us, and yet it is they which weave the web of our character and our destiny. These extreme outbursts — and even the most moderate *conscious* pleasure or displeasure, while eating food or hearing a note, is perhaps, rightly understood, an extreme outburst — very often rend the web apart, and then they constitute violent exceptions, no doubt usually consequent on built-up congestions: — and, as such, how easy it is for them to mislead the observer! No less easy than it is for them to mislead the person in whom they occur. *We are none of us* that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words, and consequently praise and blame; those cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us *misunderstand* ourselves, we draw a conclusion on the basis of data in which the exceptions outweigh the rule, we misread ourselves in this apparently most intelligible of handwriting on the nature of our self. *Our opinion of ourself*, however, which we have arrived at by this erroneous path, the so-called ‘ego’, is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny. —

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The unknown world of the ‘subject’. — That which, from the earliest times to the present moment, men have found so hard to understand is their ignorance of themselves! Not only in regard to good and evil, but in regard to what is much more essential! The primeval delusion still lives on that one knows, and knows quite precisely in every case, *how human action is brought about*. Not only ‘God, who sees into the heart’, not only the doer who premeditates his deed — no, everyone else too is in no doubt that he understands what is essentially involved in the process of action in every other person. ‘I know what I want, what I have done, I am free and responsible for it, I hold others responsible, I can call by its name every moral possibility and every inner motion which precedes action; you may act as you will — in this matter I understand myself and understand you all!’ — that is how everyone formerly thought, that is how almost everyone still thinks. Socrates and Plato, in this regard great doubters and admirable innovators, were nonetheless innocently credulous in regard to that most fateful of prejudices, that profoundest of errors, that ‘right knowledge *must be followed* by right action’ — in this principle they were still the heirs of the universal madness and presumption that there exists knowledge as to the essential nature of an action. ‘For it would be *terrible* if insight into the nature of right action were not followed by right action’ — this is the only kind of proof these great men deemed necessary for demonstrating the truth of this idea, the opposite seemed to them crazy and unthinkable—and yet this opposite is precisely the naked reality demonstrated daily and hourly from time immemorial! Is the ‘terrible’ truth not that no amount of knowledge about an act ever suffices to ensure its performance, that the space between knowledge and action has never yet been bridged even in one single

instance? Actions are never what they appear to us to be! We have expended so much labour on learning that external things are not as they appear to us to be — very well! the case is the same with the inner world! Moral actions are in reality ‘something other than that’ more we cannot say: and all actions are essentially unknown. The opposite was and is the universal belief: we have the oldest realism against us; up to now mankind has thought: ‘an action is what it appears to us to be’. (In rereading these words a very express passage of Schopenhauer occurs to me which I shall here adduce as evidence that he too remained an adherent of this moral realism, and did so without the slightest compunction: ‘Each one of us is truly a competent and perfectly moral judge, with an exact knowledge of good and evil, holy in loving good and abhorring evil — each of us is all this insofar as it is not our actions but those of others which are under investigation and we have merely to approve or disapprove, while the burden of performance rests on others’ shoulders. Consequently, everyone can, as a confessor, wholly and completely deputise for God.’)

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In prison. — My eyes, however strong or weak they may be, can see only a certain distance, and it is within the space encompassed by this distance that I live and move, the line of this horizon constitutes my immediate fate, in great things and small, from which I cannot escape. Around every being there is described a similar concentric circle, which has a mid-point and is peculiar to him. Our ears enclose us within a comparable circle, and so does our sense of touch. Now, it is by these horizons, within which each of us encloses his senses as if behind prison walls, that we *measure* the world, we say that this is near and that far, this is big and that small, this is hard and that soft: this measuring we call sensation — and it is all of it an error! According to the average quantity of experiences and excitations possible to us at any particular point of time one measures one’s life as being short or long, poor or rich, full or empty: and according to the average human life one measures that of all other creatures — all of it an error! If our eyes were a hundredfold sharper, man would appear to us tremendously tall; it is possible, indeed, to imagine organs by virtue of which he would be felt as immeasurable. On the other hand, organs could be so constituted that whole solar systems were viewed contracted and packed together like a single cell: and to beings of an opposite constitution a cell of the human body could present itself, in motion, construction and harmony, as a solar system. The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deception of sensation: these again are the basis of all our judgments and ‘knowledge’—there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into into the *real world*! We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we can catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely *our* net.

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Experience and invention. — However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives (*Trieb*) which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him. This nutriment is therefore a work of chance: our daily experiences throw some prey in the way of now this, now that drive, and the drive seizes it eagerly; but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives: so that the outcome will always be twofold — the starvation and stunting of some and the overfeeding of others. Every moment of our lives sees some of the polyp-arms of our being grow and others of them wither, all according to the nutriment which the moment does or does not bear with it. Our experiences are, as already said, all in this sense means of nourishment, but the nourishment is scattered indiscriminately without distinguishing between the hungry and those already possessing a superfluity. And as a consequence of this chance nourishment of the parts, the whole, fully grown polyp will be something just as accidental as its growth has been. To express it more clearly: suppose a drive finds itself at the point at which it desires gratification — or exercise of its strength, or discharge of its strength, or the saturation of an emptiness — these are all metaphors—: it then regards every event of the day with a view to seeing how it can employ it for the attainment of its goal; whether a man is

moving, or resting or angry or reading or speaking or fighting or rejoicing, the drive will in its thirst as it were taste every condition into which the man may enter, and as a rule will discover nothing for itself there and will have to wait and go on thirsting: in a little while it will grow faint, and after a couple of days or months of non-gratification it will wither away like a plant without rain. Perhaps this cruelty perpetrated by chance would be more vividly evident if all the drives were as much in earnest as is *hunger*, which is not content with *dream food*; but most of the drives, especially the so-called moral ones, *do precisely this*— if my suspicion is allowed that the meaning and value of our *dreams* is precisely to compensate to some extent for the chance absence of ‘nourishment’ during the day. Why was the dream of yesterday full of tenderness and tears, that of the day before yesterday humorous and exuberant, an earlier dream adventurous and involved in a continuous gloomy searching? Why do I in this dream enjoy indescribable beauties of music, why do I in another soar and fly with the joy of an eagle up to distant mountain peaks? These inventions, which give scope and discharge to our drives to tenderness or humorousness or adventurousness or to our desire for music and mountains — and everyone will have his own more striking examples to hand — are interpretations of nervous stimuli receive while we are asleep, *very free*, very arbitrary interpretations of the motions of the blood and intestines, of the pressure of the arm and the bedclothes, of the sounds made by church bells, weather-cocks, night-revelers and other things of the kind. That this text, which is in general much the same on one night as on another, is commented on in such varying ways, that the inventive reasoning faculty *imagines* today a *cause* for the nervous stimuli so very different from the cause it imagined yesterday, though the stimuli are the same: the explanation of this is that today’s prompter of the reasoning faculty was different from yesterday’s — a different *drive* wanted to gratify itself, to be active, to exercise itself, to refresh itself, to discharge itself— today this drive was at high flood, yesterday it was a different drive that was in that condition.— Waking life does not have this *freedom* of interpretation possessed by the life of dreams, it is less inventive and unbridled—but I do have to add that when we are awake our drives likewise do nothing but interpret nervous stimuli and, according to their requirements, posit their ‘causes’? that there is no *essential* difference between waking and dreaming? that when we compare very different stages of culture we even find that freedom of waking interpretation in the one is in no way inferior to the freedom exercised in the other while dreaming? that our moral judgments and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us, a kind of acquired language for designating certain nervous stimuli? that all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text?— Take some trifling experience. Suppose we were in the market place one day and we noticed someone laughing at us as we went by: this event will signify this or that to us according to whether this or that drive happens at that moment to be at its height in us — and it will be a quite different event according to the kind of person we are. One person will absorb it like a drop of rain, another will shake it from him like an insect, another will try to pick a quarrel, another will examine his clothing to see if there is anything about it that might give rise to laughter, another will be led to reflect on the nature of laughter as such, another will be glad to have involuntarily augmented the amount of cheerfulness and sunshine in the world — and in each case a drive has gratified itself, whether it be the drive to annoyance or to combativeness or to reflection or to benevolence. This drive seized the event as its prey: why precisely this one? Because, thirsty and hungry, it was lying in wait. — One day recently at eleven o’clock in the morning a man suddenly collapsed right in front of me as if struck by lightning, and all the women in the vicinity screamed aloud; I myself raised him to his feet and attended to him until he had recovered his speech— during this time not a muscle of my face moved and I felt nothing, neither fear nor sympathy, but I did what needed doing and went coolly on my way. Suppose someone had told me the day before that tomorrow at eleven o’clock in the morning a man would fall down beside me in this fashion — I would have suffered every kind of anticipatory torment, would have spent a sleepless night, and at the decisive moment instead of helping the man would perhaps have done what he did. For in the meantime all possible drives would have *had time* to imagine the experience and to comment on it. — What then are our experiences? Much *more* that which we put into them than that which they already contain! Or must we go so far as to say: in themselves they contain nothing? To experience is to invent? —

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Dream and responsibility. — You are willing to assume responsibility for everything! Except, that is, for your dreams! What miserable weakness, what lack of consistent courage! Nothing is more your own than your dreams! Nothing *more* your own work! Content, form, duration, performer, spectator—in these comedies you are all of this yourself! And it is precisely here that you rebuff and are ashamed of yourselves, and even Oedipus, the wise Oedipus, derived consolation from the thought that we cannot help what we dream! From this I conclude that the great majority of mankind must be conscious of having abominable dreams. If it were otherwise, how greatly this nocturnal poetising would have been exploited for the enhancement of human arrogance! — Do I have to add that the wise Oedipus was right, that we really are not responsible for our dreams—but just as little for our waking life, and that the doctrine of freedom of will has human pride and feeling of power for its father and mother? Perhaps I say this too often: but at least that does not make it an error.

Book III

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German hostility to the Enlightenment. — Let us consider the intellectual contribution to general culture made by the Germans of the first half of this century, and let us take first the German philosophers: they retreated to the first and oldest stage of speculation, for, like the thinkers of dreamy ages, they were content with concepts instead of explanations — they brought to life again a pre-scientific species of philosophy. Secondly, the German historians and romantics: their general endeavour was to bring into honour older, primitive sensibilities and especially Christianity, the folk-soul, folk-lore, folk-speech, the medieval world, oriental asceticism, the world of India. Thirdly, the natural scientists: they fought against the spirit of Newton and Voltaire and, like Goethe and Schopenhauer, sought to restore the idea of a divine or diabolical nature suffused with ethical and symbolic significance. The whole great tendency of the Germans was against the Enlightenment and against the revolution in society which was crudely misunderstood as its consequence: piety towards everything that exists sought to translate itself into piety towards everything that ever had existed, to the end that heart and spirit might once more become *full* and no room be left for future and novel goals. The cult of feeling was erected in place of the cult of reason, and the German composers, as artists of the invisible, emotional, fabulous, unsatisfied, built at the new temple more successfully than any of the artists of words or of ideas. Even if we take into account the enormous quantity of individual achievement, and the fact that since that time many things have been judged more fairly than they were before, it must nonetheless be said that there was *no small danger* involved when, under the appearance of attaining a full and final knowledge of the past, the movement as a whole set knowledge in general below feeling and — in the words Kant employed to designate his own task — ‘again paved the way for faith by showing knowledge its limitations’. Let us breathe freely again: the hour of this danger has passed! And strange: it is precisely the spirits the Germans so eloquently conjured up which have in the long run most thwarted the intentions of their conjurers — after appearing for a time as ancillaries of the spirit of obscurantism and reaction, the study of history, understanding of origins and evolutions, empathy for the past, newly aroused passion for feeling and knowledge one day assumed a new nature and now fly on the broadest wings above and beyond their former conjurers as new and stronger genii of *that very Enlightenment* against which they were first conjured up. This Enlightenment we must now carry further forward: let us not worry about the ‘great revolution’ and the ‘great reaction’ against it which have taken place — they are no more than the sporting of waves in comparison with the truly great flood which bears *us* along!

Book V

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Mortal souls. — So far as the promotion of knowledge is concerned, mankind's most useful achievement is perhaps the abandonment of its belief in an immortal soul. Now mankind can wait, now it no longer needs to rush precipitately forward or gulp down ideas only half—tasted, as it formerly had to do. For in the past the salvation of the 'eternal soul' depended on knowledge acquired during a brief lifetime, men had *to come to a decision* overnight — 'knowledge' possessed a frightful importance. We have reconquered our courage for error, for experimentation, for accepting provisionally—none of it is so very important! and it is for precisely this reason that individuals and generations can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness and a trifling with Heaven and Hell. We may experiment with ourselves! Yes, mankind now has a right to do that! The greatest sacrifices have not yet been offered to knowledge— indeed, merely to *have an inkling* of such ideas as nowadays determine our actions would in earlier times have been blasphemy and the loss of one's eternal salvation.

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What we are at liberty to do. — One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis; one can do it with the good or bad taste of a gardener and, as it were, in the French or English or Dutch or Chinese fashion; one can also let nature rule and only attend to a little embellishment and tidying-up here and there; one can, finally, without paying any attention to them at all, let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves — indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness, and desire precisely this delight, though it gives one some trouble, too. All this we are at liberty to do: but how many know we are at liberty to do it? Do the majority not *believe* in *themselves* as in complete *fully-developed facts*? Have the great philosophers not put their seal on this prejudice with the doctrine of the unchangeability of character?

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We aeronauts of the spirit! — All those brave birds which fly out into the distance, into the farthest distance— it is certain! somewhere or other they will be unable to go on and will perch on a mast or a bare cliff-face— and they will even be thankful for this miserable accommodation! But who could venture to infer from that, that there was *not* an immense open space before them, that they had flown as far as one *could* fly! All our great teachers and predecessors have at last come to a stop and it is not with the noblest or most graceful of gestures that weariness comes to a stop: it will be the same with you and me! But what does that matter to you and me! *Other birds will fly farther!* This insight and faith of ours vies with them in flying up and away; it rises above our heads and above our impotence into the heights and from there surveys the distance and sees before it the flocks of birds which, far stronger than we, still strive whither we have striven, and where everything is sea, sea, sea! — And whither then would we go? Would we cross the sea? Whither does this mighty longing draw us, this longing that is worth more to us than any pleasure? Why just in this direction, thither where all the suns of humanity have hitherto gone down? Will it perhaps be said of us one day that we too, steering westward, hoped to reach an India— but that it was our fate to be wrecked against infinity? Or, my brothers. Or? —

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