

The Second Treatise in *On the Genealogy of Morality*: Nietzsche on the Origin of the Bad Conscience¹

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I. Introduction: Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*

On a postcard to Franz Overbeck from January 4, 1888, Nietzsche makes some illuminating remarks with respect to the three treatises in his book *On the Genealogy of Morality*.² Nietzsche says that, 'for the sake of clarity, it was necessary artificially to isolate the different roots of that complex structure that is called morality. Each of these three treatises expresses a single primum mobile; a fourth and fifth are missing, as is even the most essential ('the herd instinct') – for the time being, the latter had to be ignored, as too comprehensive, and the same holds for the ultimate summation of all those different elements and thus a final account of morality.' Nietzsche also points out that each treatise makes a contribution to the genesis of Christianity and rejects an explanation of Christianity in terms of only one psychological category. The topics of the treatises are 'good' and 'evil' (first treatise), the 'bad conscience' (second), and the 'ascetic ideal' (third). The postcard suggests that Nietzsche discusses these topics separately because a joint treatment is too complicated, but that in reality, these ideas are inextricably intertwined, both with each other and with others that Nietzsche omits. Therefore, the three treatises should be regarded as parts of a unified theory and critique of morality. Nietzsche's remarks on that postcard are important because in the *Genealogy* itself, he makes little effort to show the unity among the treatises. We shall return to this postcard repeatedly.³

The first treatise has attracted most scholarly attention, but much less work has been done on the second treatise, '“Debts”, “Bad Conscience”, and Related Matters'. This is unfortunate, since it seems that, in Nietzsche's own view, the central notion of the second treatise, namely, the *bad conscience as a feeling of guilt*, is a key element of Christian morality. Therefore, understanding Nietzsche's treatment of this notion is essential to understanding his views on Christianity and the impact of the Christian heritage on non-religious moral philosophy. At the same time, however, the second treatise confronts the reader with considerable exegetical difficulties. In particular, Nietzsche's remarks about the bad conscience itself make it hard to conceive of them as contributions to a coherent account of the same concept. Ridley's 1998 study of the *Genealogy* finds no way of making sense of all of them and ends up classifying several remarks on the bad

conscience as confused. As Nietzsche himself puts it in the section on the *Genealogy* in *Ecce Homo*, each of the three treatises of the *Genealogy* reveals 'a new truth' only 'among thick clouds.' Thus the importance of the notion of the bad conscience for Nietzsche's thought, combined with the exegetical difficulties of the second treatise, more than justifies a closer investigation of Nietzsche's treatment of the bad conscience in that treatise. I intend to illuminate Nietzsche's views on the bad conscience by interpreting what I take to be the pivotal section of the second treatise and, to that end, by scrutinizing Nietzsche's treatment of the relevant notions used in this pivotal section. That section is section 21, in which Nietzsche tells us how the bad conscience *as a feeling of guilt* arises from an *earlier form of the bad conscience* (which has nothing to do with guilt) and an *indebtedness towards gods*. Exploring Nietzsche's thoughts on this earlier form of the bad conscience, indebtedness, and the fusion of the two that leads to the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt, is illuminating for large parts of the second treatise. However, I do not provide an overall interpretation of the second treatise. In particular, I hardly touch on exegetical problems raised by the initial three sections.

I begin by following Nietzsche's treatment of the bad conscience (part II). (I talk about 'sections' when referring to Nietzsche's second treatise, and to 'parts' when referring to my essay.) It turns out that Nietzsche's remarks are plausibly understood as referring to two different stages in the development of the bad conscience. One is the present stage of the bad conscience *as a feeling of guilt*, and the other is an *earlier stage* to be explored in part II. In order for this earlier stage of the bad conscience to develop into the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt, Nietzsche needs another element, namely an indebtedness towards gods. I discuss this indebtedness in part III. The bad conscience as a feeling of guilt arises from the earlier form of the bad conscience when this indebtedness is 'pushed back' into that earlier form. This is what Nietzsche claims in section 21, and it is because this section brings together these two elements and thereby explains how the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt arises that I consider it the pivotal section. However, this 'pushing back' does not occur by itself: it is only through the impact of Christianity that the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt arises. I explore this 'pushing back' in detail in part IV. Explaining the 'pushing back' is the most demanding exegetical challenge raised by the second treatise. In parts III and IV we encounter the question of what Nietzsche actually means by morality, and answering this question is crucial for assessing the relevance of Nietzsche's thoughts to ethics. After all, ethics nowadays tends to be non-religious, and thus if Nietzsche's thoughts only apply to Christianity, they will be of little interest to ethics. I discuss this matter in part V, and I also explore there whether there is any hope for us to escape from the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt along the lines that Nietzsche suggests. My discussion of Nietzsche's treatment of the bad conscience will entail various disagreements with Ridley's recent study of the *Genealogy* (cf. Ridley 1998). I claim that my reading makes sense of important passages in the second treatise that Ridley's reading makes appear to be very confused.⁴

II. The Bad Conscience

Nietzsche introduces the bad conscience early on in the second treatise. Referring to it as the 'consciousness of guilt', he asks how this 'sinister thing' has arrived on earth (sec. 4).⁵ The discussion that follows immediately, however, does not answer this question directly, and the bad conscience reappears only ten sections later (sec. 14). Yet it does not reappear for Nietzsche to tell us his view on the origin of the bad conscience. Rather, in the context of a discussion of punishment, Nietzsche says that the *creation of a bad conscience* is *not* among the effects of *punishment*. For, say, prisoners perceive punishment as inflicting the same kind of harm for which they themselves were imprisoned. So punishment only instigates them to inflict more of the same, but does not make them feel *guilty*. With respect to the origin of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt, Nietzsche's point is that the most common explanation of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt fails.

It is only a few sections later (sec. 16) that Nietzsche begins his own reply to his question about the origin of the bad conscience. The bad conscience, we read in section 17, originates in people oppressed by intruders, the notorious 'pack of blond beasts of prey, a conqueror- and master-race', which 'puts its terrible claws on a perhaps numerically vastly superior, but formless, still spreading population' (sec. 17). Thereby these intruders bring about the 'most thorough of all changes' man has lived to see (sec. 16). The idea seems to be that people are living more or less by themselves, following their instincts for food, shelter, sex, and, as Nietzsche emphasizes, their drives for aggression. (I do not distinguish between instincts and drives.) Then some groups get organized, and start oppressing others that do not. Nietzsche insists that these conquests happen *abruptly*. In the course of long, gradual colonization, wild drives may become domesticated, which might soften the impact of the change. As it is, the instincts do not become *gradually* domesticated, but are *vehemently* turned inwards.⁶ The oppressed are prevented from letting their instincts act against others, and Nietzsche must have in mind here the instincts for aggression, i.e., 'enmity, cruelty, the lust for pursuit, for raid, for change, for destruction' (sec. 16). The oppressed are forced to redirect these instincts inward since otherwise they are threatened with severe *punishment*. So from now on, the oppressed treat themselves in ways similar both to those in which they used to treat others, and to ways in which they themselves are still treated by the oppressors. Nietzsche presents the image of an incarcerated animal that beats itself raw on the bars of its cage (cf. also third treatise, sec. 20). He calls this inward-direction of previously outward-directed instincts the *internalization* (*Verinnerlichung*) of man, and regards it as the origin not only of the bad conscience, but also of what should come to be called the *soul*. (Nietzsche believes that the soul is a creation of Christianity, as we learn in the first treatise of the *Genealogy*.)

This account of the origin of the bad conscience should make us pause for various reasons. The first is that one may question the consistency of Nietzsche's account. First, what Nietzsche sets out to explore is the bad conscience as a *feeling of guilt*. Guilt, however, is not mentioned when he presents his own answer to the

question. What is more, it is hard to see how his answer could possibly explain the occurrence of *guilt* (rather than *anger*) in the oppressed. So are we still talking about the same question? Second, Nietzsche's answer to the question about the origin of the bad conscience contradicts his earlier point that punishment *cannot* explain the bad conscience. For he now says that the conquerors use *punishment* to oppress the instincts of freedom among the conquered. So earlier, Nietzsche denies that punishment explains the bad conscience, but now he includes punishment in an explanation of how the bad conscience arises. Is Nietzsche contradicting himself? (Note that Ridley 1998 claims that Nietzsche's discussion of the bad conscience is immensely confused. In light of Ridley's reading, this question becomes quite pressing.)

As a solution to this puzzle, I submit that the bad conscience develops *in stages*. Early on in the second treatise (sec. 4), Nietzsche introduces the bad conscience *as a feeling of guilt*. It is *this* notion whose origins he wants to explore and to which he returns when he says that punishment cannot explain it (sec. 14). This is a notion that we have after centuries of Christianity. But in section 17, Nietzsche talks about an *older form* of the bad conscience that *precedes* Christianity and is not connected to guilt at all. This older form arises through the internalization of instincts and is a remote ancestor of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. So what then happens in between? In particular, where does the *guilt* come from? Guilt arises when this older form of the bad conscience merges with an indebtedness to ancestors or gods. Nietzsche discusses this fusion of the indebtedness towards ancestors and gods with the early form of the bad conscience in section 21. (I claim that section 21 is the pivotal section precisely because it contains that discussion.) But before we can interpret section 21, we have to explore the early stage of the bad conscience more thoroughly and then discuss the idea of indebtedness towards ancestors and gods.

So again, has Nietzsche changed the topic, or is he contradicting himself? The answer to both questions is negative. Nietzsche denies that punishment causes the bad conscience *as a feeling of guilt*. But punishment had its impact on the bad conscience *at an earlier stage*, when the latter was still detached from guilt. So there is no contradiction in Nietzsche's statements about the connection between the bad conscience and punishment. Moreover, we are still talking about the same thing, i.e., the bad conscience, but at different stages in its development.

There is more that should make us pause upon reading Nietzsche's account of the early form of the bad conscience. What *kind of thing* is the bad conscience at this early stage? Nietzsche tends to talk as if 'bad conscience' is another term to refer to a rudimentary form of the 'inner world' (sec. 16), i.e., an early stage in the development of the mental. Prior to the oppression, this inner world is merely 'thick as extended between two skins',⁷ but it was as a consequence of the oppression that this inner world 'has spread and unfolded, has taken on depth, breadth, height to the same degree that man's outward discharging has been inhibited' (sec. 16). There is no reason why we should not take his talk about the early stage of the bad conscience as an early form of the inner world, or the mental, literally. Moreover, the claim that the early form of the bad conscience is identical to an

early stage in the development of the mental is also supported by Nietzsche's way of talking about the emergence of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt (cf. part IV below). The latter, after all, arises by something's being 'pushed back' into the early form of the bad conscience, and this claim will be more plausible if there actually is something (such as the 'inner world') *into which* something else can be 'pushed back.' The bad conscience as a feeling of guilt is connected to this earlier form by descending from it in a way that we shall explore shortly. Since it is in virtue of that kind of relationship that they are both called 'bad conscience', it should not surprise us that the early form is different from the later form in many ways. At the very least, however, both forms of the bad conscience have in common that there is indeed something 'bad' about them. As for the later form, it is the feeling of guilt, and also as for the early form, it is the immense pain that goes along with the internalization. However, it needs to be emphasized that, for Nietzsche, there is no moral connotation at the early stage. The 'moralization' (sec. 21) has not yet happened (cf. part IV below).⁸

Finally, there is one more point that should make us pause when reading Nietzsche's own account of the origin of the bad conscience. One may wonder when, where, and to whom all this happened. In particular, who was oppressed, and who were the oppressors? Nietzsche does not indicate which era he is thinking of. All we can tell is that he is talking about a 'pre-historic' time before the development of state-like communities, but also before the rise of Christianity, since Christianity appears only when the consequences of the conquest are already in place (sec. 21). To see why this lack of specificity should not worry us, it is helpful to recall that, on his postcard to Overbeck from January 1888, Nietzsche points out that he is far from explaining Christianity in terms of only one *psychological* category. In view of that point, I submit that Nietzsche's interest is in exploring how morality, i.e., Christian morality, *could* have arisen in the course of human history when only basic assumptions about human psychology are in place. Moreover, Nietzsche's concern is to show how moral phenomena could have arisen in ways that are not only surprising, but appalling. As far as the development of the early form of the bad conscience is concerned, these assumptions are about the aggressive instincts. The historical presentation serves only as a medium for exploring the effects of such psychological assumptions. Put differently, the *Genealogy* does not present history for the sake of historical accuracy. Rather, the *Genealogy* is a *polemic* (*Streitschrift*, which is the subtitle of the work), and its ultimate goal is to contribute to the 'revaluation of values.' To that end, then, Nietzsche focuses only on the most significant parts of the historical events at issue, i.e., the moral psychology that figures in the genealogy of morality.

But this worry about the historical accuracy of Nietzsche's discussion is bigger than has become clear yet, and thus it may not be possible to put it to rest by the response in the preceding paragraph. For it seems impossible to put the events of the second treatise into any historically coherent story with the events related in the two other treatises while still being faithful to the text of the treatises.⁹ What then can we learn from Nietzsche's discussion if we do not even have a coherent historical story in the background? For a more considered response, recall again

the postcard, where Nietzsche mentions that he accepts an *artificial separation* of topics. One implication of this separation is that all three topics treated in the *Genealogy* are also developed in their own historical story. Nietzsche does not give us a *single* overall story of the development of morality, nor does he give us a *single* historical background story. But this is no threat to what I have identified as Nietzsche's concern in the *Genealogy*, i.e., to show how moral phenomena could have arisen in ways that are both surprising and appalling. For although this point would be made in a stronger way had Nietzsche actually provided us with one coherent historical background narrative, it is forceful and threatening enough if Nietzsche is able to make this point with respect to a number of *aspects* of morality. (So the absence of a single coherent background story by no means exempts us from spelling out the account in each treatise with as much care and rigor as possible.) Moreover, Nietzsche's work in the *Genealogy* is preliminary. The preliminary character of the work is not only indicated in the title ('On the Genealogy of Morality' [my emphasis], rather than 'The Genealogy of Morality'), but is also emphasized in the postcard to Overbeck. One way in which we should understand this preliminary character of the *Genealogy* is that there is no single historical background story in place yet.¹⁰

The effects of the development that leads to the early form of the bad conscience are immense. It is only at this stage of the development of the mental that much of what we associate with human intellectual and spiritual activity becomes possible. Among other things, Nietzsche points out that it is only through the rise of the older form of the bad conscience that we can understand 'contradictory notions' (sec. 18) such as selflessness, self-denial, and self-sacrifice as ideals. More generally, only from now on can we understand the 'un-egoistic' as a value. But why would he claim that? The same theme concerned Nietzsche as early as HAH 57, where he discusses examples of behavior instantiating such values: a good author with a concern for his subject wishes that another might come and destroy him by discussing the subject more clearly; or a soldier wishes to die for his victorious country. A necessary condition for values such as selflessness to be comprehensible is that a *single person* be thought of not, as he says in HAH 57, as an *individuum*, but as a *dividuum*, as something that can be split, as a plurality within a unity. But only after the oppression of instincts is there a sufficiently rich inner life to allow for such ideas. From then on, a person is, for better or worse, a plurality owing to the presence of divergent and competing instincts. According to Nietzsche, there still is nothing un-egoistic, but we can now at least see how it was not entirely absurd any more to develop such a notion: a person becomes praised as un-egoistic or selfless if a drive within himself that is beneficent to others leads to action. It is in this way that the internalization of instincts and its consequences render the idea of selflessness at least intelligible.¹¹

The development of this early form of inner world also provides the foundations for *reflectiveness*. Nietzsche does not speak about reflectiveness explicitly. Rather, he says that a person now *gives himself a shape* and can envisage 'ideal and imaginative events' (sec. 18) as part of a vision. It seems to be this more advanced degree of internalization that Nietzsche also has in mind in BGE 257, where we

read that without internalization culture is impossible. In contrast to the slaves suffering from this internalization, the beasts of prey are 'wholer men', *ganzzere Menschen* (BGE 257), since *they* do not suffer from inner conflict due to the oppression of instincts. Yet this also means that they fail to contribute to the development of culture, which is prompted by the growth of the mental. The oppressors initiate the development that leads to the growth of the mental, but it is the slaves who bring about cultural achievements, and do so *in virtue of being slaves*. Eventually, there are no beasts of prey left since in due course they get absorbed into the form of life created by their slaves and thus by the enslavement that they themselves start.¹²

III. The Indebtedness to Ancestors and Gods

This completes my elaboration on Nietzsche's account of the early form of the bad conscience. Recall the discussion so far: we started by tracing what Nietzsche says about the origin of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. We could account for his remarks on the bad conscience by distinguishing between the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt, which is the notion we have nowadays, and an earlier form of the bad conscience. How then does the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt arise from this earlier form? As I said earlier, Nietzsche introduces a second element, and it is through the fusion of this second element with the early form of the bad conscience that the current notion of the bad conscience arises. Our next task is to explore this second element.

This second notion is *indebtedness towards ancestors and gods*. In German, the word *Schuld/Schulden* means both 'guilt' and 'debts', and it is not always clear whether Nietzsche is speaking of debts or guilt. But this ambiguity is evidently an important *causa cognoscendi* for his account. For, as he tells us in section 6, it is in the sphere of the debtor-creditor relationship that the notion of guilt has its origin. Nietzsche starts discussing debtor-creditor relationships immediately after raising his initial question about the origin of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt early on in the treatise (sec. 4). Having debts is a purely juridical relationship, and whatever emotional or moral connotations the concept of *guilt* may have, those do not pertain to this original relationship of having *debts*. One variant of this relationship is the debt of the offspring towards the ancestors in virtue of the latter's contributions to the flourishing of the tribe (sec. 19). On the strength of these achievements the offspring *owe* sacrifices to the ancestors, just as they would owe gratitude to living benefactors. The offspring's debts grow the more they succeed, and eventually, the ancestors transfigure into gods. Debts towards ancestors on the side of successful clans spread through mankind via their conquests. For the submitted population receives and continues the tradition of giving sacrifices to the ancestors of the conquerors (sec. 20).

I have not discussed *guilt* yet. Since guilt is a moral notion, this is in order. For Nietzsche tells us at the beginning of section 21 – the pivotal section – that up to that point, there is no moral connotation to the notion of *Schuld*. That is, up to here

we have talked about debts, and even when Nietzsche discusses a *Schuldgefühl* (sec. 20), we should not understand this as a feeling of guilt, but rather as a sense of debts, i.e., indebtedness.¹³ Guilt only comes into existence after the old form of the bad conscience and the indebtedness have merged. (The reader should keep this point in mind. For if *Schuld* in sec. 20 is not understood as debt, but rather as guilt, then sec. 21 may easily appear to be a *repudiation* of Nietzsche's claim in sec. 20, i.e., the claim that atheism might be the cure for *guilt*. But Nietzsche does not at all suggest this in sec. 20. What he says there is merely that atheism would put an end to the indebtedness towards gods, including the Christian maximal God, if what he has told us up to that point were the full story. In sec. 21, then, he tells us why the situation is in fact much more complicated, and it is much more complicated precisely because we have not yet heard about the moralization of *Schuld*, i.e., about the development of *guilt*. Unfortunately, both Clark/Swensen and Diethel translate *Schuld* as *guilt* throughout the relevant passage, while Kaufmann, more cautiously, speaks of *guilty indebtedness* in some cases while also providing the respective German terms. Needless to say, the double meaning of *Schuld* in German makes the translator's task here very difficult. However, as I suggested earlier, this double meaning seems to be an important *causa cognoscendi* for Nietzsche.)

But before I proceed to discuss this next step in the development of the bad conscience, we should have a closer look at Nietzsche's remarks on the debtor-creditor relationship. For doing so will prove illuminating for his understanding of *morality*, which we shall discuss at more length in part V below. As Nietzsche points out in section 4, there is an old idea that originates in the debtor-creditor relationship, namely, the idea that every damage has its equivalent and can be paid off in some way. The origin of this idea is that a debtor who cannot pay his creditor is forced to give the creditor something else that he owns. This may amount to letting the creditor inflict torture on the creditor. As Nietzsche informs us in section 6, the reason why inflicting pain can have this function is because people actually *enjoy* watching torture or inflicting pain themselves. An individual's relationship with his *community* is also a debtor-creditor relationship. The community grants him protection, and in return requires that the individual pay back his debts towards the community by way of respecting certain rules of conduct. For all these debtor-creditor relationships, there is a background assumption that the people involved are roughly equally powerful (sec. 8). These ideas give rise to an idea of *justice* as a principle both for interaction among individuals and for communities as a whole, and this idea is that 'Everything can be paid off, and everything must be paid off.'

The reason why this is worth elaborating (apart from the fact that Nietzsche goes on about it for a good part of the first half of the treatise) is because these thoughts provide him with a *naturalistic* approach to at least simple moral codes.¹⁴ Depending on how one interprets the background assumption that people are supposed to be roughly equally powerful, this approach may account for more than very simple moral codes. (A case in point would be the Hobbesian idea that all people are equally powerful in the sense that each person can kill any

other person in some way; or the idea that in more specialized societies, people may be regarded as equals because they have different skills relevant to the thriving of the community). If it is right that such forms of conduct can indeed be regarded as moral codes, then, no matter what the purpose of the *Genealogy* is, Nietzsche cannot intend to dismiss *all* of morality. As I said, we shall resume this subject in part V. But we should keep in mind that Nietzsche has developed here a viewpoint from which he can account for codes that one may classify as moral, but without appeal to notions such as guilt, and without any appeal to Christianity. So these moral codes are thoroughly grounded in this world, so to speak.¹⁵

IV. Bad Conscience and Guilt – How They Are Combined

We have followed Nietzsche through his discussion of the two elements from which the current meaning of the bad conscience descends, the bad conscience as the result of the internalization of instincts and the indebtedness to gods. We have now reached section 21, where these two elements are combined to give rise to the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. Thus we may finally answer Nietzsche's initial question about the origin of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. At the beginning of section 21, Nietzsche says that he has not yet told us anything about the actual *moralization* of the notions of 'debts' and 'duty'. As he explains in brackets, this moralization is brought about through the 'pushing-back of those notions into the conscience, or more specifically, through the involvement of the *bad* conscience with the concept of God.'¹⁶ Our next task is to explain this pushing back of the indebtedness into the bad conscience.¹⁷

It is clear on textual grounds that Nietzsche thinks that an explanation of the 'pushing-back' requires a third element in addition to the indebtedness towards ancestors and gods and the early form of the bad conscience. That is, the joint presence of these two elements *by itself* does not lead to the moralization of the notions of debts and duty.¹⁸ This third element is *Christianity*, and it is through the interaction of Christianity with the early form of the bad conscience and the indebtedness that the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt arises. Let us focus, then, on how Nietzsche introduces Christianity. The stage is set by the concluding remarks of section 20, where Nietzsche finishes his story about the development of an indebtedness towards ancestors and gods with the Christian 'maximal God'. Throughout section 21, then, we find key terms of Christian theology ('eternal punishment', 'Adam', 'hereditary sin', etc.), and that section ends with a reference to the Christian God sacrificing himself out of love for his 'debtors'. In the light of all this, it is clear that the notion of God that the bad conscience gets involved with is the *Christian* notion of God. The aforementioned key terms of Christian theology then provide valuable hints for the interpretation of section 21.¹⁹ Similar considerations can also be made with respect to section 22.

This observation about the relevance of Christianity immediately confronts us with a difficulty with respect to the relevance of this treatise and possibly the whole *Genealogy* for moral philosophy. For, on the one hand, Nietzsche emphasizes that

he is concerned with 'all that has so far been celebrated as morality on earth' (Preface, sec. 3). Moreover, the title of his book is not, after all, *On the Genealogy of Christianity*, but *On the Genealogy of Morality*. But, on the other hand, there is ample evidence that he is at least predominantly interested in a *Christian* moral point of view. Recall the postcard to Overbeck, where Nietzsche explains his project in terms of the psychological roots of Christianity. The choice of the topics of the three treatises (in particular the bad conscience and the ascetic ideal) supports this claim as well. What is more, the concluding sentence in Nietzsche's discussion of the *Genealogy* in *Ecce Homo* is that the book presents '[t]he first psychology of the priest.'²⁰ Yet if it is true that Nietzsche's project is concerned predominantly with Christianity, then we may suspect that the problems he identifies may not bear much on non-religious moral philosophy. But let us not dwell on this issue at this stage. Let us first try to explain the 'pushing-back' with the preliminary understanding that Nietzsche merely talks about Christianity, before going on to the scope of Nietzsche's considerations, in part V below.

So without further ado, let us see what the 'pushing-back' is. Roughly speaking, my account of the 'pushing-back' is this: Christianity, notably the ascetic priest discussed in the third treatise, invents what Nietzsche calls an 'ethical world order' (*sittliche Weltordnung*; A 26), i.e., a comprehensive metaphysical and ethical outlook focused on the notion of the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God who both creates the world and everything in it and gives divine commandments regulating the proper conduct of his creatures. This ethical world order provides a *meaning* for suffering and misery. (As Nietzsche says in sec. 7, 'What arouses indignation against the suffering is not the suffering by itself, but meaningless suffering', cf. also third treatise, sec. 28.) Let me call this account the *Christian story*. The 'pushing-back' of the indebtedness into the bad conscience is plausibly understood as a psychological consequence of accepting the Christian story. Its acceptance gives rise to an entirely new sentiment, namely *guilt*, which is so strong that by itself it gives rise to a new kind of moral psychology. What used to be a sense of having debts towards ancestors and gods is now transformed, that is, 'pushed back', into a much more entrenched, much more profound, and much more demanding sentiment. So Christianity interacts with the indebtedness towards gods and ancestors by transforming it into this new sentiment (which may not have arisen otherwise). The original form of the bad conscience is relevant to this account because it provides a kind of psychology that is capable of producing such a sentiment in the first place.

Here then is the Christian story in more detail: the founders of Christianity find oppressed people tormented by internalized instincts and by the general misery of living the life of the oppressed. These people suffer, and they are searching for an explanation of why life is *like that*. (At this stage, they have the required extent of reflectiveness to ask this kind of question, as mentioned above in part II.) As Nietzsche says in the third treatise of the *Genealogy*, they are looking for a culprit, somebody to blame for their misfortunes (third treatise, sec. 15). Christianity names one, claiming that the oppressed *themselves* are to blame. What at first may appear to be a rather peculiar claim looks more plausible once it is

embedded into the Christian ethical world order. Christian metaphysics describes a divine order according to which things and beings have their special place in the functioning of the whole by the will of God, and according to which there are good and bad character traits and right and wrong actions, which are good or right insofar as they are in harmony with the divine order. Many of man's natural instincts, in particular the instincts for aggression, come to be seen as dispositions to violate the divine order, that is, as *sins* (third treatise, sec. 20). Within this framework, the suffering that the instincts cause may be seen as the pain from the struggle of the good inclinations against the bad ones, or as a form of preliminary punishment already on earth for the presence of bad dispositions. Christianity thus gives a meaning to the suffering by explaining why it is perfectly in order.

There is, however, much more to the Christian story. Man is *God's creature*, and so by violating God's commands he acts against what he is first and foremost, that is, he acts against his very own nature. By thinking of God as giving commandments regulating the lives of his creatures, Christianity creates a point of view from which the ultimate judgement is passed in view of how man conducts himself with respect to the ethical world order. (Recall that the worst of the deadly sins is pride, which indicates a violation of man's natural status in this ethical world order, which in turn is why the proud in Dante's *Inferno* live at the bottom of hell.) Being condemned from that point of view means being condemned without restriction, being condemned *sub specie aeternitatis*. This should be taken quite literally, for *eternal punishment* is among the sanctions that threaten the transgressors.

Now, finally, we are in a position to see what the 'pushing-back' of the indebtedness into the bad conscience amounts to and how this leads to guilt. Prior to the development of Christianity, religion is a practice of sacrifices to ancestors and gods as an expression of gratitude for their contributions to the thriving of the tribe. Failing to pay one's debts by no means decreases one's worth as a person, simply because there is no point of view from which one's overall worth as a person is assessed. In the Christian story, debts to God are immense, and they are not even individually acquired, but come along with the very fact of one's being human through hereditary sin. Moreover, any thought of redeeming them seems absurd since man's nature is full of dispositions to violate the divine order and thereby to increase his indebtedness to God. For, recall, this point explains the *suffering* in the first place. The original indebtedness is thereby transformed into a much more profound, much more persistent and much more tyrannizing sentiment, a sentiment that can only arise once there is a privileged point of view from which one's worth as a person is assessed. The original indebtedness turns into a deep sense of being a complete failure with respect to what one is first and foremost, namely, God's creature. It is in this way that the sense of having debts is 'pushed back' into the 'inner world' (sec. 16), i.e., into the bad conscience at the early stage. (And it is at this point where it turns out to be useful indeed to think of the original bad conscience as an inner space filled with the struggle of and among instincts.) The indebtedness has turned into *guilt*. As a consequence of the

'pushing-back', the bad conscience 'fixes itself firmly, eats into him [the debtor], spreads out, and grows like a polyp in every breadth and depth.' (sec. 21). The feeling of guilt is so dominant in the inner space that constitutes the bad conscience that the bad conscience is ultimately identified with this feeling of guilt. So the bad conscience *as* a feeling of guilt has finally emerged.²¹

Yet by providing a meaning for the suffering in this way, the ascetic priest has succeeded in relieving the pain while poisoning the wound (third treatise, sec. 15). That is, the suffering is not meaningless any more, but the price to pay is the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. To understand the meaning of suffering, man has to condemn himself. Eventually the existence of guilt is accepted to such an extent that even the accused in witchcraft trials, victims of this way of giving meaning to life, would believe in its reality (cf. GS 250, and third treatise, sec. 16).²² The only temporary relief to the ever growing guilt of humankind is what Nietzsche calls the stroke of genius of Christianity, i.e., God sacrificing himself for the guilt of man (sec. 21). However, this temporary relief also implies that man's guilt, from then on, is so great that even the strongest conceivable means could not possibly relieve it.²³

At this stage, it is important to emphasize just how Christianity interacts with the indebtedness towards gods and ancestors, on the one hand, and with the early form of the bad conscience, on the other. The indebtedness originally is not much more than an inclination to practice ancestral cults. As a result of the impact that the Christian ethical world order has on the oppressed, this inclination undergoes a profound change and becomes a much stronger sentiment. So Christianity interacts with the indebtedness by transforming its character entirely. But, without the initial presence of pagan indebtedness, the later Christian feeling of guilt may not have arisen. The original form of the bad conscience is relevant because it makes sure that the psychological presuppositions are satisfied for such a strong sentiment to arise in the first place. For, recall, the early form of the bad conscience is an early form of the mental, an inner space that arose from the oppression of instincts. It is only because such an inner space existed already that the feeling of guilt as a profound sense of imperfection could come into existence.

Why does Nietzsche want us to know all this? Does he want us to abandon Christianity? In the *Antichrist*, this indeed seems to be his purpose. After all, the *Antichrist* ends with a decree outlawing Christian practices and clergymen (cf. also A 59 and A 60). The *Genealogy* does not seem to be written in that spirit. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, written only briefly before the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche even expresses ideas that discourage us from thinking so: every morality, so he says there, 'is 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). Moreover, he even sees enormous advantages in the unification of attitudes towards life that a moral point of view provides. To quote again from BGE 188: 'What is essential "in heaven and earth" seems to be . . . that there should be *obedience* over a long period of time and in a single direction: given that, something always develops, and has always 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.’ So if, at least at this stage, Nietzsche’s goal is not to have Christianity abandoned, what then is his point? It seems that he wants to draw attention to the utterly worldly and contingent origins of noble ideas such as soul, good, evil, and, in this case, guilt and bad conscience. Attempts to ground rules for human conduct and for character evaluation in a point of view that does not belong to this world arise in a contingent manner, and, appearances notwithstanding, the purposes behind them are far from noble and may indeed be quite appalling. But in the Preface to the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche also warns us that the ‘highest power and splendor’ of humanity may not be reached just because humankind has adopted standards of conduct that are based on this history. In that case, as he says, morality would be ‘the danger of dangers.’²⁴

V. The Scope of the Discussion

In part III, we encountered Nietzsche’s naturalistic notion of justice, and in part IV we saw that he sometimes speaks as if his subject were all of morality, but then presents a discussion that is apparently only relevant to Christianity. We are left wondering what Nietzsche means by morality (*die Moral*) and why he thinks that his considerations on the bad conscience are relevant to all of it. We address this question explicitly now because we need to know the scope of Nietzsche’s discussion not only to understand what he was trying to do, but also for assessing the relevance of his ideas for ethics. If Nietzsche’s discussion is relevant merely to Christianity, moral philosophers should leave it to Christian theologians to deal with him.²⁵

It should be clear that Nietzsche is not interested in Christian morality as a set of rules from a catechism. Rather, he is interested in a *type of character* distinguished by a peculiar moral psychology, and his notion of morality is tied up with this type of character. Each treatise of the *Genealogy* contributes to explaining the development of this moral psychology: the first treatise discusses it under the aspect of the slave revolt in morality, the third under the aspect of the ascetic ideal, and the second under the aspect of the development of a feeling of guilt. As Nietzsche tells Overbeck, there are other aspects under which this kind of psychology could be discussed as well, in particular the herd instinct.

What, then, about other moral theories? To begin with, this Christian type of moral psychology is alien to the psychology required for the naturalistic moral codes. Thus Nietzsche’s theory does not apply to such moral codes and *a fortiori* not to moral notions such as justice that grow out of such codes. That Nietzsche does not intend to include such moral codes and related notions in the kind of treatment he gives in the *Genealogy* is also suggested by remarks he makes elsewhere. In the *Wanderer and his Shadow*, Nietzsche distinguishes between different stages of morality (WS 44), the highest of which includes the absolutist ‘Thou Shalt’ (*Du sollst*), to which Christianity seems to belong. Moral

codes that merely serve to regulate community life pertain to lower stages of morality. Similarly, Nietzsche tells us in the *Wanderer and his Shadow* that virtues such as moderation, justice, and peace of mind would be regained by every free and conscious mind independently of morality (WS 212). So when Philippa Foot (cf. Foot 1994) assesses the relevance of Nietzsche's notorious 'immoralism' in terms of his rejection of *justice*, she is right if she means a decidedly *Christian* notion of justice (or notions of justice that are similar to or derived from the Christian notion in ways to be explained shortly). But she is wrong if she thinks that Nietzsche rejects ideas of justice that merely entail giving to each other what we owe to each other. In fact, Nietzsche has only the highest praise for the just man, and dedicates a comparatively long section (sec. 11) to arguing that the just man is not the man of *ressentiment*, appearances notwithstanding. Elsewhere, Nietzsche emphasizes that one of the flaws of Christianity is that it destroyed all worldly justice (WS 81). For justice is about acting in proportion and about measuring things against each other. Christianity, so Nietzsche tells us in HAH 114, lacks precisely that – measure and proportion. For that reason, Nietzsche calls it 'barbarian, Asian, ignoble, and un-Greek' (cf. also third treatise, sec. 22).

Thus we have found a class of moral codes that Nietzsche does not attack at all in the *Genealogy*. However, it is also clear that he did not think that naturalistic moral codes were in place in the Europe of his day. Rather, he thought that current moral systems were derived from *Christian* morality (e.g., GS 343, EH, *Why I Am a Destiny*, 7). Therefore he thought of those as still being within the scope of his discussion, even if these moral systems explicitly did without Christian metaphysics, in particular without the idea of God. Nietzsche thinks that such systems would at best be feeble attempts at reconstructing fragments of the Christian ethical world order, and at worst they would be very silly.²⁶ Nietzsche certainly wants to make this latter claim about *utilitarianism*. A typical remark that captures the spirit of his views on utilitarianism is that 'Man does not strive after happiness; only the Englishman does' (TI, *Maxims and Arrows*, 12). As opposed to this contempt for 'English philosophy', Nietzsche takes *Kantian philosophy* more seriously. But taking it more seriously does not keep him from classifying it as a feeble attempt at reconstructing fragments of Christian doctrine. Perhaps the strongest expression of this view is in the *Antichrist*, sections 10–11, where he calls the Protestant minister the 'grandfather of German philosophy.' Kant's own philosophy was nothing more 'than a secret path to the old ideal' (A 10). With respect to the Categorical Imperative, Nietzsche says that 'a people perishes if it confuses *its* duty with the idea of duty in general', and that 'it was only the instinct of the theologian that protected it [i.e., the Categorical Imperative]' (A 11; cf. also third treatise, sec. 25).

Even though Nietzsche's remarks on the relationship between Christianity and Kantian philosophy sound rather amusing, we should be alert to the problem that Nietzsche identifies here: if what he says about the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt is right, then a feeling of guilt can still be operative (and very strongly so) even when the original idea of its creation, the idea of God, has

been abandoned. That is, without their knowing it, moral theorists develop seemingly non-religious ethics in ways that are inspired by and derivative from Christianity. How could it be otherwise if Nietzsche's theory of the bad conscience is correct? That this is indeed what Nietzsche has in mind is confirmed in the *Twilight of Idols*. In II, *Excursions*, 5, Nietzsche once again finds fault with the English 'flatheads': 'Christianity', so he says there, 'is a system, a *whole* view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole. . . . When the English actually believe that they know 'intuitively' what is good and evil, when they therefore suppose that they no longer require Christianity as the guarantee of morality, we merely witness the *effects* of the dominion of the Christian value judgement and an expression of the strength and depth of this dominion.' Nietzsche's point is that it is an illusion to think that non-religious ethics could be built on 'intuitions' because these intuitions themselves grew out of centuries of Christianity. Nietzsche's subject in that quotation is not Kantian philosophy, of course. However, there is a related thought on Kant in GS 193 where Nietzsche tells us that Kant's point was to develop prejudices of the common man in a manner accessible to scholars.²⁷ Needless to say, Nietzsche is addressing a Western-all-too-Western readership (in spite of his occasional references to non-Western religions and in spite of his occasional citation of a non-Westerner for *Übermensch*-like qualities). Therefore it is plausible for him to choose the Kantian and utilitarian philosophy in order to make his point concerning the ways in which the death of God may have consequences that are not yet fully understood.

According to Nietzsche, then, attempts at constructing a non-religious ethics as they are present in Western culture are doomed to fail, and it will take philosophers and others a long time to understand this predicament. This point is also made by the famous story about the madman in the *Gay Science*. The madman runs around among the *atheists* and shouts at them that God is dead (GS 125). These people, again, are atheists, and so one would think that the madman does not tell them anything new. But they have not fully realized the immense implications of the 'death of God' with respect to how we conceive of our lives. Among other things, the death of God implies that there is no distinguished point of view from which to evaluate people's characters and actions, *sub specie aeternitatis*, but without hell as a sanction. These atheists mock the madman because they do not yet understand such matters.

Does Nietzsche think, then, that there is no escape from the bad conscience? Clearly he does not think that the bad conscience is *inevitable*. (Recall from part IV above that his point is to show its contingency.) In section 24, Nietzsche makes reference to the Homeric Greeks to refer to people who remained unaffected by the bad conscience. Instead of giving meaning to the miseries of life in a way that involves thinking of the maximal God as punishing himself, the Homeric Greeks made a different use of gods. According to Nietzsche, these Greeks think of their actions and character traits as being embedded in a causal web in which the gods give rise to these deeds and character traits. If deeds and

character traits evoke disapproval, they are criticized in terms of stupidity rather than in terms of sinfulness, and the causal origin of the stupidity is localized in the gods. What is missing is the distinguished moral point of view from which human beings *qua* God's creatures are evaluated. There is no *guilt* among the Homeric Greeks. These Greeks, as Nietzsche tells us in TI, *Excursions*, 47, start culture at the right place: 'not soul, but body, gesture, diet, physiology'. Or as Nietzsche says in the second preface to the *Gay Science*, they are 'superficial out of depth.'²⁸

However, one may find this example unpersuasive. For Homeric Greeks were *never* affected by Christianity. What we want to know is whether there is a hope *for us* to leave the bad conscience *behind*. Nietzsche's message here is mixed: on the one hand, he asks us to exercise caution. A new sanctuary can be built only where another one has been torn down (sec. 24), so he says, and he does not think that the old one is about to disappear. On the contrary, he wonders who can be strong enough to take the necessary steps for escaping from the bad conscience after thousands of years of 'conscience-vivisection' and 'self-animal-torture.' But as that same section 24 draws to a close, he points out emphatically that, 'in a stronger time', another kind of person will finally overcome the bad conscience. The next and final section of the second treatise ends, then, with an appeal to Zarathustra.

But why does Nietzsche think he is entitled to this confidence? The reason is that he believes that, eventually, the consequences of the death of God will have their impact. He thinks that Christianity 'as a dogma' (third treatise, sec. 27), i.e., as an ethical world order, has already become incredible, mostly because of its very own emphasis on truthfulness. So Christianity has become incredible on its own terms. He thinks, therefore, that Christianity will also perish as morality, i.e., the Christian moral psychology will also disappear (third treatise, sec. 27, cf. also GS 357). He even envisages a time frame, thinking that the two hundred years after writing the *Genealogy* should be sufficient at least for this development to begin. Nietzsche is extremely optimistic here on his own terms. For, in section 24, he indicates the magnitude of the required change. He says that just as man's natural inclinations (i.e., the instincts for aggression, etc.) have been oppressed by Christianity and have been wedded to the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt, so the same could happen to all 'aspirations to the beyond, to what is contrary to the senses, to the instincts, to nature, to the animal', that is, to all tendencies in man that are supportive of Christianity. Just what this would mean is hard to figure out, in particular since it is clear that it must be a process, undoing the bad conscience. But at the very least, in part II, we emphasized the sheer magnitude of the original oppression. It seems the change that Nietzsche envisages here would at least be a change of similar magnitude, and possibly of more considerable magnitude, since now man has a much more developed psychology. So being as confident as Nietzsche is that this change is going to happen *at all*, i.e., that the herd instinct does not keep people from realizing the implications of the death of God, and that it is going to happen within two hundred years, means being

almost excessively optimistic. However, after all, Nietzsche was an optimist throughout his life.²⁹

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NOTES

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² For abbreviations of Nietzsche's works, cf. the beginning of the literature references. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine. This postcard from January 4, 1888, is on p. 224 of vol. 8 of the collected letters. I make references to a range of Nietzsche's other works in this essay; this seems justified because Nietzsche himself does so (cf. Preface, sec. 4, and various references throughout the text). Also, Nietzsche wrote the *Genealogy* partly in order to stimulate interest in his other writings (cf. a letter to his publisher Ernst Wilhelm Fritsch from August 20, 1887 (pp. 131–32 in vol. 8), a letter from July 18, 1887 to Koeselitz (p. 112–114), and a letter on November 8, 1887, to Constantin Georg Naumann (p. 186–187)), which suggests that he thought of the ideas in those other works as being in harmony with those in the *Genealogy*. Furthermore, differences in emphasis and also certain differences in views notwithstanding, Nietzsche's views on morality as published at least since *Daybreak* display a high degree of unity. (Clark and Leiter 1997 argue for Nietzsche's own claim, in the subsection on *Daybreak* in *Ecce Homo*, that *Daybreak* marks the beginning of his own 'campaign against morality'. According to Clark and Leiter, Nietzsche was still very much under the influence of Schopenhauer when he wrote *Human, All Too Human*. In the light of these claims, they also argue that Nietzsche's subsequent writings on morality should be understood as revisions and refinements of the views presented in *Daybreak*. Note, however, that in the preface to the *Genealogy* (section 4), Nietzsche also makes reference to *Human, All Too Human* in a way that highlights the similarity of the views expressed in the *Genealogy* to those expressed in *Human, All too Human*.)

³ This postcard strongly supports Clark's thesis in her introduction to the recent Clark/Swensen translation of the *Genealogy* that the three treatises discuss different strands in the development of morality, and that this separate discussion is done in abstraction from their actual interaction (cf. also Clark 1994, in particular for a discussion of what *opposing* views amount to). It also supports Clark and Swensen's translation of the word 'Moral' in the German title as 'morality' rather than as 'morals', which was the translation that Kaufmann chose. (This translation was also chosen by Diethel 1994.) For the three treatises should be seen as contributions to a unified theory, and that purpose is better served by using the word 'morality'. The postcard also explains why Nietzsche uses

the preposition 'zur', i.e., 'on' in the title: The three treatises contribute to an understanding of the development of morality, but they are far from exhausting the topic. I disagree with Clark when it comes to describing the main theme of the second treatise. She writes that its topic is 'the realm of right [. . .], which includes ideas of right and wrong, duty and obligation, fairness and justice' (p. xxxi). This puts no emphasis on the bad conscience, although it is not only mentioned in the title, but also essential for Nietzsche's very project in the *Genealogy*. For as the postcard suggests and as I discuss at more length in part V below, Nietzsche is interested in a type of moral psychology that arose under the impact of Christianity. The bad conscience is immensely relevant there. Moreover, the other two treatises can fairly straightforwardly be understood in terms of the notions mentioned in their titles, and in the absence of reasons to the contrary, we should assume that the same is true for the second treatise. I hope that my interpretation will render it plausible that this is indeed so. (In Clark 1994, however, she says that the 'big story' of the second treatise is the 'development of bad conscience'.) As a general background fact it should also be noted that, in German-speaking countries, the expression '*schlechtes Gewissen*' is more commonly used than the expression 'bad conscience' is used in English-speaking countries. So this part of Christian heritage is very present.

Notice also the following difference between 'bad conscience' and '*schlechtes Gewissen*': The German expression can have quasi-institutional associations, sometimes even to the extent that one may metaphorically envisage a small person 'located' (or the voice of God speaking up) in one's mind who supervises one's actions and thoughts. As opposed to this, the English expression tends to denote a frame of mind, i.e., a state of affairs. This linguistic difference (which is hard to capture) may explain why Walter Kaufmann (a native speaker of German) tends to add the direct article to 'bad conscience' in his translations, whereas Clark and Swensen tend not to do so. I will follow Kaufmann in this regard to preserve as much as possible the kind of associations that Nietzsche may have had in mind when talking about 'the bad conscience'.

⁴ Despite the recent collections of articles on GM in Schacht 1994, there is very little systematic work on the second treatise. Important exceptions are Clark's piece in Schacht 1994, which, however, is very brief with respect to many issues that will occupy us here, and Ridley 1998. Both pieces will be relevant later. For recent interesting philological work on the second treatise, cf. Thatcher 1989. Kimmerle 1983 and in particular Stegmaier 1994 contain a wealth of information about GM and its place in Nietzsche's work, but they do not address many vexing interpretive difficulties and philosophical questions. Shapiro 1994 proposes reading the treatise as an interpretation of a dictum by Anaximander, since Nietzsche suggests in the introduction to GM that the *third* treatise is an interpretation of the preceding aphorism. However, Shapiro does not elaborate on this, and Nietzsche himself does not make such a claim for the second treatise of GM (and even with respect to the third, matters are far from simple, cf. Clark 1997, and Janaway 1997). The new Clark/Swenson translation and in particular the introduction by Clark and her many helpful comments may stimulate more research on the second treatise. For reasons of space and in order not to lose the focus on the topic, I do not discuss in abstraction what 'genealogy' is. For the purposes of this essay, the understanding that emerges from Nietzsche's postcard to Overbeck is sufficient. There is already a significant literature on the subject, cf. Foucault 1977, 1982, and the pieces in the section 'Genealogy and Philosophy' in Schacht 1994.

⁵ In what follows I tend to speak of a 'feeling of guilt' rather than of a 'consciousness of guilt'. In this context, the difference is negligible. But since Nietzsche's purpose is to explain the development of guilt, i.e., the development of a moral sentiment, I prefer that term.

⁶ Strangely, Nietzsche compares the immensity of this event with the change inflicted upon the water animals when those started living ashore. Yet that change took a long time to be complete. Maybe Nietzsche had Lamarckian tendencies and thought of that transition in terms of fish being stranded. Or maybe the comparison does not include the abruptness, but merely the immensity of the change. But this is contradicted by the text, which says that the water animals' instincts were undone at a stroke (*mit einem Male*). One may argue that Nietzsche did think of a *gradual* change. One may then also say that his point about the final (*endgültig*) enclosure into society and peace discussed there is the outcome of a process. Nietzsche's insistence on the abruptness may then be explained in evolutionary terms: even though all this took 'a long time', from the point of view of the history of the human species, it was abrupt. I think, on balance, the evidence for the abruptness-view is stronger.

⁷ This is a curious image. Clark/Swensen 1998: 147, suggest that one may think of something like two layers of an onion. It is important that Nietzsche indeed assumes that there already is a 'small' inner world. For that excuses him from the task of explaining how there could be any form of inner life *at all*, as opposed to explaining how it could be *expanded* significantly. The first explanation may be even harder to come by than the second one, but with respect to Nietzsche's goal it is not essential that he has such an explanation. Cf. chapters 4 and 6 of Danto 1965 for a good introduction to Nietzsche's psychology. Specifically for Nietzsche and the soul, cf. Thiele 1990.

⁸ A referee suggested that an alternative account of Nietzsche's remarks on the bad conscience is that the internalization explains an *aspect* of the bad conscience, namely, its physiological aspect, and that there is no need to speak of an *early form* of the bad conscience. However, Nietzsche clearly speaks as if there were something that should be referred to as the bad conscience as a result of the internalization. At the beginning of sec. 16, he says that the bad conscience is the 'deep disease that man had to fall into under the pressure of those most thorough of all changes.' At the end of sec. 17, he makes clear that the oppressed instinct for freedom *is* the bad conscience at its beginning. In the light of such (and similar) remarks, it seems fair to think of the inner space that came into existence through the internalization as an early form of the bad conscience. However, this disagreement is not deep. It is essential that the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt be explained in part as descending from the internalization of instincts. We may then describe the relationship between the result of the internalization and the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt in two ways: either we say that the one is an earlier form of the other (and lacks the element of guilt) and highlight the connection between them by calling them both 'bad conscience' (the one being an earlier stage than the other); or, we say that one aspect of the latter derives from the former without calling them both 'bad conscience'. Yet I think the early-form reading makes more straightforward sense of what Nietzsche actually says.

Another question that comes up here is whether Nietzsche also has a notion of *conscience*, as opposed to a notion of a *bad* conscience. He does indeed. The notion of conscience is used with respect to the sovereign individual mentioned in the initial sections (cf. in particular sec. 2). It seems that conscience is what those people have who have overcome the bad conscience (cf. part V below).

⁹ Let me illustrate this claim with respect to the first two treatises: as Nietzsche emphasizes in the penultimate section of the first treatise, the Jews are the people of *ressentiment* par excellence. The historical case study for the slave revolt is 'Rome vs. Judea'. And as he points out in sec. 8 in the first treatise, Christianity is the vehicle with which Judaism ultimately takes its revenge on Rome. In particular, Jews and Christians never adopt the Roman gods, but rather, Christian monotheism ultimately becomes the official religion of

the Roman empire. In sec. 19 of the second treatise, however, Nietzsche emphasizes that indebtedness towards ancestors and gods grows with the power of the tribe, but also diminishes if the power of the tribe decreases. This strongly suggests that, when the Jews were oppressed by the Romans, their indebtedness towards their God, and thus their religious devotion, should have decreased significantly in a way that would have left their religion in no position to 'take over' the Roman empire. Yet this point conflicts with the story of the first treatise. One way of removing this apparent inconsistency is by arguing that the logic of ancestor-worship does not apply to the Jewish religion, because the Jewish God is the god of *ressentiment* (rather than a tribal god whose cult developed out of ancestral worship) and thus needs to be accounted for in a different way. However, this move would have to be made in a way that is still consistent with the importance of the indebtedness to the emergence of the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. A related way of making this point is to say that the Jews play no role in the second treatise. A reader who would like to pursue the question of the consistency of the three treatises may want to read Ridley 1998. Ridley's concern is to weave the three treatises into one story, and he documents in some depth how Nietzsche's account of the development of the bad conscience is *prima facie* at odds with his account of the slave revolt. His solution is to disregard certain remarks that Nietzsche makes about the development of the bad conscience. I explain later why I do not think his approach is successful.

¹⁰ Some readers might find my discussion of this point un-Nietzschean because I regard consistency is a desirable goal for an historical account of morality. Nietzsche, after all, was a perspectivist, and one might say that, whatever else this means once it is fully spelled out, it surely means that Nietzsche is not committed to the existence of 'meta-narratives' that encompass all the 'sub-narratives' in a consistent way. (As one referee put it, Nietzsche is 'the "intellectual guerrilla-fighter" who resists locally all allegedly more global meta-narratives about the meaning of being and suffering.')

For the purposes of this essay, however, I find it helpful neither to discuss nor to assume Nietzsche's perspectivism. For, although I think that Nietzsche surely is a perspectivist *in some sense*, this notion is so difficult to account for that any appeal to it would involve us in a host of epistemological difficulties that we could not dispose of quickly, but which ultimately would be peripheral to the goal of this essay. For I think that the major exegetical and philosophical problems specific to Nietzsche's treatment of the bad conscience (as opposed to being general issues arising in Nietzsche's oeuvre) can be discussed without appeal to this notion, and they are difficult enough without such an appeal. Moreover, I think Nietzsche's ideas on the bad conscience can (and should) be made intelligible and interesting to readers who may have doubts about the very coherence or the meaning of perspectivism. It should be clear, though, that readers who are willing to assume Nietzsche's perspectivism would find the present discussion more straightforward. Thus there is no illegitimate gain in attempts to avoid such an appeal. (For a discussion of Nietzsche's perspectivism, cf., for instance, Clark 1990, Leiter 1994, Nehamas 1985, and Westphal 1984a and 1984b, and the literature references therein. Note that writers on perspectivism such as Clark, Leiter, and Westphal would actually reject the kind of perspectivism sketched at the beginning of this note. For such writers, the issue discussed here would not arise in the first place.) It should be noted, also, that in section 7 of the preface to GM, Nietzsche explicitly says that his goal is to give a real history of morality, and that he is interested in what 'can be documented, in what can be ascertained, and in what has really happened.' So in spite of the difficulties discussed above, Nietzsche seems to have thought of himself as getting at least the essential facts right.

¹¹ Cf. also GS 21 for an elaboration on the same theme. In general, just as in society people are oppressed by others, so inside, one part of the soul is oppressed by other parts.

Nietzsche takes the interaction of people as a model of the development of an inner life. See also BGE 19, where Nietzsche talks about the body as a 'commonwealth of many souls' (*Gesellschaftsbau vieler Seelen*). GS 354 is also relevant, where Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of language with respect to the emergence of reflectiveness.

¹² Two notes are in order here. First, I disagree with Ridley's 1998 discussion of the bad conscience. For one thing, my reconstruction of Nietzsche's remarks about the bad conscience in terms of *two stages* should take away a lot of the confusion that Ridley (following Staten 1990) finds in Nietzsche's discussion of the bad conscience (cf. chapter 1, section D). What is more, I think that Ridley goes wrong when he says that what I call the early form of the bad conscience 'can go either way: it can become the *bad* bad conscience of slavish *ressentiment*; or it can become the *good* bad conscience of that affirmative, joyous form-giving activity' that Nietzsche describes in sec. 18. It is not that the bad conscience can go 'either way': it goes 'both ways' (to keep the image), i.e., it is the *same people* who are the people of slavish *ressentiment* and who have the capacity to begin the development of culture, as I hope my presentation above has made plausible. *Ressentiment*, after all, can be creative as well. Ridley is too much guided by the question of what is so *bad* about the early form of the bad conscience, and how it is bad (*schlecht*) in the same way in which the slaves of the first treatise are bad. As I said above, there is something bad about it, but what matters most for calling this early form of the mental the bad conscience is that the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt derives from it. It is what the bad conscience that we have nowadays was in its beginning, and I submit that it is mostly for that reason that Nietzsche calls it the bad conscience. Likewise, as I shall explain in more detail later, Ridley is too much guided by the idea that there must be one coherent story behind all three treatises.

Second, this account suggests that the oppressors themselves do not undergo the internalization of instincts, that is, that they do not develop this early form of the bad conscience. Indeed, in sec. 17, Nietzsche says explicitly that it was not in them that the bad conscience grew. However, it seems that Nietzsche does not think that, in his time, there are still any 'beasts of prey' around, or even people much like the 'beasts of prey' in not having developed a bad conscience. But if that is so, then the oppressors themselves must have developed a bad conscience *eventually*. This is also plausible on account of Nietzsche's own story because he assumes that the oppressors themselves are assumed to have some degree of social organization, and thus must have some system of mutual constraints for their 'pack' to persist. (What Nietzsche says in sec. 11 of the first treatise about the nobles should apply here as well: they are 'sternly held in check by custom, worship, usage, gratitude, even more by mutual surveillance and jealousy inter pares.') Moreover, once they erect a state, their degree of social organization is reinforced, so that even the instincts of the oppressors themselves are oppressed more strongly than before. It is plausible to assume, however, that the bad conscience does not arise as abruptly in them as in the oppressed, and that the inward struggle it causes is less vehement. In a telling fragment in the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche says that the masters become Christians because it is easier to rule Christians (cf. *Nachgelassne Fragmente 1885–1887 in Kritische Studienausgabe*: 569); cf. also BGE 199 and A 22. A good illustration for the inescapable character of the bad conscience, even for evil and powerful people, appears in Shakespeare's *King Richard III*. When Richard III exclaims towards the end of the play that 'Conscience is but a word that cowards use, devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe', he exclaims this very soon after he himself was tortured in his dreams by the 'thousand voices' of his very own bad conscience. Not even he, no matter how hard he tries, can escape from the bad conscience.

¹³ Clark/Swensen translate the title as "'Guilt", "Bad Conscience" and Related Matters' (rather than "'Debt", "Bad Conscience", and Related Matters'). Kaufmann and

Diethelme also translate '*Schuld*' here as 'guilt'. In the light of the ambiguity discussed above, this is appropriate.

¹⁴ Readers who think of Nietzsche as a perspectivist in a sense that might require the addition of the adverb 'seemingly' to 'naturalistic' here are referred to the discussion of the relevance of Nietzsche's perspectivism in footnote 10. Nietzsche's discussion itself and the remarks in the preface quoted in footnote 10 (as well as Nietzsche's discussion of the *Genealogy* in *Ecce Homo*), I think, warrant a naturalistic reading of the *Genealogy*. Cf. Leiter 1994 and Westphal 1984a and 1984b for a reconciliation of this claim with the famous perspectivistic passage in GM III, 12.

¹⁵ I do not elaborate much on Nietzsche's thoughts on punishment and cruelty. His ideas of punishment have had an impact on Michel Foucault, and for that reason there is a good deal of discussion about them already, cf. Foucault 1977 and 1982, Ansell-Pearson 1991, and Pizer 1990. Nietzsche's remarks on cruelty also had an impact on the literature on that subject. Important pieces include Baier 1993, Baraz 1998, Miller 1990, Soll 1994, Rorty 1989, and Shklar 1984. The classic piece is Montaigne's 'On Cruelty', which, interestingly, contains a very Nietzschean line at the beginning of the actual discussion of cruelty: 'Among other vices, I cruelly hate cruelty' (Montaigne 1957: 313).

¹⁶ Even though Nietzsche here speaks about the pushing-back of the indebtedness into the *conscience* rather than into the bad conscience, he also speaks about the pushing-back into the *bad* conscience a little later (and italicizes the word 'bad'). Thus we may assume that Nietzsche is not after a contrast between the conscience and the bad conscience, but still talks about the bad conscience by itself.

¹⁷ Two notes are in order here: first, in the second treatise of GM, Nietzsche develops *three* theses about the origin of theism. I do not elaborate on them here, but since they are important, they should at least be mentioned. The first is the thesis of the transfiguration of worshiped ancestors into gods, presented in section 19. The second occurs in section 16. After the creation of the bad conscience (which, recall, is the most significant change that has occurred so far), Nietzsche says that from now on the spectacle on earth needed divine spectators in order to receive the appropriate kind of appreciation. So here Nietzsche seems to suggest that the origin of our belief in God lies in the amazement that people sensed at their own, the human condition, which, as Nietzsche says, they perceived as too 'fine, wonderful, and paradoxical simply to happen on some arbitrary planet.' The last thesis is introduced in section 7, where Nietzsche says that gods are introduced in order to rule out 'hidden, undiscovered, unwitnessed suffering.' Again we encounter a point of proximity to Freud, even though none of these three explanations is quite the same as the one offered by Freud in his *Future of an Illusion*. For Freud, gods have three tasks: 'they must exercise the terrors of nature, they must reconcile men to the cruelty of Fate, particularly as it is shown in death, and they must compensate them for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them' (Freud 1961: 22).

Second, the account that I develop is in harmony with Clark 1994, except in one important point. Clark says that 'one of the major factors behind [the development of] a purely spiritual God was the need for a weapon against the self – a standard of good we could never live up to, and in relation to which we could enjoy judging, condemning, and chastising ourselves.' I think this way of describing the development misplaces the source of the activity. It seems that Nietzsche does indeed think that Christianity is responding to a need for a meaning for the suffering. But this need is not *by itself* the need for a standard of good as Clark describes it. The standard of good is the specifically Christian response to an unspecific quest for meaning, i.e., a response propagated by the *ascetic priests* (who are discussed in the third treatise, rather than in the second treatise). That

there is such a (probably fairly small) group of people who bring about the development of guilt by propagating a very specific response to an unspecific quest is, I think, an important contribution to Nietzsche's point that the development of guilt is an *accidental* matter (cf. end of part IV below).

¹⁸ Nietzsche's account of the early form of the bad conscience and indebtedness actually *needs* a third element to lead to the bad conscience as a feeling of guilt. The reader is invited to verify this by trying to explore ways in which these two former elements by themselves could possibly do so.

¹⁹ Curiously, in addition to eternal punishment, Adam, and hereditary sin, Nietzsche also lists 'unfreedom of the will' as such a key term. This is strange because he repeatedly blames Christianity for inventing a *free will* with the intention to find man guilty (cf. TI, *The Four Great Errors* 7, and the theory of the soul in the first treatise). Moreover, in BGE 21, Nietzsche explains that guilt and free will are intimately connected. By refusing to place oneself into a causal web leading to one's character traits and deeds one becomes guilty oneself.

²⁰ A complementary question is to what extent Nietzsche thought of Christianity in this context at the exclusion of *Judaism*. What he says in sec. 21 and 22 can also be understood as referring to a development that *started* with Judaism and *culminated* in Christianity. However, Jews seem to play no role at all in the second treatise. What is more, Nietzsche lists key terms of Christian theology that would have been utterly familiar to his contemporaries, simply from church practices. (Note in particular the emphasis on love.) These points, in addition to his claim on the postcard to Overbeck and his emphasis on Christianity in the section on the *Genealogy* in *Ecce Homo*, suggest strongly that Christianity, rather than Judaism, was indeed the target. Naturally, due to the close affinity of Judaism and Christianity, much of what Nietzsche says also applies to Judaism in straightforward ways. But, in the light of these points, it makes most sense to think of his discussion in terms of Christianity without exploring its bearing on Judaism any further.

²¹ Nietzsche also talks about *shame*, cf. section 7. He says there that the darkening of the heavens over man has increased with the increase of man's shame before man. (Strangely, Clark and Swensen translate 'Scham vor dem Menschen' as 'shame of man', which changes the meaning. Kaufmann translates 'shame at man'.) The context here is cruelty. It seems that this is an early allusion to the Christian point of view from which practices entailed by the naturalistic idea of justice would be condemned. For, the inclination to enjoy cruelty is among those that are condemned as sinful, and so their presence in one's character gives rise to embarrassment, i.e., to shame of man before man.

²² However, Christianity does not only offer sanctions, but also some incentives, including the eternal life for behavior in accordance with the divine commandments. Cf. A 43, where Nietzsche mockingly says that Christianity opens up the possibility of an eternal life 'to every Peter and Paul.'

²³ As noted earlier, Ridley 1998 sets himself the task of weaving the three treatises into one consistent narrative. He is fully aware that this attempt faces exegetical difficulties and considers various ways of resolving them (cf. chapter 1, section vi). The approach that he decides to follow implies that he cannot understand guilt as connected to Christianity in the way I suggest here. (Thus Christianity also plays no role in his account of the 'pushing-back', contrary to the textual evidence. Cf. Ridley 1998: 32.) I do not think that this is the route to follow. Giving up on the close connection between guilt and Christianity (or, more generally, transcendental concepts, as Ridley says) conflicts with what Nietzsche says in sec. 21. Ridley may consider such a conflict the price to pay for finding a unified narrative in the three treatises. But Nietzsche's emphasis on the

importance of Christianity on the postcard, in the section on the *Genealogy in Ecce Homo*, and in section 21 and the surrounding text, is too much cumulative evidence against this view for this price to be acceptable. Moreover, Ridley ascribes too much confusion to Nietzsche's remarks on the concept of guilt, claiming that Nietzsche's use is 'infuriatingly changeable' (p. 35). Then Ridley goes on to say: 'Sometimes he uses it as synonym for the bad conscience – which settles nothing (e.g., in GM II, 4). Sometimes he ties it explicitly to religion, as when he glosses the moralization of guilt as 'the involvement of the *bad* conscience with the concept of god' (GM II, 21) – which appears to make guilt dependent on prior transcendental moves. Sometimes he suggests that religious concepts, such as sin arise through 'the exploitation of the sense of guilt' by 'the priest [. . .]' (GM III, 20) – which implies that guilt feelings are already there to be exploited', etc. On my account, Nietzsche's way of talking about guilt looks much more consistent, as I hope is clear by now. (The *Schuldgefühl* in III, 20 is again a sense of having debts, or indebtedness, rather than a feeling of *guilt*, and the context there supports that claim.) I think that faithfulness to the text in individual treatises should have priority over the attempt to find a consistent narrative for all three treatises simultaneously. (That should be so in particular if the alternative implies giving up on Nietzsche's emphasis on the role of Christianity.) For the absence of such a narrative is consistent with the artificial separation of topics announced on the postcard to Overbeck (cf. also the discussion in part II above).

²⁴ Korsgaard 1996 points out that Nietzsche's account of the origin of the bad conscience supports her account of the 'sources of normativity'. The harmony she sees between her own account and Nietzsche's stems from the fact that both she and Nietzsche (as she sees him) think that a sense of obligation and the 'special character of human consciousness' (p. 158) emerge simultaneously in the evolution of our species. However, the account of the second treatise I have provided here suggests that Nietzsche's view *undermines*, rather than supports, Korsgaard's views. I have no space here to argue this point in any detail though.

Another point is worth noting here: my claim that section 21 is the pivotal section is also supported by Nietzsche's remarks on the *Genealogy in Ecce Homo*. There, Nietzsche writes that the treatises in GM share some structural characteristics (I use the Kaufmann translation of *Ecce Homo*, published in 1969 by Vintage):

Each time a beginning that is *calculated* to mislead: cool, scientific, even ironic, deliberately foreground, deliberately holding off. Gradually more unrest; sporadic lightning; very disagreeable truths are heard grumbling in the distance – until eventually a *tempo feroce* is attained in which everything rushes ahead in a tremendous tension. In the end, in the midst of perfectly gruesome detonations, a new truth becomes visible every time among thick clouds.

If we grant for the time being that the beginning of the treatise (which I take to include sections 1–3, and which I do not discuss in this essay) is misleading, Nietzsche is quite right in what he says about his own treatise a year after writing it. Without worrying about details, the development up to section 14 is indeed quite slow, though not unimportant for that. So what happens there does happen gradually. Then the development happens very quickly, with the new truth, the leading insight, being indeed no more than visible between thick clouds. But, as Nietzsche emphasizes, it really is a *new* insight. Thinking of section 21 as the pivotal section and understanding the structure of the second treatise from there, is in accordance with that quotation.

²⁵ Cf. Leiter 1997 and the literature references therein for discussion of the connections between Nietzsche and contemporary moral philosophy.

²⁶ The concluding two paragraphs of Nietzsche's autobiographical *Ecce Homo* show again that he thinks of himself as the 'discoverer' of Christian morality, and that thereby the moral type was discovered as well.

²⁷ Cf. the introduction to Ridley 1998 for a helpful discussion of Nietzsche's ambivalent relationship to Kant.

²⁸ One may object that the quotation from the *Odyssey* in section 23 suggests that Nietzsche is *correcting* a Greek view, rather than *expressing* one. For in that quote, Zeus chides the Greeks for blaming the gods for things that went wrong due to their own lack of sense or their clumsiness. However, the context both before and after that quotation makes clear that Nietzsche *compliments* the Greeks for so thinking of gods. So it seems that including this Homer quotation is Nietzschean irony: the very gods whom Nietzsche claims the Greeks have conceived in order to blame them complain that they are so used by the humans.

²⁹ This kind of optimism is also present in his remarks on the sovereign individual in the initial sections of the treatise. This sovereign individual has a *conscience*, and not a *bad conscience*. It would be intriguing to think about the mechanics of this change in more detail. However, space does not permit me to do so.

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