

On the Genealogy of Morals Study Guide

On the Genealogy of Morals by Friedrich Nietzsche

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Plot Summary

Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Genealogy of Morals" is a non-fiction somewhat historical and philosophical discussion of the origin of morality and related concepts in mankind. Main body of the book is comprised of three separate but related essays written by the author dealing with the concepts of good and evil, guilt and bad conscience and meaning of ascetic ideals. Nietzsche comments on some historical events in the civilization of man in society over centuries to support his case for mankind's current condition in the late nineteenth century.

Nietzsche writes *The Genealogy* as a critique to an associates book that he uses as a template for this work. This approach enables Nietzsche to write in a more cohesive and sustained manner than many of his other works. *The Genealogy's* three essays are on Christian morality. The first essay contrasts master and slave morality, called noble and herd morality. He claims "good" or "bad" originally defines a noble not moral impact. Nietzsche states that moral value is imputed by slaves who resent nobles and call their actions vices. The slave revolt has cultural effects that replace strength and action of rich nobles with passivity and flatness of the meek who inherit the earth. The second essay traces guilt and punishment that originally have no moral significance. Guilt means owing and punishment ensures repayment. Society's need to constrain behavior develops "bad conscience" when man turns inward on his soul. Nietzsche's final essay describes asceticism as an attempt to tame the animal instincts of sick, weak-willed men.

This 123-page work of non-fiction is comprised of five sections with no index or glossary. Three essays comprise the main body of the work but the biographical Note and Preface sections help to understand the author and his purpose in writing. The preface and each of the essays is further divided in subsections. Chapters and chapter subsections range in size. There are 78 chapter subsections. The amount of detail suggested by the number of subsections does not significantly contribute to the clarity of Nietzsche's work. He writes in German that is translated into English in 1913. Sentences are long with commas, colons and semicolons to separate thoughts and ideas. English grammarians might consider them "run-on" sentences. Subsection and sentence structure make the work's purported ideas challenging to find and difficult to understand. Nietzsche is apparently aware and unconcerned about the readers' difficulty as by his comment, "If this writing be obscure to any individual, and jar on his ears, I do not think that it is necessarily I who am to blame." The solution he recommends to the reader is "read my previous writings."



Note

Note Summary and Analysis

The author's underlying motivation for writing "The Genealogy of Morals" is exposed in this biographical section. Paul Ree is a close friend of Friedrich Nietzsche, who praises Ree's book as "clear, tidy and shrewd." However, in *The Genealogy* Nietzsche disagrees with the points Ree makes. Ree and Nietzsche serve in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Ree is a soldier and Nietzsche is a volunteer medical orderly. Ree is four years younger than Nietzsche and a doctoral student in philosophy. Nietzsche is a twenty-eight year old professor at the University of Basel when their friendship begins in 1873. Nietzsche is impressed by Ree's concept of denial of universal principles of right and wrong stated in his 1877 "Origin of Moral Feelings." Ten years later Nietzsche writes "The Genealogy of Morals" in reaction to Ree's book, presumably on philosophical grounds.

However, the underlying story disclosed in this biographical note is that Nietzsche and Ree not only share philosophical ideas and the Franco-Prussian War but Lou Salome as well, whom they both want to marry. This twenty-one-year-old Russian subject of their love triangle causes their destroyed friendship. Another friend in common, Malwida von Meysenburg arranges to introduce Salome and Nietzsche. Ree and von Meysenburg both write glowing letters to Nietzsche about this intelligent and enchanting girl. Nietzsche and Salome meet in Rome and later spend three weeks together in Tautenberg under the chaperonage of his sister Elizabeth. Nietzsche is smitten and first proposes marriage to her through Ree. Nietzsche is unaware that Ree also loves Salome and is rejected by her. Later, Lou Salome returns to live with Paul Ree and Nietzsche is devastated when he finds out. He turns to a life of despair and loneliness, self-medication with chloral hydrate and opium, but ironically writes some great works. Ree and Salome live as brother and sister until she is engaged to another and then has passionate affairs with the poet Rilke and Sigmund Freud whom she writes about. The friendship of Paul Ree and Friedrich Nietzsche ends in December 1882. He writes "The Genealogy of Morals" in 1887.

Nietzsche writes *The Genealogy* based on Ree's book, "Origin of Moral Feelings." Using his book as template lets Nietzsche be cohesive and sustained unlike many of his other disjointed and discursive works. *The Genealogy* is comprised of three essays on Christian morality. The first essay contrasts master and slave morality, called noble and herd morality. He claims "good" or "bad" originally defines a noble not moral impact. Nietzsche states moral value is imputed by slaves who resent nobles and call their actions vices. The slave revolt has cultural effects that replace strength and action of rich nobles with passivity and flatness of the meek who inherit the earth. The second essay traces guilt and punishment that originally have no moral significance. Guilt means owing and punishment ensures repayment. Society's need to constrain behavior develops "bad conscience" when man turns in on his soul. The last essay describes asceticism as an attempt to tame animal instincts of sick, weak-willed men. Nietzsche

finishes five other books in 1889 but lives as a sick and deranged invalid under care of his sister until 1900.



Preface

Preface Summary and Analysis

Nietzsche claims we are unknown to ourselves because we never search for our own self and therefore can never find ourselves. He compares striving in life to a bee returning to the treasure of its hive as honey-gatherers of the spirit. Experiences of life are undergone without sufficient interest or time because neither our ear nor our heart is in it. At some point we wake up as if by a clock and we are puzzled, astonished and embarrassed that we do not know what we have lived since we remain strangers to ourselves.

In the winter of 1876-77 Nietzsche records a collection of aphorisms, or short sayings in Sorrento he recalls thinking about much earlier when his mind wanders. These thoughts about source and development of moral prejudices are the subjects discussed in essays he is writing. He believes his thoughts become riper, clearer, stronger and more complete since then. He is confident these thoughts are neither capricious nor sporadic since they are the same as earlier. They come from a common root deep in his soul necessary for a philosopher's proper study. A philosopher's thoughts, values, affirmations, negations and hypotheses must grow connected like a tree bearing its fruit in order to matter.

He notes a magnetic attraction to the well-written and precocious little book "The Origin of the Moral Emotions" written in 1877 by his erstwhile friend Dr. Paul Ree. Nietzsche claims to negate every dogma and conclusion Ree states without temper or intolerance. Rather than refuting arguments Nietzsche proposes alternative but more probable theories than the improbable thoughts of Paul Ree. Nietzsche admits in an earlier and philosophically clumsier time he has these ideas as well and provides the references in his earlier works.

As his mentor for changes in thought Nietzsche credits "my great teacher Schopenhauer" on the origin of morality. The intrinsic values in themselves are the "unegoistic" instincts of pity, self-denial and self-sacrifice. Nietzsche admits to mistrust these instincts in his own skepticism where lies a great seduction of mankind to nihilism. Of the instincts pity is the most sinister because it leads to what he calls European Buddhism that is in effect Nihilism. Before Schopenhauer's notion great philosophers Plato, Spinoza, Kant and La Rochefoucauld agree unanimously on contempt for the worthlessness of pity. Nietzsche suggests pity value and pity-morality may be isolated, but in any event require a critique of moral values to determine condition and circumstances, from which they grow, evolve and become distorted. Such knowledge does not exist nor may be desired. It is taken for granted and not questioned that the "good man" is of higher value than the "evil man" for human progress, utility and prosperity.



Nietzsche ends this section with the warning it is not his fault if his writing seems obscure. It is up to the reader to read previous writings and suffer through understanding every single word he writes to appreciate the "sunny brilliance" of his work. He is not to be treated casually to be understood. As a metaphor to the way a cow chews its cud Nietzsche requires the reader to ruminate over his words.



Essay I, Good and Evil, Good and Bad

Essay I, Good and Evil, Good and Bad Summary and Analysis

Nietzsche thanks the English psychologists, whom he also calls philosophers, for their attempts to write a history of the beginning of morality. Their lives are more interesting than the books they write. They present the shameful part of man's life to expose the power of inertia it cannot overcome. He wonders if these psychologists are motivated by unconscious instincts to make less of humans, pessimistic jealousy, mistrust idealists or hatred of Christianity. Alternatively, he suggests they simply have a taste for the bizarre, paradoxical, mystical and illogical or simply some of each to season their work. The author compares them to old frogs hopping around in a swamp but says they are brave and proud men expressing the truth even if it is repulsive, unchristian and immoral.

Nietzsche answers his own queries by claiming these historians are noble spirits but do not have any historical sense. He claims they are wrong at the start of their genealogy because they define the origin of "good" in terms of the one who receives benefits, which means good is equivalent to useful. Nietzsche infers traits of the English psychologists form their value system based on this sense of utility to others whether done by intent or habit. Specific action is good if it is useful to the one who benefits from it. Therefore, a system of values develops by the altruism of proud men of privilege who do good action. In order to counter this value system, Nietzsche evaluates the origin of the term "good."

The ones who benefit from the action do not decide whether it is "good." This judgment is made by the aristocratic and powerful that deem themselves to be good and thereby do good actions. When powerful aristocrats compare themselves to the low-minded, vulgar and plebeian they take the right to create value and profit by calling it what they will. Distance from the classes they claim to do good for disables them from knowing whether their action is useful. Distance from the "under race" does let them confer on themselves whatever value they choose. Their power is demonstrated by the language they use to define values and terms to set them apart from the herd instinct that may oppose them.

Specifically, Nietzsche claims the "good" derivation not only opposes facts of history but also has an inherent psychological contradiction. The hypothesis indicates the origin is forgotten but Nietzsche questions how it is possible for something useful to be forgotten. If an action is good, i.e. useful, then it is so daily and cannot be forgotten. The author proposes the alternative that "good" is an attribute of something shown previously to be useful that is considered "valuable in the highest degree." Nietzsche claims this idea is also wrong but is at least logical and can be defended psychologically. Nietzsche guides his study of the origin of "good" by evaluating the term and its use in various languages. He discovers the root idea from which "good" evolves includes words like aristocrat and noble. By comparison he finds the root term "bad" includes words like vulgar and low.



These parallel evolutions are ironic but his most eloquent proof is interpreting a German word for bad originally as the same word for a plebeian when compared to an aristocrat.

Expanding on the etymological developments of the term "good" and its roots the author claims the aristocrats consider themselves to be of a higher order than their fellow man. As evidence, they use one-word terms for themselves like powerful, lords, commanders and the rich that also appear in other languages. A specific distinction that becomes more significant is proposed by Nietzsche for Gaelic good, noble Aryan blond-haired man of Celtic ancestry compared to a dark black-haired aboriginal. He remarks on a conquering Aryan race and then comments on the German word for good, i.e., "gut," which evolves into "the godlike, the man of godlike race" that is the same as the tribal name of the Goths.

The slave revolt in morals begins in resentment of externally imposed demands. Slave morality negates external demands but a weak character may not be able to overcome toxic effects of external demands and become resentful instead. For example, Mirabeau shows forgiveness because he does not remember the insults or meanness done to him. Nietzsche asserts this is how one can love his enemies. An enemy is seen as the "evil one" by a resentful man. He compares himself to the evil one and judges himself as the "good one." However, the aristocratic man considers himself as good and then creates the bad. The "bad" of aristocratic man and "evil" of the resentful man are different. The aristocrat has an idea of bad relative to himself as good. The resentful man experiences "evil" in reality as insults and meanness. "Evil" and "bad" are used as the opposite of "good." The "evil" however is essential in Nietzsche's idea of slave-morality as origin.

The "evil" extends to enemies in society represented by aristocratic races acting like barbaric beasts of prey throughout Europe back to the Athenians, Scandinavian Vikings, Vandals and Goths. Civilization trains the beast of prey out of man to become a tame, civilized and domesticated animal. Instincts of reaction and resentment are tools of the civilization to degrade and overpower aristocratic races. Bearers of these tools shore up civilization but also argue against civilization. Nietzsche prefers fear and to be on guard against the "blond beast" of all aristocratic races than to be free from fear. Leveling and dwarfing the European man by eliminating fear of man also destroys hope and will to be man. The goal of this process works backwards by training more to be like all the rest of man rather than to become greater than others. For example birds of prey taking lambs are doing what is natural and should not be considered evil. Birds of prey are not evil by taking lambs to eat and lambs are not good because they are being taken. It is nonsense that the powerful should not exercise strength. Strength and its use are no different than lightning's flash. The strong cannot be weak like a bird of prey cannot be a lamb. A soul is the world's best belief system since the oppressed infer weakness as freedom or merit.



Essay II, Guilt, Bad Conscience, and The Like

Essay II, Guilt, Bad Conscience, and The Like Summary and Analysis

A human animal can promise, which is a paradox and problem because forgetfulness is an active force to block promise. Prior things and events are no longer in consciousness to make room for new, nobler functions of government, foresight and predetermination. Nietzsche calls this the utility of forgetfulness. A man who cannot forget is like a man with indigestion who can be rid of nothing. Happiness, hope, pride or experiences of the present needs forgetting. Ironically, a promise uses an ability to calculate and remember what to do in the future that cannot be done without forgetting the past. Responsibility is based on a history of making promises supported by the morality of social customs and constraints. Ironically, a sovereign individual must be free enough from social customs and constraints to competently make promises he can keep. A sovereign individual must have free will and standards of value that honor trust in his word that he calls conscience.

Conscience has a long history of development in evolution. Elements of conscience are based on inability to forget awful, sinister things burned in memory. These long-lasting memories form with blood, torture and sacrifice. Nietzsche deems religion as systems of cruelty with cruel rituals to form unforgettable "fixed ideas" basic in asceticism. Cruelty makes these ideas stand out to be unforgettable. German penal codes for punishment include stoning, the wheel, quartering and flaying to force social compliance. Much blood and cruelty is used to establish good things. The development of good conscience occurs through unforgettable blood and cruelty. However bad conscience is formed by the moral idea of "ought" that comes from a material idea "owing."

Nietzsche questions using punishment to retaliate for wrong-doing since it requires an existing social structure to apply a sense of justice. Nietzsche claims punishment comes from anger at an injury like the way parents punish their children as a cause of injury who must pay a price for it. Injury and pain are equivalent and originate in rights of creditor and debtor. These legal rights or contracts cause suspicion towards the society that makes them. Promises are made that the debtor must remember to pay the creditor so he does not suffer pain. The creditor is legally sanctioned to inflict pain on the body of the debtor. The Roman Code of Twelve Tables cited by Nietzsche allows creditors to punish debtors by cutting off limbs. Punishing debtors makes a creditor master by mistreating an "inferior" that owes him.

Nietzsche proposes this realm of contractual rights as origin of the moral ideas of guilt, conscience and duty is formed out of blood, cruelty and torture. The right to inflict suffering produces happiness in exchange for loss. The author wonders how causing another to suffer is a pleasure and normal characteristic of man. For example, he recalls



the pain of Don Quixote's suffering that is laughed at by readers. For additional support he cites an example of the bizarre cruelties apes do to each other as evidence of future humanity. Nietzsche returns to the idea of ought as an obligation that arises between individuals against each other in commercial trade. Pride and feeling of superiority arises where value and measure is assessed. Sale and purchase is a fundamental right of an individual in exchange, commerce, debt and obligation. Justice is defined as goodwill shared by people of equal power to come to terms with each other and compel those of less power to agree to settlement.

Nietzsche asserts variations of punishment should have essential utility that gives it a reason for support. Among benefits of punishment remorse is generally not one that is realistically expected. Punishment hardens and strengthens the power of resistance and alienation in the one punished. Ironically the one being punished by a court is harmed by the same methods for which he is punished. His action is called bad by punishers who are doing the same deeds that they now deem good. For example, informers and police use bribery and trickery to trap the criminal who is now being punished for doing the same acts they now consider bad. The punished has no experience of inner pain that a guilty man might possess. The wrong-doer being punished thinks something occurs that is not expected rather than being sorry for doing something wrong. Punishment is just a fatalistic event to which the wrong-doer submits. Lessons learned may include increased fear, sharpened cunning and mastery of his desires. The wrong-doer may be tamed and become more cunning by the punishment that does not succeed at making him better. Nietzsche suggests bad conscience originates in changes that the one being punished undergoes when imprisoned. He uses a metaphor of water-animals that must become clumsy land-animals to survive. Their instincts no longer are effective in coping with the world around them but instead turn backward against them. This is the origin of bad conscience. A homesick and desperate prisoner develops bad conscience from being thrust into a new environment with new conditions of existence required to survive.

The change to a bad conscience is neither gradual nor willing but a break against which there is no resistance. As a population there are no restraints until the State acts violently upon it. Nietzsche's State is a race of warlike conquerors and masters he calls "a herd of blonde beasts of prey." The author opposes a theory of state origin by contract in favor of origin by sudden force that is a necessary condition to originate bad conscience. The violent and sudden takeover of the people drives back within themselves their instinct of freedom. Latent freedom is expressed through bad conscience. The instinct of freedom Nietzsche calls will to power builds negative ideals in the soul's secret self-tyranny. This internal contradiction erupts in phases of cruelty that seem to be selflessness, self-denial and self-sacrifice but originates in bad conscience that supports the will for self-abuse.

Nietzsche compares bad conscience to pregnancy as an illness. Bad conscience forms from an earlier event just like pregnancy occurs from an earlier event. The debtor and creditor previously noted refer back through existing generations to ancestors and tribal associations from primitive periods. The race exists currently only because its ancestors sacrifice and make the necessary effort to keep it going. This is a debt that is owed and



continues to accumulate through the continuing potency of the ancestral spirits. As races increase, the amounts owing increase with fear of the ancestors' power in proportion. If a race decays the ancestors lose power. However a race that increases in power grows with its ancestors until they are transmuted into gods from a fear of them. Nietzsche proposes fear as origin of the gods though some may include piety as well.

Over centuries of the human race's existence this fear and consciousness of debts owing to the gods continues to grow. Over that time monotheism and a Christian God develop as well. However, with the Christian God, a consciousness of guilt also factors into the amount of debt owing and growing. Nietzsche claims a reverse movement also gradually starts with the decay of conscious owing. Atheism frees mankind from feeling obligated to its origin. The interrelation of ought and duty with religion interweaves ideas of God and bad conscience. In order to reverse direction of this negative movement, evolution of guilt and duty must turn backwards against an ill-defined factor. Enormity of the debt owed and its impossibility of payment leads mankind into a prison of pessimism. At the edge of Nothingness or non-being, Nietzsche says man is delivered from what he cannot deliver himself by the genius of Christianity. Specifically, God pays himself a pound of flesh as the creditor playing scapegoat for the debtor out of love for all mankind.

Nietzsche states a natural man of bad conscience exploits religious theory to erase debt in a dilemma between God and the Devil. He sees himself guilty, unworthy and punished by torment and horror to be redeemed in love from the ghastly experience of man. The author asserts nobler ways of using an invention of gods than the European experience of Christianity. For example, the Greek god Zeus portrays man in Homer as foolish and acting out of folly and imprudence but not evil and sin. Greek gods justify man by taking his guilt but not his punishment as the Christian God. Nietzsche claims man believes all that he does and thinks naturally to be evil that adds to his bad conscience. He wonders if the redeemer can redeem the curse laid upon it. He wonders if the will of man is free does it not again experience nothingness regardless whether Antichrist and Antinihilist appear one day. Nietzsche then recognizes there is nothing more to say.



Essay III, What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?

Essay III, What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals? Summary and Analysis

Nietzsche investigates meaning of ascetic ideals. Ascetic means austere but ascetic ideals have different meanings. For example, they mean nothing to an artist but to a philosopher mean "flair" and to a woman mean seductive fascination. Nietzsche claims a man needs a goal even if he wills nothingness. For example the composer Richard Wagner in old age respects chastity in an ascetic sense. Wagner changes attitude by veering from praise of sensuality that he calls "evangelistic freedom" to its opposite, chastity. This change is normal with anyone who is balanced between animal and angel. Conflict is evident when ruined swine, i.e., animal nature, worships chastity. Wagner sets it to music in "Parsifal" as flippant parody of overcoming unnatural ascetic ideals. Wagner uses Parsifal's humor in artistic expression. He uses Feuerbach's example of "healthy sensuality" in Parsifal's words about Christianity on stage that "All is vanity" and to seek salvation elsewhere.

Nietzsche comments on separation of artist and his work. The artist must be forgotten to appreciate his work. He compares enjoying the work of an artist to enjoying a child. The pain and suffering of a pregnant woman giving birth must be forgotten to enjoy the child. The artist must separate from his work. For example, Homer the writer of Achilles could not be Achilles nor could Goethe be Faust and write also. To an artist the ascetic ideal is nothing. Artists need a patron or authority. Wagner relies on Schopenhauer when he dominates Europe although his earlier and later ideas are contradictory. Schopenhauer's ideas on music increase the value of music and musician and lead to talk of ascetic ideals. Nietzsche judges Schopenhauer's idea of aesthetic from Kant's view that beauty "pleases without interesting" but prefers Stendhal's view that beauty promises happiness.

Nietzsche remarks that to say the beauty of a naked female is not interesting to men is laughable. Schopenhauer's inability to see beauty as interesting may be peculiar to his youthful age of twenty-six. Stendhal's beauty that promises happiness may interest victims of torture to escape. Nietzsche comments on Schopenhauer's thoughts and ideas on torture, sexuality and a woman. Schopenhauer needs enemies to be and maintain his reputation as pessimist. He judges sexuality a personal enemy and women a tool of the devil. Schopenhauer may not keep philosophical and practical positions without contrary ideas of others opposing him. Philosophers from all over the world challenge each other. Many oppose sensuality but Nietzsche deems Schopenhauer to be eloquent on the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche praises those who deny marriage and servitude to seek the ascetic ideal.



They are free from business, duties and cares others pursue. The ascetic ideal is signified by poverty, chastity and humility that inventive spirits live to express greater fruitfulness. The "desert" of these philosophers is anywhere one is not recognized and can talk freely to everyone. A philosopher avoids fame, princes and women despite attracting them. He is preoccupied by the supreme lord of his profession. Philosophers living in chastity do not plan children and posterity. The soul is their world and posterity is of no use. Their sensuality is transformed and sexuality does not enter consciousness. The ascetic ideal supports initial development of philosophy at a cost of peace and potential danger.

Early contemplatives live unpopular lives when they are despised and feared at the same time. Philosophical instincts make them turn against their own pleasures to strengthen character. Hermits and intellectual revolutionaries practice cruel self-mortification and self-martyrdom to embody ascetic ideals. Nietzsche compares development of the ascetic ideal to a caterpillar in its sinister repulsive form before it flies off into a sunnier, warmer world with enough courage to be in the world. The ascetic priest is a first step to resolve meaning in the ascetic ideal. It is serious for a priest whose faith, will, power, interest and existence is unified in the ascetic ideal. Despite commitment to the ideal a priest may not be a happy champion and is not an objective critic and judge. Human life to an ascetic priest bridges another existence. Life is a maze through which he returns to origin or a mistake he refutes by action and example. Either way is a self-contradiction hostile to life itself in paradoxical self-sacrifice and suffering leading to victory in salvation.

Nietzsche claims the ascetic priest cares for the sick, and he must be sick to understand them. He must also be strong to defend the weak against the healthy and powerful. He is the herdsman whom the weak and sick rely upon for protection. The weak need to find someone else responsible for their suffering. The ascetic priest as herdsman tolerates complaints of his suffering sheep and reflects back to them, or diverts, the fact it is their own fault that is responsible. He recognizes man's feelings of guilt but denies them as evidence of actual guilt. The ascetic priest soothes the suffering herd but does not cure its sickness. He is able as a Christian to provide many forms of ingenious consolation. The deadening of sensibility and susceptibility to pain uses rare powers of courage and intellectual stoicism and is harder to achieve than using work as diversion from suffering. The ascetic priest exploits these methods with laborers, slaves, prisoners and women to make them seem a benefit. The mandate to "love your neighbor" stimulates the Will for Power and is an antidote against depression. This tool is used in Christianity to create cooperative unions and stimulate a little joy in mutual benefits experienced. Community brings the individual out of personal discontent with himself alone into organization.

These methods of the ascetic priest develop herd-organization and communal awareness of power and are innocent methods to oppose depression. In addition a priest uses guilty methods to produce emotional excess against their long-lasting pain. He may also use the innocence of intellectual dishonesty in modern books that may not distinguish between the true or false in them. As a fellow psychologist, Nietzsche proposes they victimize themselves by mistrusting first impulses to produce emotional



excesses using guilty methods. This remedy does not heal but alleviates the unhappiness of depression that is its goal and achieved. The ascetic priest uses as a tool the exploitation of guilt feelings. Sin is used as "bad conscience" that the ascetic priest interprets religiously. The pain and suffering of man is exploited by the ascetic priest to become a goal in his appeal to follow a kingdom not of this world. The ascetic priest attends to the sick patients with a system of treatment that does not reform or heal them from their illness but trains and tames them to be better but not well. Nietzsche claims this ascetic ideal and its moral cult systematizes emotional excess that does more to destroy health and race efficiency of European man than German alcohol, blood inoculation or syphilis.

Only modern science claims to believe in itself alone. It does not oppose the ascetic ideal but claims to be an incarnation of the ascetic ideal's "latest and noblest form." The ascetic ideal and science start in the Christian belief that God is truth and truth is also divine. However, if this belief is no longer believable and there is nothing divine except error and lies of which God is the oldest lie, then science itself needs justification. There is no universally acceptable value of truth without God. Science and the ascetic ideal are complementary. The one is understood and known only in relation to the other. Science is not independent enough to be or create a value in itself. The ascetic ideal and science share impoverishment and simplicity of life for their expression. Nietzsche proposes a fundamental irony underlying the ascetic ideal and science. Specifically, because man is unable to satisfy his desire to know, i.e., science, there is a God that proves the ascetic ideal.



Characters

Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche is a German philosopher and the author of "The Genealogy of Morals." He writes this book to express his disagreement with the philosophical positions that his erstwhile friend, Paul Ree, states in his book titled the "Origin of Moral Feelings." However, Nietzsche initially expresses approval and agreement with Ree's book by calling it "clear, tidy and shrewd." Nietzsche is a twenty-eight-year-old professor of philosophy at the University of Basel when the friendship with Ree begins in 1873. Nietzsche compliments Ree's book after it is published in 1877.

Friedrich Nietzsche's relationship with Paul Ree is significant to Nietzsche's "The Genealogy of Morals" for several reasons. Nietzsche is a professor while Ree is a doctoral student in philosophy. Nietzsche is four years older than Ree, and they both serve in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, but Nietzsche serves as a medic and Ree serves as a soldier. They have two female friends in common. Malwida von Meysenburg is an older woman and Lou Salome is a twenty-one year old Russian girl. Nietzsche is unaware that Ree is a frustrated lover of Salome when Ree and von Meysenburg both write to him about the intelligent and enchanting Lou Salome. Nietzsche meets her through their matchmaking efforts and falls madly in love. He spends three weeks with her and his sister, Elizabeth as chaperon. Nietzsche initiates a proposal of marriage to her through Paul Ree who apparently does not tell him she has previously rejected his offer of marriage. Nietzsche's proposal is rejected and when he finds out that Salome and Ree live together he is devastated. He turns to a lonely life of despair, self-medication and writing when their friendship ends in 1882.

Nietzsche writes "The Genealogy of Morals" in 1887. He claims it is a philosophical work in response to Ree's book "Origin of Moral Feelings" but criticizes the same work he once compliments as "clear, tidy and shrewd." It is evident Nietzsche uses this work to channel his pain and suffering from the devastating experience of their friendship. Nietzsche writes The Genealogy and several other books by 1889. He lives with his sister Elizabeth under her care as a sick and deranged invalid before his death in 1900.

Paul Ree

Paul Ree becomes a close friend of Friedrich Nietzsche in 1873. Ree serves as a soldier in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Ree is four years younger than Nietzsche and a doctoral student in philosophy. Ree's idea on denial of universal principles of right and wrong is presented in his "Origin of Moral Feelings" published in 1877. The book impresses Nietzsche who calls it "clear, tidy and shrewd."

Ree's female friend Lou Salome impresses Nietzsche as well. Ree is in love with Lou Salome. Unknown to Nietzsche Ree proposes marriage to her which she rejects. Paul



Ree and Friedrich Nietzsche have another friend in common by the name of Malwida von Meysenburg. Paul and Malwida both speak highly of Lou and arrange for Friedrich to meet her. When Friedrich meets Lou Salome he falls madly in love with her and proposes marriage to her through Paul Ree who introduced them. She rejects Nietzsche as well and returns to living with Paul Ree as brother and sister. Nietzsche is distraught at this news, medicates himself with chloral hydrate, opium and a life alone writing some of his greatest works. Paul Ree's book that Nietzsche once so highly praised now becomes a target of "The Genealogy of Morals" that he writes to express his disagreement with Paul Ree. Nietzsche uses his former friend's book as a pattern against which to structure his points of philosophical dispute.

Paul Ree is a significant character in this work of Friedrich Nietzsche because their initial friendship in 1873 and its final end in 1882 have more to do with their personal relationships and competitiveness than philosophical differences. Paul is the younger, the soldier and more popular with the girl than Friedrich. Nietzsche praises Paul's work initially but criticizes it when they find themselves in a love triangle. Ree's work and their broken relationship is the reason Friedrich Nietzsche writes "The Genealogy of Morals." Paul Ree loses his friend and the girl as well when Salome later runs off to have affairs with the poet Rilke and Sigmund Freud.

Malwida von Meysenburg

Malwida von Meysenburg is a friend in common with Lou Salome, Paul Ree and Friedrich Nietzsche. She is an older woman who arranges to introduce Lou Salome and Nietzsche. Previous to this arranged meeting Malwida and Paul Ree both write glowing letters of recommendation to Nietzsche about this intelligent and enchanting girl. Malwida von Meysenburg arranges for Nietzsche and Salome to be introduced in Rome. Malwida is important to "The Genealogy of Morals" because her role is instrumental in matchmaking Lou Salome and Friedrich Nietzsche. She enables the love triangle to form between Paul Ree, Lou Salome and Nietzsche. The destructive effect of this love triangle results in Friedrich Nietzsche's critical attack on Paul Ree's "Origin of Moral Feelings."

"The Genealogy of Morals" is written in reaction not so much to their philosophical differences as to the emotional estrangement that results from the love triangle Malwida encouraged to develop.

Lou Salome

Lou Salome is the twenty-one year old Russian subject of the love triangle between Paul Ree and Friedrich Nietzsche. She also becomes the primary cause of their destroyed friendship. Lou is a friend of Paul Ree and Malwida von Meysenburg who both decide they would like her to meet their mutual friend Friedrich Nietzsche. Paul and Malwida write letters to Nietzsche about how intelligent and enchanting she is. Lou and Friedrich meet in Rome through the matchmaking of Malwida. They later spend three



weeks together in Tautenberg with Friedrich's sister Elizabeth acting as their chaperon. Some time before this apparent tryst, Lou Salome rejects Paul Ree's proposal of marriage. Nietzsche is not aware of this when he falls in love with Lou and asks Ree about proposing to her as well.

Lou rejects Friedrich's offer through Ree but when Nietzsche finds out about their love triangle he is devastated. Lou Salome later returns to her life with Paul Ree living as brother and sister. While living with Paul she becomes engaged to another man but then has a series of affairs with other famous men including Rainer Marie Rilke and Sigmund Freud. Lou is significant in this work because she is at the heart of the broken relationship between Nietzsche and Paul Ree. Ree is complimented for his work by Nietzsche until Lou Salome appears at the center of their love triangle. A distraught Nietzsche writes "The Genealogy of Morals" more in reaction to their broken relationship than its inherent philosophical differences.

Schopenhauer

Schopenhauer is a German philosopher whom Nietzsche considers a mentor for his changes in thought on the origin of morality. Nietzsche refers to him as "my great teacher Schopenhauer." Before Schopenhauer's ideas are popular other philosophers like Plato, Spinoza, Kant and La Rochefoucauld all agree in their contempt for the worthlessness of pity. Nietzsche comments on Schopenhauer's attitude, thoughts and ideas about torture, sexuality and a woman. He claims Schopenhauer needs enemies to develop and maintain his pessimist reputation. For example, he deems sexuality a personal enemy and women to be tools of the devil. Schopenhauer might not keep his philosophical and practical positions without other contrary ideas to oppose him.

It is not unusual for philosophers from all over the world to challenge each other's opinions. Many oppose sensuality but Nietzsche considers Schopenhauer the most eloquent and his ideas to illustrate the ascetic ideal. Schopenhauer opposes marriage and Nietzsche agrees that marriage hinders the path to the ideal. Nietzsche praises philosophers who deny marriage and other servitude to independently enter the desert in search of the ascetic ideal. Philosophers who practice chastity do so because their mind is elsewhere than on children and posterity that absorbs the vigor of their animal life. Their soul is the world and posterity is of no use to them. Such is the case with Schopenhauer according to Nietzsche. Schopenhauer's sensuality is transfigured and sexual excitement no longer enters his consciousness.

Nietzsche considers Schopenhauer's idea of the aesthetic from Kant's viewpoint that "beautiful" pleases without interesting but he prefers Stendhal's view that beautiful promises happiness. Nietzsche notes the claim that beauty of a naked female is not interesting to men is comical. Schopenhauer's inability to see beauty as interesting may reveal his peculiarities and youthful age of twenty-six. Schopenhauer's insight into beauty is of little value compared to Stendhal.



The aristocratic man

The aristocratic man also referred to as noble or the master is a model Nietzsche uses to illustrate the distinctive differences in morality between classes. The aristocratic man spontaneously considers himself to be good. He then creates the bad from his idea of bad in comparison to himself as good. Aristocratic morality comes from the internal affirmation of its own values unlike slave morality that comes from negating external demands. To that extent aristocratic morality is positive and affirms itself.

The "bad" of the aristocratic man and the "evil" of the resentful man are different because the aristocrat has only an idea of bad compared to the good that he sees in himself. Nietzsche claims "good" or "bad" come originally from a linguistic point of view that just describes nobles without any moral component.

The Resentful Man

The resentful man who is also referred to as herd or slave is a contrasting model that Nietzsche uses to illustrate distinctive differences in morality between classes. The resentful man experiences "evil" as insults and meanness done to him. "Evil" and "bad" are both used as the opposite of "good." The "evil" is essential in the author's idea of slave-morality as origin. The enemy is conceived as the "evil one" by the resentful man who evaluates himself in relation to the evil one which lets him judge himself as the "good one" by comparison. The slave revolt in morality is different because it begins in resentment and opposes that which is imposed on it externally. Nietzsche states moral value is imputed by slaves who resent nobles and consider their actions to be vices. The slave revolt has a cultural effect that replaces strength and action of rich nobles with passivity and flatness of the meek who inherit the earth.

This "evil" expands to the evil enemies represented in society by the aristocratic races acting as beasts of prey that exhibit barbarism throughout Europe back to Athenians, Scandinavian Vikings, Vandals and Goths. A goal of civilization is to train the beast of prey out of man to become a tame, civilized and domesticated animal. Instincts of reaction and resentment are tools of civilization to degrade and overpower aristocratic races. Bearers of these tools represent civilization but are also an argument against civilization. Nietzsche claims it is preferable to fear and be on guard against the "blond beast" at the core of all aristocratic races than to be free from fear at the cost of being distorted, dwarfed, stunted and venomous through being tamed. The process of leveling and dwarfing the European man by eliminating fear of man also destroys hope in man and will to be man. The goal of this process is to work backwards by becoming more like all the rest of man rather than to become greater than the others. The process is to become less a man that becomes tiring and develops into Nihilism.



The Ascetic Priest

The ascetic priest is the embodiment of an ascetic ideal in Nietzsche's philosophy. Development of the ascetic priest is a first step to resolve the question of meaning in the ascetic ideal. A priest's faith, will, power, interest and existence is unified in an ascetic ideal. Despite commitment to the ideal, a priest may not be a happy champion of the ascetic ideal. He is not an objective critic or judge of it. Nietzsche purports to help the priest defend the ascetic ideal. Human life from the view of an ascetic priest is a bridge to another existence. To an ascetic, life is either a maze through which one returns to his origin or a mistake that he refutes by his actions and example. An ascetic lives a self-contradiction in which he is hostile to life itself. He takes pleasure in paradoxical self-sacrifice and suffering that may lead to final victory in salvation

The ascetic priest is the wish for life in another realm made real in flesh and blood on earth. The power of this wish binds him on earth as a tool to create more favorable conditions for life on earth. The ascetic priest is misperceived as an enemy of life when he is really the conservative and affirmative force for life on earth amidst the sickness of man's animal existence. His self-destruction is a wound that lets him live. The ascetic priest cares for the sick and he must be sick as well to understand those he cares for. However he must also be strong to defend the weak from the healthy and powerful. He is a herdsman whom the weak and sick rely on to protect them. The weak and suffering would like to blame someone else for their condition. The weak have an intense need to find someone else responsible for their suffering. Primary value of the priestly life is to divert his suffering herd's course of resentment. The ascetic priest as herdsman tolerates the complaints of his suffering sheep and reflects back to them, or diverts, the fact that it is their own fault alone that is responsible.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is Nietzsche's sister. She is instrumental in his life and this work at two critical times. During a happy and hopeful time in Nietzsche's life she chaperones his three-week vacation with Lou Salome in the early 1880s. Elizabeth is virulently anti-Semitic however and has little regard for his image and vision. Twenty years later after his emotional breakdown she takes care of her devastated, lonely, sick and deranged invalid brother until his death in 1900.

Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner is a German composer. Wagner relies on ideas of the philosopher Schopenhauer when he dominates Europe even though his earlier and later ideas about art are contradictory. Schopenhauer's ideas about music increase the value of music and musician and lead to talk of ascetic ideals. For example, Nietzsche suggests the composer Richard Wagner in his old age respects chastity in an ascetic sense. He claims Wagner changes attitude by veering from praise of his sensuality that he calls "evangelistic freedom" to chastity, its opposite. This change is normal with anyone

delicately balanced between natures of animal and angel. The conflict is clear when a ruined swine, as he refers to the animal nature, turns to worship chastity.

Wagner sets it to music. Nietzsche considers Wagner's drama of "Parsifal" a flippant parody that demonstrates overcoming the unnatural ascetic ideal. Wagner uses the character Parsifal to illustrate humor in the superiority of overcoming himself in this highest artistic expression of soul and body. He follows the example of Feuerbach's "healthy sensuality" about Christianity when Parsifal proclaims on stage that "All is vanity" and to seek salvation elsewhere.



Objects/Places

The University of Basel

The University of Basel is the university at which Friedrich Nietzsche is a professor of philosophy in 1873. During his time there he meets and forms a friendship with Paul Ree, a doctoral candidate in philosophy.

The Franco-Prussian War

The Franco-Prussian War is fought in 1870. This is one of the experiences that Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul Ree share in common. Nietzsche serves in the war as a medical orderly, while Ree serves as a soldier.

Tautenberg

Tautenberg is the location of Nietzsche and Lou Salome's vacation. They spend three weeks there together with Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth as a chaperon. Friedrich falls madly in love with Salome here and later proposes marriage to her through Paul Ree.

Sorrento

Sorrento is the location where Nietzsche records a collection of aphorisms in the winter of 1876-77 that he recalls thinking about much earlier but does not develop. These thoughts are about the same subjects in the essays he is writing. He believes his thoughts are riper, clearer, stronger and more complete since then. He is sure they are neither capricious nor sporadic since they are consistent and seem to originate from a common root deep in his soul.

Origin of Moral Feelings

The "Origin of Moral Feelings" is the book written and published in 1877 by Paul Ree that Nietzsche initially compliments as being "clear, tidy and shrewd." Ten years later after the friendship with Paul Ree is broken from the love triangle with Salome, Nietzsche criticizes it in "The Genealogy of Morals." Nietzsche uses the structure of the Origin as a pattern to organize and compose his criticism in the Genealogy.

The Slave Revolt

The slave revolt in morals begins in resentment and opposes anything externally imposed on it. Aristocratic morality comes from internal positive affirmation of its own



values unlike slave morality. The Redeemer is a paradox of "god on the cross" that is self-crucifixion of god for the sake of man that trans-values in triumph under that sign over all other more aristocratic ideals. Regardless of the name to describe them this demonstrates that slaves, people or the herd triumph over masters through the Jews. Redemption of the human race from the masters progresses, whether called Judaized, Christianized or vulgarized by free-thinkers that remain unfettered.

Nietzsche supports this argument with his prejudice about Jews that he calls a priestly nation that cause trans-valuation of values on the aristocrats by a clever act of revenge. He claims Jews propose a contrary equation that wretched, poor, weak, lowly, needy, sick and loathsome are good, pious, blessed and alone will be saved. Aristocrats and men of power are evil, horrible, covetous and godless, unblest, cursed and damned eternally. He recalls from earlier work that a revolt of slaves starts in the moral realm two millennia ago with Jews. It is not seen today only because they achieve victory.

Turin, Italy

Turin, Italy is the city in Italy where Nietzsche has an emotional breakdown after completing five books the previous year. He is rescued by his friend Overbeck who takes him from Turin to Basel where he is treated in a psychiatric clinic. This marks the end of his productive writing period. He spends the last ten or so years of his life from 1889 to 1900 as an invalid being cared for by his anti-Semitic sister Elizabeth.

Parsifal

Parsifal is the name of a character and an opera by Richard Wagner. Nietzsche uses Wagner's drama of "Parsifal" as a frivolous caricature that illustrates overcoming the unnaturalness of the ascetic ideal. Wagner uses the character Parsifal to show humor in the superiority of overcoming himself in this highest artistic expression of soul and body. He follows the idea of Feuerbach's "healthy sensuality" that Parsifal proclaims about Christianity on stage that "All is vanity" and to seek salvation elsewhere.

Don Quixote

Don Quixote is the name of a fictional character that Nietzsche uses to illustrate how causing another to suffer is a pleasurable and normal characteristic of man. Nietzsche references other works as well that cite a developing spiritualization and "deification" of cruelty throughout civilization. For example he recalls the pain of Don Quixote's suffering that is laughed at by readers. For additional support he cites the example of bizarre cruelties that apes do to each other to show evidence of their future humanity.

The Roman Code of the Twelve Tables

The Roman Code of the Twelve Tables cited by Nietzsche is a Roman law that authorizes creditors to punish debtors by cutting off their limbs. Promises are made that the one who owes a debt must remember to pay to the creditor so that he does not suffer pain. Under Roman Code a creditor is legally sanctioned by the state to inflict pain on the body of one who owes a debt. By punishing debtors, a creditor becomes a master by mistreating for his pleasure an "inferior" that owes him.



Themes

The Origins of Good

Nietzsche contrasts master and slave morality, also called noble and herd morality. He claims "good" or "bad" originally just describes the nobles without moral impact. Nietzsche states moral value is imputed by slaves who resent the nobles and consider their actions vices. This slave revolt has a cultural effect that replaces strength and action of the rich nobles with passivity and flatness of the meek who inherit the earth. Nietzsche's inquiry into the origins of good are focused around four key components.

The first component is the utility or useful value of good. He initiates the inquiry by reviewing the psychological dimension proposed by the English psychologists. Good is defined by them in terms of the one who benefits from the action. To that extent good is a utilitarian idea. Specifically if action is useful for the beneficiary, i.e., one who benefits from the action, regardless of the benefactor's intent, then it is good. However, it is not the beneficiary who decides whether action is useful even though he is the one who benefit from it. Those with the resources to dispense to others, i.e., the rich and powerful, claim the right to decide what is good.

Historically more intriguing is the linguistic, or language based dimension of good. Since the rich and powerful decide what is good for the poor and powerless upon whom they dispense goods, Nietzsche researches the origin of terms used to identify them. Although beneficiaries do not decide what is good, the rich and powerful are so far removed from conditions of the poor and powerless they do not know whether what they do is useful or not. However, benefactors do consider themselves good and Nietzsche analyzes the history of terms, or etymology in various languages that refer to aristocratic and other class levels. The term "good" evolves from root ideas with words like noble and aristocrat. He finds that the term "bad" evolves from root ideas with other words like vulgar and low. He finds a most eloquent proof in the German word for bad to be the same as a word for plebeian.

Class ranking and superiority are associated with the rich and powerful who consider themselves above their inferiors and refer to themselves in one word terms such as powerful, lords, and others. This approach is found in several languages. The simplicity of the German word for good, i.e., "gut" evolves over time into the tribal name used to identify the conquering Goths. Finally the ancient worlds of Rome and Judea provide final resolution to origins of good. Good originates with the Romans who Nietzsche deems to be the strong and aristocratic nation-state in comparison to the Jews whom he considers to be a priestly nation that illustrates his notion of resentment.



Formation of The Bad Conscience

The origins of guilt and punishment originally have no moral significance. Guilt means owing and punishment ensures payment. It is not until society constrains behavior that "bad conscience" causes man to turn against his own soul. Nietzsche's point is that forms of punishment should offer social utility to be supported. Remorse is generally not a benefit of punishment that can be expected. Punishment hardens and strengthens resistance and alienation in the one punished. Ironically, the one being punished by a court is treated with the same methods for which he is punished. For example, informers and police use bribery and trickery to trap criminals who are then punished for committing acts of bribery and trickery that the authorities now call criminal. The one punished feels no inner guilt but may think something happens he did not expect. He does not feel sorry for doing something wrong. Punishment is an event of fate to be endured. Lessons he may learn include increased fear of capture, sharper cunning and mastery of his desires. A wrong-doer may be tamer but becomes more cunning by the punishment that does not make him any better.

Nietzsche suggests bad conscience originates from changes within that the one being punished undergoes when imprisoned. He uses the metaphor of water-animals that are forced to become clumsy land-animals to survive. Their instincts are no longer effective in coping with the world but instead turn inward against them. A homesick and desperate prisoner develops his own bad conscience from being thrust into a new environment with new conditions of existence required to survive. Similarly, a State that originates by sudden force is a necessary condition for bad conscience to evolve. Violent and sudden takeover of a people drives back into themselves the instinct of freedom that is an origin of bad conscience. The instinct of freedom that Nietzsche calls will to power builds negative ideals in a soul's secret self-tyranny. Internal contradiction shows in phases of cruelty that seem to be selflessness, self-denial and self-sacrifice but originates in bad conscience that causes the will for self-abuse.

Nietzsche compares bad conscience to pregnancy as an illness that forms from an earlier event like pregnancy occurs from an earlier event. The race exists because ancestors sacrifice and make efforts to keep it going. This debt is owed and continues to accumulate through continuing potency of the ancestral spirits. As a race increases in power so do its ancestors until they transform into fearful gods. The interrelation of ought and duty with religion interweaves the idea of God and bad conscience. Size of debt owed and impossibility of payment leads mankind into a prison of pessimism.

Nietzsche claims man is delivered from what he cannot deliver himself by the genius of Christianity. Specifically, God pays himself a pound of flesh as a creditor playing scapegoat for debtors from loving them. Nietzsche proposes the natural man of bad conscience exploits religious theory to eliminate debt by placing himself in a dilemma between God and the Devil. His madness of will causes him to find himself guilty, unworthy and punished through a night of torment and horror to be redeemed in love from the ghastly experience of man.



The Ascetic Ideal

Asceticism is an attempt to tame the animal instincts of sick, weak-willed men. The ascetic ideal is a strategy to preserve life rather than a form of living death between two worlds. The ascetic ideal ends Nietzsche's investigation in genealogy of morals. Ironically, ascetic ideal is a relatively flexible notion attractive to different characters. For example, Nietzsche notes it is nothing to artists like Richard Wagner who enjoys his sensuality in the prime of life but can be everything to that same artist learning to respect chastity in old age. To an artist the meaning of ascetic ideal may be nothing at all or all that matters. Ascetic ideal may be "flair" to a philosopher and seductive fascination to a woman.

Analysis of the ascetic priest may resolve any question of meaning in the ascetic ideal. It is a serious matter for the priest whose faith, will, power, interest and very existence is unified in the ascetic ideal. A priest may not be a happy champion of the ascetic ideal and is certainly not an objective critic and judge of it. Nietzsche claims to defend the ideal. Human life from the viewpoint of an ascetic priest is a bridge to another existence. To an ascetic, life can be either a maze through which one returns to his origin or a mistake that he refutes by action and example. The ascetic lives a self-contradiction in which he is hostile to life itself. He experiences the sense of pleasure only in paradoxical self-sacrifice and suffering that leads to salvation

Nietzsche does not deem ascetics to be saints but simply free from business, duties and cares that others pursue. The ascetic ideal is signified by qualities of poverty, chastity and humility that all inventive spirits live to demonstrate greater fruitfulness. The "desert" sought by these philosophers is not of sand but may be anywhere he is unrecognized and can talk without harm to anyone there. Specifically philosophers need a place to avoid the things of "to-day." Philosophers can be recognized by the brilliant and noisy things they avoid like fame, princes and women despite attracting them. They avoid fame not from virtue but from preoccupation with a supreme lord.

Early contemplative men live under the burden of unpopularity in which they were despised and feared at the same time. Their philosophical instincts require them to turn against their own pleasures to strengthen character. Hermits and intellectual revolutionaries practice cruel self-mortification and self-martyrdom to exemplify the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche compares this development of the priest's ascetic ideal to that of a caterpillar in its sinister and repulsive form that precedes its butterfly birth. The ascetic priest embodies a wish for life in another realm made real in flesh and blood on earth. The power of this wish binds him on earth to act as tool creating favorable conditions for life on earth. The ascetic priest is misperceived as enemy of life when he is really the conservative and affirmative force for life on earth amidst sickness of man's animal existence. Man has no meaning except for the ascetic ideal. The ideal means something is lacking to man as animal. Man is surrounded by void that makes him suffer as a diseased animal. He wills his own suffering and senselessness spreads over mankind without an ascetic ideal that lets him will, even if he wills nothingness.

Style

Perspective

The author, Friedrich Nietzsche, is a German philosopher. He is born in 1844 and dies in 1900. He is employed as a professor at the University of Basel and writes many books during the productive period of his life. Amongst his writing from 1883 to 1887 are some of his greatest works, including "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", "Beyond Good and Evil" and "The Genealogy of Morals." In the last year of his productive period he finishes five books including "The Case of Wagner", "Twilight of the Idols" and "The Antichrist." At the end of this intensely productive year Nietzsche suffers an emotional breakdown and his friend Overbeck exclaims "Nietzsche is done for!" He spends the last ten years of his life a hopelessly deranged mental and physical invalid living like a puppet in the care of his domineering and anti-Semitic sister Elizabeth.

"The Genealogy of Morals" is written in reaction to a personal situation. He is unwittingly caught up in a love triangle with his friend Paul Ree and Lou Salome. Ree is also a philosopher and four years younger than Nietzsche. They both fall madly in love with twenty-one year old Russian enchantress Lou Salome. Nietzsche is devastated when Lou not only turns down his proposal of marriage but then moves in with his close friend Paul Ree. Their friendship is destroyed. Nietzsche writes "The Genealogy of Morals" in 1887 to critique Ree's "Origin of Moral Feelings."

The intended audience for "The Genealogy of Morals" seems to be Paul Ree and his proponents in an apparent attempt to transcend the emotional anguish Nietzsche still feels five years after their friendship is broken. Previously Nietzsche praises Ree on his book as a "decisive turning-point in the history of moral philosophy" when it is published in 1877 and they are still close friends before Lou's appearance in 1882. Nietzsche seems indifferent to any other audience by warning readers. He ends the Preface by claiming it is not his fault if his writing seems obscure. It is up to the reader to read his previous writings and suffer through the understanding of every single word he writes to appreciate the "sunny brilliance" of his work.

Tone

Friedrich writes "The Genealogy of Morals" in the first person subjective tone. Although the book purports to be an objective research and analytic study of the origin and development of morals throughout civilization, Nietzsche is clearly expounding on his opinions, learned though they may be. Despite personal conflict and disappointment that spawns Nietzsche's work he maintains the appearance of sophisticated philosophical arguments to oppose the ideas of his rival. According to commentary on this work, Nietzsche's style of using Ree's work as the framework for The Genealogy makes this work of Nietzsche's more comprehensible and logical than many of his other writings. Regardless, the work is complex, confusing and obtuse.



The work is originally written in German and translated in 1913. Consequently, there are several barriers for contemporary readers to overcome in the work. It is purported to be and clothed in philosophic ideas that may in fact provide only a veneer on what is really Nietzsche's presumably hostile and bitter state of mind. The work is written in German and according to a late nineteenth century style, structure and grammatical construction wholly foreign to an early twenty-first century English reader. English translation is done in the early twentieth century which creates a burden of idiomatic expression, verbiage and understanding. The final barrier is perhaps most significant since Nietzsche expects readers to suffer through understanding what he writes.

Structure

This 123-page work of non-fiction is comprised of five sections with no index or glossary. Three essays comprise the main body of the work but biographical note and preface sections are invaluable to develop an understanding of the author and his purpose in writing. The preface and each of the essays is further divided in subsections ranging from eight in the Preface to 28 in the longest final Essay. Nietzsche appends a note to the first Essay commenting on the future task of the philosopher as he sees it. Chapters range in size from five pages in the biographical section to 51 in the last essay. Chapter subsections range in size from four lines to four pages. There are a total of 78 chapter subsections.

The amount of detail suggested by the number of subsections, i.e., 78 in 123 pages, does not significantly contribute to the clarity of Nietzsche's work. He writes in German that is originally translated into English by Horace B. Samuel in 1913. Sentences often seem to be transliterated direct from German. Many sentences are very long with liberal use of commas, colons and semicolons to separate thoughts and ideas. English grammarians might consider them "run-on" sentences. Subsection and sentence structure make the work's purported ideas challenging to find and difficult to understand. Nietzsche is apparently aware and unconcerned about the readers' difficulty as evidenced by his comment, "If this writing be obscure to any individual, and jar on his ears, I do not think that it is necessarily I who am to blame." The solution he recommends to the reader is "read my previous writings."



Quotes

"What an astonishing proposal, what a gift from the gods, this must have seemed to Nietzsche. He traveled to Rome and, on meeting Salome, bowed to her and said, 'From what stars have we fallen to meet here?' He was soon in love with her, and he proposed to her more than once - the final time through Ree, not knowing that Ree also was in love with her and also had a proposal rejected." Chapter Note, p. iv

"The above three paragraphs, which are meant only as a general guidepost, are of course a vast oversimplification. How, after all, can one synopsise Nietzsche? The nuggets of his thought are too many, too shining. His vision does not progress from A to B, but back and forth, up and down. He is not merely a logician, but a psychologist, a poet - most of all, a searcher for the truth. One of his great strengths is that he is able to see both sides of an issue." Chapter Note, p. vi

"If this writing be obscure to any individual, and jar on his ears, I do not think that it is necessarily I who am to blame. It is clear enough, on the hypothesis which I propose, namely, that the reader has first read my previous writings and has not grudged them a certain amount of trouble; it is not, indeed, a simple matter to get really at their essence." Chapter Preface, p. 7

"Now the first argument that comes ready to my hand is that the real homestead of the concept 'good' did not originate among those to whom goodness was shown. Much rather has it been the good themselves that is, the aristocratic, the powerful, the high-stationed, the high-minded, who have felt that they themselves were good, and that their actions were good, that is to say of the first order, in contradistinction to all the low, the low-minded, the vulgar, and the plebeian. It was out of this pathos of distance that they first arrogated the right to create values for their own profit, and to coin the names of such values; what had they to do with utility?" Chapter Essay 1, p. 11

"It was the Jews who, in opposition to the aristocratic equation (good = aristocratic = beautiful = happy = loved by the gods), dared with a terrifying logic to suggest the contrary equation, and indeed to maintain with the teeth of the most profound hatred (the hatred of weakness) this contrary equation, namely, 'the wretched are alone the good; the poor, the weak, the lowly, are alone the good; the suffering, the needy, the sick, the loathsome, are the only ones who are pious, the only ones who are blessed, for them alone is salvation - but you, on the other hand, you aristocrats, you men of power, you are to all eternity the evil, the horrible, the covetous, the insatiate, the godless; eternally also shall you be the unblessed, the cursed, the damned!'" Chapter Essay 1, p. 17

"The subject (or, to use popular language, the soul) has perhaps proved itself the best dogma in the world simply because it rendered possible to the horde of mortal, weak, and oppressed individuals of every kind that most sublime specimen of self-deception, the interpretation of weakness as freedom, of being this, or being that, as merit." Chapter Essay 1, p. 26



"Alas! reason, seriousness, mastery over the emotions, all these gloomy, dismal things which are called reflection, all these privileges and pageantries of humanity; how dear is the price that they have exacted! How much blood and cruelty is the foundation of all 'good things!'" Chapter Essay 2, p. 38

"The sight of suffering does one good, the infliction of suffering does one more good - this is a hard maxim, but none the less a fundamental maxim, old, powerful, and 'human, all-too—human'; one, moreover, to which perhaps even the apes as well would subscribe; for it is said that in inventing bizarre cruelties they are giving abundant proof of their future humanity, to which, as it were, they are playing the prelude. Without cruelty, no feast; so teaches the oldest and longest history of man - and in punishment too is there so much of the festive." Chapter Essay 2, p. 42

"The broad effects which can be obtained by punishment in man and beast, are the increase of fear, the sharpening of the sense of cunning, the mastery of the desires; so it is that punishment tames man, but does not make him 'better' - it would be more correct even to go so far as to assert the contrary ('Injury makes a man cunning.' says a popular proverb; so far as it makes him cunning, it makes him also bad. Fortunately, it often enough makes him stupid). Chapter Essay 2, p. 56

"These Greeks long utilized their gods as simple buffers against the 'bad conscience' - so that they could continue to enjoy their freedom of soul; this of course is diametrically opposed to Christianity's theory of its god." Chapter Essay 2, p. 64

"But in the very fact that the ascetic ideal has meant so much to man, lies expressed the fundamental feature of man's will, his "horror vacui"; he needs a goal - and he will sooner will nothingness than not will at all." Chapter Essay 3, p. 67

"And to come back again to our first question, 'What is the meaning of a philosopher paying homage to ascetic ideals?' We get now, at any rate, a first hint; he wishes to escape from a torture." Chapter Essay 3, p. 74

"I am proceeding, as you see, in this essay, from an hypothesis which, as far as such readers as I want are concerned, does not require to be proved; the hypothesis that 'sinfulness' in man is not an actual fact, but rather merely the interpretation of a fact, of a physiological discomfort, - a discomfort seen through a moral religious perspective which is no longer binding upon us. The fact, therefore, that any one feels 'guilty,' 'sinful,' is certainly not yet any proof that he is right in feeling so, any more than any one is healthy simply because he feels healthy." Chapter Essay Essay 3, p. 93

"'Sin' - for that is the name of the new priestly version of the animal 'bad-conscience' (the inverted cruelty) - has up to the present been the greatest event in the history of the diseased soul; in 'sin' we find the most perilous and fatal masterpiece of religious interpretation." Chapter Essay 3, p. 102

". . . let us have the courage to grasp it - a will for Nothingness, a will opposed to life, a repudiation of the most fundamental conditions of life, but it is and remains a will! - and

to say at the end that which I said at the beginning - man will wish Nothingness rather than not wish at all." Chapter Essay 3, p. 118



Topics for Discussion

Describe and discuss the personal facts that cause Nietzsche to write his book on the "Genealogy of Morals."

Who is Lou Salome and why is she significant to Nietzsche's philosophical arguments?

Define and discuss what Nietzsche claims to be the origin of good and evil.

Describe and discuss Nietzsche's ideas about guilt and punishment.

Identify and discuss what philosopher Nietzsche relies on to develop his thoughts on the origin of morality.

What does Nietzsche expect any reader to do if he is to be understood?

Identify and describe the differences that Nietzsche uses to show a difference between the morality ideas of the aristocrat compared to that of the slave.

Describe and discuss how forgetfulness is essential to forgiveness.

Describe and discuss the origin of responsibility according to Nietzsche.

Where does bad conscience come from according to Nietzsche?