Nietzsche: The Will To Power

PREFACE

(Nov. 1887–March 1888)

1 Of what is great one must either be silent or speak with greatness. With greatness—that means cynically and with innocence.

2 What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere; for this music of the future all ears are cocked even now. For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.

3 He that speaks here, conversely, has done nothing so far but reflect: a philosopher and solitary by instinct, who has found his advantage in standing aside and outside, in patience, in procrastination, in staying behind; as a spirit of daring and experiment that has already lost its way once in every labyrinth of the future; as a soothsayer-bird spirit who looks back when relating what will come; as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself.

4 For one should make no mistake about the meaning of the title that this gospel of the future wants to bear. "The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values"—in this formulation a countermovement finds expression, regarding both principle and task; a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism—but presupposes it, logically and psychologically, and certainly can come only after and out of it. For why has the advent of nihilism become necessary? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals—because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these "values" really had.—We require, sometime, new values.

BOOK ONE

EUROPEAN NIHILISM

1 (1885–1886)

Toward an Outline

1. Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests? Point of departure: it is an error to consider "social distress" or "physiological degeneration" or, worse, corruption, as the cause of nihilism. Ours is the most decent and compassionate age. Distress, whether of the soul, body, or intellect, cannot of itself give birth to nihilism (i.e., the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and
desirability). Such distress always permits a variety of interpretations. Rather: it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted.

2. The end of Christianity—at the hands of its own morality (which cannot be replaced), which turns against the Christian God (the sense of truthfulness, developed highly by Christianity, is nauseated by the falseness and mendaciousness of all Christian interpretations of the world and of history; rebound from "God is truth" to the fanatical faith "All is false"; Buddhism of action—).

3. Skepticism regarding morality is what is decisive. The end of the moral interpretation of the world, which no longer has any sanction after it has tried to escape into some beyond, leads to nihilism. "Everything lacks meaning" (the untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false). Buddhistic tendency, yearning for Nothing. (Indian Buddhism is not the culmination of a thoroughly moralistic development; its nihilism is therefore full of morality that is not overcome: existence as punishment, existence construed as error, error thus as a punishment—a moral valuation.) Philosophical attempts to overcome the "moral God" (Hegel, pantheism). Overcoming popular ideals: the sage; ~he saint; the poet. The antagonism of "true" and "beautiful" and "good"—

4. Against "meaninglessness" on the one hand, against moral value judgments on the other: to what extent has all science and philosophy so far been influenced by moral judgments? and won't this net us the hostility of science? Or an antiscientific mentality? Critique of Spinozism. Residues of Christian value judgments are found everywhere in socialistic and positivistic systems. A critique of Christian morality is still lacking

5. The nihilistic consequences of contemporary natural science (together with its attempts to escape into some beyond). The industry of its pursuit eventually leads to self-disintegration, opposition, an antiscientific mentality. Since Copernicus man has been rolling from the center toward X.*

6. The nihilistic consequences of the ways of thinking in politics and economics, where all "principles" are practically histrionic: the air of mediocrity, wretchedness, dishonesty, etc. Nationalism. Anarchism, etc. Punishment. The redeeming class and human being are lacking—the just fiers-


8. Art and the preparation of nihilism: romanticism (the conclusion of Wagner's Nibelungen).

I. NIHILISM

2 (Spring-Fall 1887)
What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate tiemselves. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer.

3 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Radical nihilism is the conviction of an absolute untenability of existence when it comes to the highest values one recognizes; plus the realization that we lack the least right to posit a beyond or an in-itself of things that might be "divine" or morality incarnate. This realization is a consequence of the cultivation of "truthfulness"—
thus itself a consequence of the faith in morality.
4 (June 10, 1887)
What were the advantages of the Christian moral hypothesis?
1. It granted man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away.
2. It served the advocates of God insofar as it conceded to the world, in spite of suffering and evil, the character of perfection-including "freedom": evil appeared full of meaning.
3. It posited that man had a knowledge of absolute values and thus adequate knowledge precisely regarding what is most important.
4. It prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking sides against life; from despairing of knowledge: it was a means of preservation.
In sum: morality was the great antidote against practical and theoretical nihilism.
5 (June 10, 1887)
But among the forces cultivated by morality was truthfulness: this eventually turned against morality, discovered its teleology, its partial perspective—and now the recognition of this inveterate mendaciousness that one despairs of shedding becomes a stimulant. Now we discover in ourselves needs implanted by centuries of moral interpretation-needs that now appear to us as needs for untruth; on the other hand, the value for which we endure life seems to hinge on these needs. This antagonism—not to esteem what we know, and not to be allowed any longer to esteem the lies we should like to tell ourselves—results in a process of dissolution.
6 (-Spring-Fall 1887)
This is the antinomy:
Insofar as we believe in morality we pass sentence on exist
7 (Nov. 1887-March 1888)
The supreme values in whose service man should live, especially when they were very hard on him and exacted a high puce-these social values were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as "reality," as the true" world, as a hope and future world. Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems "meaningless"—but that is only a transitional stage.
8 (1883-1888)
The nihilistic consequence (the belief in valuelessness) as a consequence of moral valuation: everything egoistic has come to disgust us (even though we realize the impossibility of the unegoistic): what is necessary has come to disgust us (even though we realize the impossibility of any liberum arbitrium or "ntelligible freedom"). We see that we cannot reach the sphere in which we have placed our values; but this does not by any means confer any value on that other sphere in which we live: on the contrary, we are weary because we have lost the ma-n stimulus "In vain so far!"
9 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Pessimism as a preliminary form of nihilism.
10 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Pessimism as strength—in what? in the energy of its logic, as anarchism and nihilism, as analytic.
Pessimism as decline—in what? as growing effeteness, as a sort of cosmopolitan fingering, as "tout comprendre 6 and h~storicism.
The critical tension: the extremes appear and become predominant.
11 (Spring-Fall 1887, rev. Spring-Fall 1888)
The logic of pessimism down to ultimate nihilism: what is at work in it? The idea of valuelessness, meaninglessness: to what extent moral valuations hide behind all other high values.
Conclusion: Moral value judgments are ways of passing sentence,
negations; morality is a way of turning one's back on the will to existence.

Problem: But what is morality?

12 (Nov. 1887-March 1888)
Decline of Cosmological Values

Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, first, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged. Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long waste of strength, the agony of the "in vain," insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure—being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had deceived oneself all too long.—This meaning could have been: the "fulfillment" of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal happiness; or even the development toward a state of universal annihilation—any goal at least constitutes some meaning. What all these notions have in common is that something is to be achieved through the process—and now one realizes that becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing.—Thus, disappointment regarding an alleged aim of becoming as a cause of nihilism: whether regarding a specific aim or, universalized, the realization that all previous hypotheses about aims that concern the whole "evolution" are inadequate (man no longer the collaborator, let alone the center, of becoming). Nihilism as a psychological state is reached, secondly, when one has posited a totality, a systematization, indeed any organization in all events, and underneath all events, and a soul that longs to admire and revere has wallowed in the idea of some supreme form of domination and administration (—if the soul be that of a logician, complete consistency and real dialectic are quite sufficient to reconcile it to everything). Some sort of unity, some form of "monism": this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity.—"The well-being of the universal demands the devotion of the individual"—but behold, there is no such universal! At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order to be able to believe in his own value.

Nihilism as psychological state has yet a third and last form. Given these two insights, that becoming has no goal and that underneath all becoming there is no grand unity in which the individual could immerse himself completely as in an element of supreme value, an escape remains: to pass sentence on this whole world of becoming as a deception and to invent a world beyond it, a true world. But as soon as man finds out how that world is fabricated solely from psychological needs, and how he has absolutely no right to it, the last form of nihilism comes into being: it includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a true world. Having reached this standpoint, one grants the reality of becoming as the only reality, forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities—but cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it. What has happened, at bottom? The feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of "aim," the concept of "unity," or the concept of "truth." Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking: the character of existence is not "true," is false. One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a true world. Briefly: the categories "aim," "unity," "being" which we used to project some value into the world—we pull out again; so the world looks valueless.
Suppose we realize how the world may no longer be interpreted in terms of these three categories, and that the world begins to become valueless for us after this insight: then we have to ask about the sources of our faith in these three categories. Let us try if it is not possible to give up our faith in them. Once we have devaluated these three categories, the demonstration that they cannot be applied to the universe is no longer any reason for devaluing the universe.

Conclusion: The faith in the categories of reason is the cause 1; of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world.

Final conclusion: All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which then proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world—all these values are, psychologically considered, the results of certain perspectives of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination—and they have been falsely projected into the essence of things. What we find here is still the hyperbolic naivete of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things.

Nihilism represents a pathological transitional stage (what is pathological is the tremendous generalization, the inference that there is no meaning at all): whether the productive forces are not yet strong enough, or whether decadence still hesitates and has not yet invented its remedies.

Presupposition of this hypothesis: that there is no truth, that there is no absolute nature of things nor a "thing-in-itself." This, too, IS merely nihilism—even the most extreme nihilism. It places the value of things precisely in the lack of any reality corresponding to these values and in their being merely a symptom of strength on the part of the value-positers, a simplification for the sake of life.

Values and their changes are related to increases in the power of those positing the values.
The measure of unbelief, of permitted "freedom of the spirit" as an expression of an increase in power.
"Nihilism" an ideal of the highest degree of powerfulness of spirit, the over-richest life-partly destructive, partly ironic.

What is a belief? How does it originate? Every belief is a cons-denugfomthing-true.
The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that every being, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false cause there simply is no true world Thus. a perspectival appearance whose origin lies in us (in so far as we continually need a narrower, abbreviated, simplified world).

That it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely apparent character, the necessity of lies.

To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be a divine way of thinking.

If we are "disappointed," it is at least not regarding life: rather we are now facing up to all kinds of "desiderata."
With scornful wrath we contemplate what are called "ideals"; we despise ourselves only because there are moments when we cannot subdue that absurd impulse that is called "idealism." The influence of too much coddling is stronger than the wrath of the disappointed.
To what extent Schopenhauer's nihilism still follows from the same ideal that created Christian theism.—One felt so certain about the highest desiderata, the highest values, the highest perfection that the philosophers assumed this as an absolute certainty, as if it were a priori: "God" at the apex as a given truth. "To become as God," "to be absorbed into God"—for thousands of years these were the most naive and convincing desiderata (but what convinces is not necessarily true—it is merely convincing; a note for asses).

One has unlearned the habit of conceding to this posited ideal the reality of a person; one has become atheistic. But has the ideal itself been renounced?—At bottom, the last metaphysicians still seek in it true "reality," the "thing-in-itself" compared to which everything else is merely apparent. It is their dogma that our apparent world, being so plainly not the expression of this ideal, cannot be "true"—and that, at bottom, it does not even lead us back to that metaphysical world as its cause. The unconditional, representing that highest perfection, cannot possibly be the ground of all that is conditional. Schopenhauer wanted it otherwise and therefore had to conceive of this metaphysical ground as the opposite of the ideal—as "evil, blind will": that way it could be that "which appears," that which reveals itself in the world of appearances. But even so he did not renounce the absoluteness of the ideal—he sneaked by.—

(Kant considered the hypothesis of "intelligible freedom" necessary in order to acquit the ens perfection of responsibility for the world's being such-and-such-in short, to account for evil and ills: a scandalous bit of logic for a philosopher.—)

The most universal sign of the modern age: man has lost dignity in his own eyes to an incredible extent. For a long time the center and tragic hero of existence in general; then at least intent on proving himself closely related to the decisive and essentially valuable side of existence—like all metaphysicians who wish to cling to the dignity of man, with their faith that moral values are cardinal values. Those who have abandoned God cling that much more firmly to the faith in morality.

Every purely moral value system (that of Buddhism, for example) ends in nihilism: this to be expected in Europe. One still hopes to get along with a moralism without religious background: but that necessarily leads to nihilism.—In religion the constraint is lacking to consider ourselves as value-positing.

The nihilistic question "for what?" is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded from outside—by some superhuman authority. Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks another authority that can speak unconditionally and command goals and tasks. The authority of conscience now steps up front (the more emancipated one is from theology, the more imperativistic morality becomes) to compensate for the loss of a personal authority. Or the authority of reason. Or the social instinct (the herd). Or history with an immanent spirit and a goal within, so one can entrust oneself to it. One wants to get around the will, the willing of a goal, the risk of positing a goal for oneself; one wants to rid oneself of the responsibility (one would accept fatalism). Finally, happiness—and, with a touch of Tartuffe, the happiness of the greatest number.

One says to oneself:
1. a definite goal is not necessary at all,
2. cannot possibly be anticipated.

Just now when the greatest strength of will would be necessary, it is weakest and least confident. Absolute mistrust regarding the organizing
strength of the will for the whole.
21 (Spring-Fall 1887; rev. 1888)
The perfect nihilist.—The nihilist's eye idealizes in the direction of
erugliness and is unfaithful to his memories: it allows them to drop, lose
their leaves; it does not guard them against the corpse-like pallor that
weakness pours out over what is distant and gone. And what he does not
do for himself, he also does not do for the whole past of mankind: he
lets it drop.
22 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Nihilism. It is ambiguous:
A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as active
nihilism.
B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as
passive nihilism.
23 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Nihilism as a normal condition.
It can be a sign of strength: the spirit may have grown so strong that
previous goals ("convictions," articles of faith) have become
incommensurate (for a faith generally expresses the constraint of
conditions of existence, submission to the authority of circumstances
under which one flourishes, grows, gains power). Or a sign of the lack
of strength to posit for oneself, productively, a goal, a why, a faith.
It reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of
destruction—as active nihilism.
Its opposite: the weary nihilism that no longer attacks; its most famous
form, Buddhism; a passive nihilism, a sign of weakness. The strength of
the spirit may be worn out, exhausted, so that previous goals and values
have become incommensurate and no longer are believed; so that the
synthesis of values and goals (on which every strong culture rests)
dissolves and the individual values war against each other:
disintegration—and whatever refreshes, heals, calms, numbs emerges into
the foreground in various disguises, religious or moral, or political,
or aesthetic, etc.
24 (Nov. 1887—March 1888)
Nihilism does not only contemplate the "in vain!" nor is it merely the
belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy.—This
is, if you will, illogical; but the nihilist does not believe that one
needs to be logical.—It is the condition of strong spirits and wills,
and these do not find it possible to stop with the No of "judgment":
their nature demands the No of the deed. The reduction to nothing by
judgment is seconded by the reduction to nothing by hand.
25 (Spring-Fall 1887)
On the genesis of the nihilist.—It is only late that one musters the
courage for what one really knows.' That I have hitherto been a
thorough-going nihilist, I have admitted to myself only recently: the
energy and radicalism with which I advanced as a nihilist deceived me
about this basic fact. When one moves toward a goal it seems impossible
that "goal-lessness as such" is the principle of our faith.
26 (Spring-Fall 1887)
The pessimism of active energy: the question "for what?" after a
terrible struggle, even victory. That something is a hundred times more
important than the question of whether we feel well or not: basic
instinct of all strong natures—and consequently also whether others feel
well or not. In sum, that we have a goal for which one does not hesitate
to offer human sacrifices, to risk every danger, to take upon oneself
whatever is bad and worst: the great passion.
27 (Spring-Fall 1887)
Causes of nihilism: 1. The higher species is lacking, i.e., those whose
inexhaustible fertility and power keep up the faith in man. (One should
recall what one owes to Napoleon: almost all of the higher hopes of this
2. The lower species ("herd," "mass," "society") unlearns modesty and blows up its needs into cosmic and metaphysical values. In this way the whole of existence is vulgarized: in so far as the mass is dominant it bullies the exceptions, so they lose their faith in themselves and become nihilists.

All attempts to think up higher types failed ("romanticism"; the artist, the philosopher; against Carlyle's attempt to ascribe to them the highest moral values).

The resistance to higher types as a result.
Decline and insecurity of all higher types. The fight against the genius ("folk poetry," etc.). Pity for the lowly and suffering as a measure for the height of a soul.
The philosopher is lacking who interprets the deed and does not merely transpose it.

28 (Spring-Fall 1887)

Main proposition. How complete nihilism is the necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto.

Incomplete nihilism; its forms: we live in the midst of it.
Attempts to escape nihilism without revaluating our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute.

29 (1883-1888)
The ways of self-narcotization._ 16 Deep down: not knowing whither.

Emptiness. Attempt to get over it by intoxication intoxication as music; intoxication as cruelty in the tragic enjoyment of the destruction of the noblest; intoxication as blind enthusiasm for single human beings or ages (as hatred, etc.). Attempt to work blindly as an instrument of science: opening one's eyes to the many small enjoyments; e.g., also in the quest of knowledge (modesty toward oneself); resignation to generalizing about oneself, a pathos; mysticism, the voluptuous enjoyment of eternal emptiness; art "for its own sake" ("le fait") and "pure knowledge" as narcotic states of disgust with oneself; some kind or other of continual work, or of some stupid little fanaticism; a medley of all means, sickness owing to general immoderation (debauchery kills enjoyment).

1. Weakness of the will as a result.
2. Extreme pride and the humiliation of petty weakness felt in contrast.

30 (Nov. 1887-March 1888; rev. 1888)
The time has come when we have to pay for having been Christians for two thousand years: we are losing the center of gravity by virtue of which we lived; we are lost for a while. Abruptly we plunge into the opposite valuations, with all the energy that such an extreme overvaluation of man has generated in man.

Now everything is false through and through, mere "words," chaotic, weak, or extravagant:
a. one attempts a kind of this-worldly solution, but in the same sense-that of the eventual triumph of truth, love, and justice (socialism: "equality of the person");
b. one also tries to hold on to the moral ideal (with the pre-eminence of what is un-egoistic, self-denial, negation of the win);
c. one tries to hold on even to the "beyond"-even if only as some antilogical "x,"-but one immediately interprets it in such a way that some sort of old-fashioned metaphysical comfort can be derived from it;
d. one tries to find in events an old-fashioned divine governance-an order of things that rewards, punishes, educates, and betters;
e. one still believes in good and evil and experiences the triumph of the good and the annihilation of evil as a task (that is English; typical case: the flathead John Stuart Mill);
f. contempt for what is "natural," for desire, for the ego: attempt to
understand even the highest spirituality and art as the consequence of depersonalization and as desinteressement; g. the church is still permitted to obtrude into all important experiences and main points of individual life to hallow them and give them a higher meaning: we still have the "Christian state," "Christian marriage"