

## HOW THE "TRUE WORLD" FINALLY BECAME A FABLE

### HISTORY OF AN ERROR

- 1 The true world attainable by the wise, the pious, and the virtuous man,—he lives in it, *he embodies it*.

(Oldest form of the idea, relatively rational, simple, and convincing. Transcription of the proposition, "I, Plato, *am* the truth.")

- 2 The true world unattainable at present, but promised to the wise, the pious, and the virtuous man (to the sinner who repents).

(Progress of the idea : it becomes more refined, more insidious, more incomprehensible,—it *becomes feminine*, it becomes Christian.)

- 3 The true world unattainable, undemonstrable, and unable to be promised ; but even as conceived, a comfort, an obligation, and an imperative.

(The old sun still, but shining only through mist and scepticism ; the idea become sublime, pale, northerly, Königsbergian.)

- 4 The true world—unattainable ? At any rate unattained. And being unattained also *unknown*. Consequently also neither comforting, saving, nor obligatory : what obligation could anything unknown lay upon us ?

(Grey morning. First yawning of reason. Cock-crowing of Positivism.)

- 5 The "true world"—an idea neither good for anything, nor even obligatory any longer,—an idea become useless and superfluous ; *consequently* a refuted idea : let us do away with it !

(Full day ; breakfast ; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness ; Plato blushing for shame ; infernal noise of all free intellects.)

- 6 We have done away with the true world : what world is left ? perhaps the seeming ? . . . But no ! *in doing away with the true, we have also done away with the seeming world !*

(Noon ; the moment of the shortest shadow ; end of the longest error ; climax of mankind ; *INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA*).

worthy man, who, returning from a love appointment, *tanquam re bene gesta*, said thankfully, "*Ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluptas*".—

## 14

*Anti-Darwin.*—As regards the celebrated "struggle for life," it seems to me, in the mean time, to be more asserted than proved. It occurs, but only as an exception; the general aspect of life is *not* a state of want or hunger; it is rather a state of opulence, luxuriance, and even absurd prodigality,—where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for *power*.—We must not confound Malthus with nature. Granted, however that this struggle exists—and in fact it does occur,—its results, alas, are the reverse of what the Darwinian school wish, the reverse of what one *might* perhaps wish, in accordance with them: it is prejudicial to the strong, the privileged, the fortunate exceptions. The species does *not* grow in perfection: the weak again and again get the upper hand of the strong,—their large number and their *greater cunning* are the cause of it. Darwin forgot the intellect (that was English!); *the weak have more intellect*. . . . One must need intellect in order to acquire it; one loses it when it is no longer necessary. He who has strength rids himself of intellect ("let it go hence!")\* is what

\* An allusion to Luther's song, *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott!*

people think in Germany at present, "the *Empire* will remain"...). As is obvious, under intellect I comprehend foresight, patience, craft, dissimulation, grand self-control, and all modifications of *mimicry*. A great deal of so-called virtue is included under mimicry.

## 15

*Psychologist Casuistry.* This individual is an expert in the knowledge of men: for what end is he actually studying men? He wants to get some little advantages over them, or even some great advantages,—he is a *politicus*!... That individual is also an expert in the knowledge of men, and you say he wants nothing for himself thereby, he is one of the grand "impersonal." Look at him more carefully! Perhaps he even wants a *more reprehensible* advantage: to feel himself superior to men, to be allowed to look down on them, not to confound himself with them any longer. This "impersonal one" is a *despiser* of men; the former is the more humane species, whatever appearance may indicate. He at least places himself on an equality with men, he places himself *among* them...

## 16

The *psychological tact* of the Germans seems to me to be called in question by a whole series of cases,

to mind the result of the statistics, that the years in which the cholera rages do not differ from the other years in the total number of deaths.

## 37

*Whether we are become more moral.*—As was to be expected, the whole *ferocity* of moral stupefaction, which avowedly passes for morality itself in Germany, has taken up arms against my conception, “beyond good and evil:” I could tell fine stories about it. My critics above all gave me the “undeniable superiority” of the moral sentiment of our age to reflect upon, the actual *progress* we have made in this respect; in comparison with *us*, a Cæsar Borgia was on no account to be set up in my fashion as a “higher man,” as a kind of *beyond-man*. A Swiss editor, of the “Bund,” went so far (not without expressing his esteem of the courage for such a jeopardy) as to “understand” the meaning of my work to the effect that I proposed to do away with all decent sentiment. Very much obliged!—I permit myself, as an answer, to raise the question, *whether we are really become more moral*. That all the world believes it is already an objection against it . . . We modern men, very delicate, very readily injured, giving and taking consideration in a hundred ways, we conceit ourselves in fact that this delicate humanity which we

manifest, this *realised* unanimity in forbearance, in helpfulness, and in mutual trust is positive progress, and that we are thereby far above the men of the Renaissance. Every age, however, thinks in this manner, it *is obliged* to think thus. It is certain, we could not place ourselves in Renaissance conditions; we could not even conceive ourselves placed in them: our nerves would not stand that reality, not to speak of our muscles. No progress, however, is demonstrated by this incapacity, but only a different, a later condition, weaker, tenderer, and more readily injured, out of which a *considerate* morality necessarily evolves. If we were to think of our tenderness and lateness, our physiological aging, as absent, our "humanising" morality also would forthwith lose its value (no morality has value in itself); it would even let us despise it. Let us not doubt, on the other hand, that we modern men, with our thick wadded humanity, which will not by any means strike against a stone, would furnish a comedy to the contemporaries of Cæsar Borgia to laugh themselves to death over. In fact we are extraordinarily amusing, though involuntarily, with our modern "virtues" . . . The decline of hostile and distrust-awakening instincts—for that would be our "progress"—represents only one of the consequences in the general decline of *vitality*: it costs a hundred times more pains and more foresight to effectuate an existence so conditioned and so late.

Under such circumstances people mutually assist one another; to a certain extent everybody is sick, and everybody is a sick-nurse. That condition of things is then denominated "virtue:" among men who knew a different mode of life, fuller, more prodigal, more profuse, it would have had a different name, perhaps "cowardice," "pitiableness," or "old woman's morality" . . . Our softening of manners—that is my thesis, it is, if you will, my *innovation*—is a consequence of *décadence*; severity, frightfulness of manners may, inversely, be a consequence of superabundance of life: for then much can be dared, much can be challenged, and much also can be *squandered*. What was formerly a seasoning of life would be *poison* to us . . . To be indifferent—that also is a form of strength—for that likewise we are too old and too late: our morality of sympathy against which I was the first to give warning, that which one might designate as *l'impressionisme morale*, is a further expression of the physiological over-excitability possessed by all that is *décadent*. That movement which has attempted to introduce itself scientifically by means of Schopenhauer's *morality of sympathy*—a very unfortunate attempt!—is the true *décadence* movement in morals, and, as such, is intrinsically related to Christian morality. Vigorous eras, noble civilisations, see something contemptible in sympathy, in "brotherly love," in the lack of self-assertion and self-reliance.—Eras are to be measured by

their *positive powers*: the period of the Renaissance accordingly, so profuse and fateful, presents itself as the last *great* period; and we modern men, with our anxious self-nursing and brotherly love, with our virtues of labour, unpretentiousness, fair play, and scientific spirit—accumulating, economic, mechanical,—we represent a *weak* period . . . Our virtues are determined, are *peremptorily called forth* by our weakness . . . “Equality,” as an actual approximation to similarity, of which the theory of “equal rights” is but the expression, belongs essentially to *décadence*: the gap between man and man, between class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to assert itself, to stand out in contrast, that which I call *pathos of distance* belongs to every *vigorous* period. The power of stretch, the width of stretch between the extremes, becomes always smaller at present,—the extremes themselves finally merge into similarity. All our political theories and state constitutions, the “German Empire” by no means excepted, are consequences, resulting necessities, of *décadence*; the unconscious operation of *décadence* has gained the ascendancy so far as to affect the ideals of some of the sciences. My objection against the whole of the sociology of England and France is that it only knows *decaying types* of society by experience, and quite innocently takes its own instincts of decay as the standard for sociological valuations. *Deteriorating* life, the decline of all organising power

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(i. e., separating, gap-making, subordinating and super-ordinating power) is formulated as the *ideal*, in the sociology of the present day. Our socialists are *décadents*; Mr. Herbert Spencer, however, is also a *décadent*,—he sees something desirable in the triumph of altruism.

## 38

*My concept of freedom.*—The worth of a thing lies sometimes not in what one attains with it, but in what one pays for it,—what it *costs* us. I give an example. Liberal institutions immediately cease to be liberal, so soon as they are attained; afterwards, there are no more mischievous or more radical enemies of freedom than liberal institutions. One knows well enough *what* they accomplish: they undermine the will to power, they are the levelling of mountain and valley exalted into morality, they make people small, cowardly, and voluptuous,—with them the herding animal always triumphs. Liberalism: that is *increased herding-animality* . . . The same institutions produce quite other results so long as they are fought for; they then, in fact, further freedom in a powerful manner. On looking more accurately, we see that it is warfare which produces these results, warfare *for* liberal institutions, which, as war, allows *illiberal* instincts to continue. And warfare educates for freedom. For what is freedom? To have the will to be respon-

sible for one's self. To keep the distance which separates us. To become more indifferent to hardship, severity, privation, and even to life. To be ready to sacrifice men for one's cause, one's self not excepted. Freedom implies that manly instincts, instincts which delight in war and triumph, dominate over other instincts; for example over the instincts of "happiness." The man *who has become free*, how much more the spirit which has become free, treads under foot the contemptible species of well-being dreamt of by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats. The free man is a *warrior*.—How is freedom measured, in individuals, as well as in nations? By the resistance which has to be overcome, by the effort which it costs to retain superiority. We should have to seek the highest type of free men where the highest resistance is constantly overcome: five paces from tyranny, close on the threshold of the danger of thralldom. This is psychologically true, when we mean by "tyrants" pitiless and frightful instincts, which peremptorily call forth the maximum of authority and discipline—the finest type is furnished by Julius Cæsar; it is also politically true—let us but traverse the course of history. The people who were worth something, who *became* worth something, never acquired their greatness under liberal institutions: *great danger* made something out of them which deserves reverence,—danger which first teaches us to

know our resources, our virtues, our shield and sword, our *genius*,—which *compels* us to be strong . . . *First* principle: men must require strength; otherwise, they never attain it.—Those great forcing-houses for the strong, the strongest species of man that has hitherto existed, the aristocratic commonwealths of the pattern of Rome and Venice, understood freedom precisely in the sense in which I understand the word: as something which one has and has *not*, as something which one *desires*, which one *wins by conquest* . . .

## 39

*Criticism of modernism.*—Our institutions are no longer worth anything: that is a matter on which we are unanimous. But the fault is not in the institutions, but in *us*. After we have lost all instincts out of which institutions grow, the institutions themselves are being lost, because *we* are no longer suitable for them. Democratism has always been the *décadence* type of organising power: I have already (Human, All-too-human, Vol. I, Aphorism 472) characterised modern democracy (together with its incomplete forms, such as the "German Empire") as a *declining type of the state*. In order that there may be institutions, there must be a species of will, instinct, or imperative, anti-liberal even to malignity: a will for tradition, for authority, for responsibility throughout centuries, a will