

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The Gay Science

*With a Prelude in German Rhymes
and an Appendix of Songs*

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The teachers of the purpose of existence. – Whether I regard human beings with a good or with an evil eye, I always find them engaged in a single task, each and every one of them: to do what benefits the preservation of the human race. Not from a feeling of love for the race, but simply because within them nothing is older, stronger, more inexorable and invincible than this instinct – because this instinct constitutes *the essence* of our species and herd. One might quickly enough, with the usual myopia from five steps away, divide one’s neighbours into useful and harmful, good and evil; but on a large-scale assessment, upon further reflection on the whole, one grows suspicious of this tidying and separating and finally abandons it. Even the most harmful person may actually be the most useful when it comes to the preservation of the species; for he nurtures in himself or through his effects on others drives without which humanity would long since have become feeble or rotten. Hatred, delight in the misfortunes of others, the lust to rob and rule, and whatever else is called evil: all belong to the amazing economy of the preservation of the species, an economy which is certainly costly, wasteful, and on the whole most foolish – but still *proven* to have preserved our race so far. I no longer know whether you, my dear fellow man and neighbour, are even *capable* of living in a way which is damaging to the species, i.e. ‘unreasonably’ and ‘badly’. What *might* have harmed the species may have become extinct many thousands of years ago and may by now belong to the things that are no longer possible even for God. Pursue your best or your worst desires, and above all, perish! In both cases you are probably still in some way a promoter and benefactor of humanity and are thus entitled to your eulogists – as well as to your mockers! But you will never find someone who could completely mock you, the individual, even in your best qualities, someone who could bring home to you as far as truth allows your boundless, fly- and frog-like wretchedness! To laugh at oneself as one would have to laugh in order to laugh *from the whole truth* – for that, not even the best have had enough sense of truth, and the most gifted have had far too little genius! Perhaps even laughter still has a future – when the proposition ‘The species is everything, an individual is always nothing’ has become part of humanity and this ultimate liberation and irresponsibility is accessible to everyone at all times. Perhaps laughter

will then have formed an alliance with wisdom; perhaps only 'gay science' will remain. At present, things are still quite different; at present, the comedy of existence has not yet 'become conscious' of itself; at present, we still live in the age of tragedy, in the age of moralities and religions. What is the meaning of the ever-new appearance of these founders of moralities and religions, of these instigators of fights about moral valuations, these teachers of pangs of conscience and religious wars? What is the meaning of these heroes on this stage? For these have been the heroes thus far; and everything else, even if at times it was all that we could see and was far too near, has always served only to set the stage for these heroes, whether as machinery and backdrop or in the role of confidant and servant. (The poets, for example, were always the servants of some kind of morality.) It is obvious that these tragedies, too, work in the interest of the *species*, even if they should believe that they are working in the interest of God, as God's emissaries. They, too, promote the life of the species *by promoting the faith in life*. 'Life is worth living', each of them shouts, 'there is something to life, there is something behind life, beneath it; beware!' This drive, which rules the highest as well as the basest of human beings – the drive for the preservation of the species – erupts from time to time as reason and passion of mind; it is then surrounded by a resplendent retinue of reasons and tries with all its might to make us forget that fundamentally it is drive, instinct, stupidity, lack of reasons. Life *ought to be loved, because –!* Man *ought to advance himself and his neighbour, because –!* What names all these Oughts and Because have been given and may yet be given in the future! The ethical teacher makes his appearance as the teacher of the purpose of existence in order that what happens necessarily and always, by itself and without a purpose, shall henceforth seem to be done for a purpose and strike man as reason and an ultimate commandment; to this end he invents a second, different existence and takes by means of his new mechanics the old, ordinary existence off its old, ordinary hinges. To be sure, in no way does he want us to *laugh* at existence, or at ourselves – or at him; for him, an individual is always an individual, something first and last and tremendous; for him there are no species, sums, or zeroes. Foolish and fanciful as his inventions and valuations may be, badly as he may misjudge the course of nature and deny its conditions – and all ethical systems hitherto have been so foolish and contrary to nature that humanity would have perished from

every one had it gained power over humanity – all the same! Every time ‘the hero’ appeared on stage, something new was attained: the gruesome counterpart of laughter, that profound shock that many individuals feel at the thought: ‘Yes, living is worth it! Yes, I am worthy of living!’ Life and I and you and all of us became *interesting* to ourselves once again for a while. There is no denying that *in the long run* each of these great teachers of a purpose was vanquished by laughter, reason and nature: the brief tragedy always changed and returned into the eternal comedy of existence, and the ‘waves of uncountable laughter’ – to cite Aeschylus¹ – must in the end also come crashing down on the greatest of these tragedians. Despite all this corrective laughter, human nature on the whole has surely been altered by the recurring emergence of such teachers of the purpose of existence – *it has acquired one additional need*, the need for the repeated appearance of such teachers and such teachings of a ‘purpose’. Man has gradually become a fantastic animal that must fulfil one condition of existence more than any other animal: man *must* from time to time believe he knows *why* he exists; his race cannot thrive without a periodic trust in life – without faith in the *reason in life*! And ever again the human race will from time to time decree: ‘There is something one is absolutely forbidden henceforth to laugh at.’ And the most cautious friend of man will add: ‘Not only laughter and gay wisdom but also the tragic, with all its sublime unreason, belongs to the means and necessities of the preservation of the species.’ And therefore! Therefore! Therefore! Oh, do you understand me, my brothers? Do you understand this new law of ebb and flood? We, too, have our time!

2

Intellectual conscience. – I keep having the same experience and keep resisting it anew each time; I do not want to believe it although I can grasp it as with my hands: *the great majority lacks an intellectual conscience* – indeed, it has often seemed to me as if someone requiring such a conscience would be as lonely in the most densely populated cities as he would be in the desert. Everyone looks at you with strange

¹ A mistranslation of lines 89–90 of *Prometheus Bound* formerly ascribed to the fifth-century (BC) Athenian dramatist Aeschylus. The lines actually read: ‘countless laughter of the sea waves’.

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*Consciousness (Bewußtsein)*⁶ – Consciousness (*Bewußtheit*) is the latest development of the organic, and hence also its most unfinished and unrobust feature. Consciousness gives rise to countless mistakes that lead an animal or human being to perish sooner than necessary, ‘beyond destiny’, as Homer puts it.⁷ If the preserving alliance of the instincts were not so much more powerful, if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish with open eyes of its misjudging and its fantasizing, of its lack of thoroughness and its incredulity – in short, of its consciousness; or rather, without the instincts, humanity would long have ceased to exist! Before a function is fully developed and mature, it constitutes a danger to the organism; it is a good thing for it to be properly tyrannized in the meantime! Thus, consciousness is properly tyrannized – and not least by one’s pride in it! One thinks it constitutes the *kernel* of man, what is abiding, eternal, ultimate, most original in him! One takes consciousness to be a given determinate magnitude! One denies its growth and intermittences! Sees it as ‘the unity of the organism’! This ridiculous overestimation and misapprehension of consciousness has the very useful consequence that an all-too-rapid development of consciousness was *prevented*. Since they thought they already possessed it, human beings did not take much trouble to acquire it – and things are no different today! The *task* of *assimilating knowledge* and making it instinctive is still quite new; it is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is yet barely discernible – it is a task seen only by those who have understood that so far we have incorporated only our *errors* and that all of our consciousness refers to errors!

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On the aim of science. – What? The final aim of science should be to give man as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible? But what if

⁶ The usual German word for ‘consciousness’ is *Bewußtsein* (literally ‘being-in-a-state-of-awareness-of’) and this is the term Nietzsche uses in the title of this paragraph. He then however shifts to the much more unusual word *Bewußtheit*, which has an ending (*heit*) that usually signifies an abstract property, and argues against the view that having such a property is something fundamental or especially important to humans.

⁷ See *Iliad* 11.155 and XX.30, 336.

New battles. – After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!

Let us beware. – Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where would it stretch? What would it feed on? How could it grow and procreate? After all, we know roughly what the organic is; are we then supposed to reinterpret what is inexpressibly derivative, late, rare, accidental, which we perceive only on the crust of the earth, as something essential, common, and eternal, as those people do who call the universe an organism? This nauseates me. Let us beware even of believing that the universe is a machine; it is certainly not constructed to one end, and the word ‘machine’ pays it far too high an honour. Let us beware of assuming in general and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighbouring stars; even a glance at the Milky Way raises doubts whether there are not much coarser and more contradictory movements there, as well as stars with eternally linear paths, etc. The astral order in which we live is an exception; this order and the considerable duration that is conditioned by it have again made possible the exception of exceptions: the development of the organic. The total character of the world, by contrast, is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called. Judged from the vantage point of our reason, the unsuccessful attempts are by far the rule; the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical mechanism repeats eternally its tune, which must never be called a melody – and ultimately even the phrase ‘unsuccessful attempt’ is already an anthropomorphism bearing a reproach. But how could we reproach or praise the universe! Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness or unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect, nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it want to become any of these things; in no way does it strive to imitate man! In no way do

our aesthetic and moral judgements apply to it! It also has no drive to self-preservation or any other drives; nor does it observe any laws. Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is no one who commands, no one who obeys, no one who transgresses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for only against a world of purposes does the word 'accident' have a meaning. Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is only a form of what is dead, and a very rare form. Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the god of the Eleatics.¹ But when will we be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?

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Origin of knowledge. – Through immense periods of time, the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them turned out to be useful and species-preserving; those who hit upon or inherited them fought their fight for themselves and their progeny with greater luck. Such erroneous articles of faith, which were passed on by inheritance further and further, and finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species, are for example: that there are enduring things; that there are identical things; that there are things, kinds of material, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in and for itself. Only very late did the deniers and doubters of such propositions emerge; only very late did truth emerge as the weakest form of knowledge. It seemed that one was unable to live with it; that our organism was geared for its opposite: all its higher functions, the perceptions of sense and generally every kind of sensation, worked with those basic errors that had been incorporated since time immemorial. Further, even in the realm of knowledge those propositions became the norms according to which one determined 'true' and 'untrue' – down to the most remote areas of pure logic. Thus

¹ Group of philosophers in the early fifth century B.C. who argued that the world of change was a mere appearance of an underlying unchanging being

the *strength* of knowledge lies not in its degree of truth, but in its age, its embeddedness, its character as a condition of life. Where life and knowledge seem to contradict each other, there was never any serious fight to begin with; denial and doubt were simply considered madness. Those exceptional thinkers, like the Eleatics, who still posited and clung to the opposites of the natural errors, believed in the possibility of also *living* this opposite: they invented the sage as the man of unchangeability, impersonality, universality of intuition, as one and all at the same time, with a special capacity for that inverted knowledge; they had the faith that their knowledge was at the same time the principle of *life*. But in order to be able to claim all this, they had to *deceive* themselves about their own state: they had fictitiously to attribute to themselves impersonality and duration without change; they had to misconstrue the nature of the knower, deny the force of impulses in knowledge, and generally conceive reason as a completely free, self-originated activity. They closed their eyes to the fact that they, too, had arrived at their propositions in opposition to what was considered valid or from a desire for tranquillity or sole possession or sovereignty. The subtler development of honesty and scepticism finally made also these people impossible; even their life and judgements proved dependent on the ancient drives and fundamental errors of all sentient existence. This subtler honesty and scepticism arose wherever two conflicting propositions seemed to be *applicable* to life because both were compatible with the basic errors, and thus where it was possible to argue about the greater or lesser degree of *usefulness* for life; also wherever new propositions showed themselves to be not directly useful, but at least also not harmful, as expressions of an intellectual play impulse, and innocent and happy like all play. Gradually the human brain filled itself with such judgements and convictions; and ferment, struggle, and lust for power developed in this tangle. Not only utility and delight, but also every kind of drive took part in the fight about the 'truths'; the intellectual fight became an occupation, attraction, profession, duty, dignity – knowledge and the striving for the true finally took their place as a need among the other needs. Henceforth, not only faith and conviction, but also scrutiny, denial, suspicion, and contradiction were a *power*; all 'evil' instincts were subordinated to knowledge and put in its service and took on the lustre of the permitted, honoured, useful and finally the eye and the innocence of the *good*. Thus knowledge became a part of life and, as

life, a continually growing power, until finally knowledge and the ancient basic errors struck against each other, both as life, both as power, both in the same person. The thinker – that is now the being in whom the drive to truth and those life-preserving errors are fighting their first battle, after the drive to truth has *proven* itself to be a life-preserving power, too. In relation to the significance of this battle, everything else is a matter of indifference: the ultimate question about the condition of life is posed here, and the first attempt is made here to answer the question through experiment. To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated? – that is the question; that is the experiment.

III

The origin of the logical. – What is the origin of logic in man's head? Surely it arose out of the illogical, the realm of which must originally have been immense. But innumerable beings drew inferences in a way different from that in which we do now perished; nonetheless, they might have been closer to the truth! He, for instance, who did not know how to find 'identity' often enough, both with regard to nourishment and to hostile animals – that is, he who subsumed too slowly and was too cautious in subsumption – had a slighter probability of survival than he who in all cases of similarity immediately guessed that they were identical. The predominant disposition, however, to treat the similar as identical – an illogical disposition, for there is nothing identical as such – is what first supplied all the foundations for logic. Similarly, in order for the concept of substance to originate, which is indispensable to logic though nothing real corresponds to it in the strictest sense, it was necessary that for a long time changes in things not be seen, not be perceived; the beings who did not see things exactly had a head start over those who saw everything 'in a flux'. As such, every great degree of caution in inferring, every sceptical disposition, is a great danger to life. No living being would be preserved had not the opposite disposition – to affirm rather than suspend judgement, to err and make things up rather than wait, to agree rather than deny, to pass judgement rather than be just – been bred to become extraordinarily strong. The course of logical thoughts and inferences in our brains today corresponds to a process and battle of drives that taken separately are all very illogical and unjust; we usually experience only the outcome

– is also the highest standard of value for all individuals. With morality the individual is instructed to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function. Since the conditions for preserving one community have been very different from those of another community, there have been very different moralities; and in view of essential changes in herds and communities, states and societies that are yet to come, one can prophesy that there will yet be very divergent moralities. Morality is herd-instinct in the individual.

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Herd pangs of conscience. – During the longest and most remote periods of time there was a kind of pang of conscience completely different from that which exists now. Today one feels responsible only for what one wants and does, and finds one's pride in oneself: all our teachers of justice start from this feeling of self and pleasure in the individual (*des Einzelnen*), as if the spring of justice (*des Rechts*)² had always arisen here. But for the longest period of humanity's existence there was nothing more frightful than feeling alone (*einzel*). To be alone (*allein*), to experience things by oneself (*einzel*), to neither obey nor rule, to represent an individual (*ein Individuum bedeuten*) – that was no pleasure back then, but a punishment; one was sentenced 'to be an individual (*Individuum*)'. Freedom of thought was considered discomfort itself. While we experience law and conformity as compulsion and loss, one formerly experienced egoism as a painful thing, as an actual affliction. To be a self, to estimate oneself according to one's own measure and weight – that was contrary to taste in those days. The inclination to this would have been considered madness, for every misery and every fear were associated with being alone (*Alleinsein*). Back then, 'free will' had bad conscience as its closest neighbour. The more unfreely one acted, the more the herd instinct and not the sense of self spoke through the action, the more moral one considered oneself. In those days, everything that hurt the herd, whether the individual had willed it or not, gave the individual pangs of conscience – and his neighbour as well; indeed, the whole herd! On this point we have relearned most of all.

² The German word 'Recht' is usually ambiguous, meaning both 'right' and 'law'. In this case it seems best to render it as 'justice'.

infer from his words that he places science above art – strange as this may be for such a friend of the arts – in the end it is nothing but politeness when he does not speak of what he, too, places high above all science: ‘revealed truth’ and the ‘eternal salvation of the soul’. Compared to that, what are ornaments, pride, entertainment, and the security of life to him! ‘Science is something second-class; nothing ultimate, unconditional; not an object of passion’ – this judgement was held back in Leo’s soul: the truly Christian judgement about science! In antiquity the dignity and recognition of science were diminished by the fact that even among her most zealous disciples the striving for *virtue* took first place, and that one thought one had given knowledge one’s highest praise when one celebrated it as the best means to virtue. It is something new in history that knowledge wants to be more than a means.

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In the horizon of the infinite. – We have forsaken the land and gone to sea! We have destroyed the bridge behind us – more so, we have demolished the land behind us! Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean; it is true, it does not always roar, and at times it lies there like silk and gold and dreams of goodness. But there will be hours when you realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that has felt free and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Woe, when homesickness for the land overcomes you, as if there had been more *freedom* there – and there is no more ‘land’!

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The madman. – Haven’t you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, ‘I’m looking for God! I’m looking for God!’ Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? – Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. ‘Where is God?’ he cried; ‘I’ll tell you! *We*

have killed him – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit in the morning? Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? – Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed – and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!' Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; they too were silent and looked at him disconcertedly. Finally he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early', he then said; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars – *and yet they have done it themselves!*' It is still recounted how on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there started singing his *requiem aeternam deo*.¹⁰ Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but, 'What then are these churches now if not the tombs and sepulchres of God?'

¹⁰ 'Grant God eternal rest.' A transformation of that part of the service for the dead which reads 'Requiem aeternam dona eis [scilicet, mortuis], Domine' ('Lord, grant them [the dead] eternal rest')

Mystical explanations – Mystical explanations are considered deep; the truth is, they are not even shallow.

Aftereffects of the oldest religiosity. – Every thoughtless person believes that the will alone is effective; that willing is something simple, absolutely given, underivable, and intelligible in itself. When he does something, e.g. strikes something, he is convinced that it is *he* who is striking, and that he did the striking because he *wanted* to strike. He does not even notice a problem here; the feeling of *will* suffices for him to assume cause and effect, but also to believe that he *understands* their relation. He knows nothing of the mechanism of what happened and the hundredfold delicate work that has to be done to bring about the strike, or of the incapacity of the will as such to do even the slightest part of this work. The will is to him a force that works by magic: the belief in the will as the cause of effects is the belief in forces that work by magic. Now, originally man believed, wherever he saw something happen, that a will had to be the cause and that beings with a personal will had to be operating in the background – the concept of mechanics was quite foreign to him. But since man believed for immense periods of time only in persons (and not in substances, forces, things, etc.), the faith in cause and effect has become for him the fundamental faith that he uses everywhere something happens – still today instinctively and as an atavism of the oldest origin. The propositions, ‘no effect without a cause’, ‘every effect again a cause’, appear as generalizations of much narrower propositions: ‘no effecting without willing’; ‘it is possible to have an effect only on willing beings’; ‘no suffering of an effect is ever pure and without consequences, but all suffering is an agitation of the will’ (towards action, defence, revenge, retribution) – but in the prehistory of humanity the former and latter propositions were identical: the former were not generalizations of the latter, but the latter were elucidations of the former.¹¹ With his assumption that only that which wills exists, Schopenhauer enthroned a primordial mythology; he

¹¹ See Schopenhauer, ‘Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde’ (1813).

seems never to have attempted an analysis of the will because like everyone else he *believed* in the simplicity and immediacy of all willing – whereas willing is actually such a well-practised mechanism that it almost escapes the observing eye. Against him I offer these propositions: first, in order for willing to come about, a representation of pleasure or displeasure is needed. Secondly, that a violent stimulus is experienced as pleasure or pain is a matter of the *interpreting* intellect, which, to be sure, generally works without our being conscious of it (*uns unbewußt*); and one and the same stimulus *can* be interpreted as pleasure or pain. Thirdly, only in intellectual beings do pleasure, pain, and will exist; the vast majority of organisms has nothing like it.

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The value of prayer. – Prayer has been invented for people who never really have thoughts of their own and who know no elevation of the soul or do not notice it if it occurs: what are such people to do in sacred places or in all important situations in life that demand calm and a kind of dignity? In order that they at least do not *disturb*, the wisdom of all founders of religions, small as well as great, has prescribed to them the formulas of prayer as a long mechanical work of the lips, combined with exertion of the memory and a same fixed posture of hands and feet and eyes! So they may, like the Tibetans, go ahead regurgitating their ‘om mane padme hum’¹² countless times or, as in Benares, count the name of the god off their fingers, Ram-Ram-Ram¹³ (and so on, with or without charm), or honour Vishnu with his thousand names,¹⁴ or Allah with his ninety-nine; or they may use prayer-mills and rosaries – the main point is that this work keeps them still for a time and makes them a tolerable sight: their type of prayer has been invented for the benefit of the pious who know thoughts and elevations of their own. And even they have their tired hours, when a string of venerable words and sounds and a mechanical piety do them good. But supposing these rare human beings – in every religion the religious person is an exception – can figure out what to do; those who are poor in spirit cannot figure out

¹² This is a formula which adepts repeat in certain forms of Buddhist meditation as a help to attaining spiritual enlightenment. The literal meaning seems to be something like: ‘You [Buddha] the centre of the lotus-flower’.

¹³ The god of a monotheistic Hindu cult centred in Benares

¹⁴ One of the major gods of the Hindu pantheon

For the new year. – I'm still alive; I still think: I must still be alive because I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum.*¹ Today everyone allows himself to express his dearest wish and thoughts: so I, too, want to say what I wish from myself today and what thought first crossed my heart – what thought shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life! I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati:*² let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!

Personal providence. – There is a certain high point in life; once we have reached it we are, for all our freedom, once more in the greatest danger of spiritual unfreedom; and no matter how much we have confronted the beautiful chaos of existence and denied it all providential reason and goodness, we still have to pass our hardest test. For it is only now that the thought of a personal providence confronts us with the most penetrating force and the best advocate, appearance, speaks for it – now that we so palpably see how everything that befalls us continually *turns out for the best*. Every day and every hour life seems to want nothing else than to prove this proposition again and again; be it what it may – bad or good weather, the loss of a friend, a sickness, slander, the absence of a letter, the spraining of an ankle, a glance into a shop, a counter-argument, the opening of a book, a dream, fraud – it shows itself immediately or very soon to be something that 'was not allowed to be lacking' – it is full of deep meaning and use precisely *for us!* Is there any more dangerous seduction than to renounce one's faith in the gods of Epicurus,³ those carefree and unknown ones, and to believe instead in

¹ 'I am, therefore I think: I think, therefore I am.' In the second of his *Meditations*, Descartes argued that as long as he thought he could be sure he existed.

² 'love of (one's) fate'

³ Epicurus thought common views about the gods were completely erroneous; they in fact lived a

some petty deity who is full of worries and personally knows every little hair on our heads and finds nothing nauseating in the most miserable small service? Well – I mean in spite of it all! – we should leave the gods alone as well as the genies at our service and be content with the assumption that our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events has now reached its apex. Nor should we think too highly of this dexterity of our wisdom when at times the wonderful harmony created by the playing of our instrument surprises us all too much – a harmony that sounds too good for us to dare to give credit to ourselves. Indeed, now and then someone plays *with* us – good old chance; occasionally chance guides our hand, and the wisest providence could not invent music more beautiful than what our foolish hand then produces.

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The thought of death. – It gives me a melancholy happiness to live in the midst of this jumble of lanes, needs, and voices: how much enjoyment, impatience, desire; how much thirsty life and drunkenness of life comes to light every moment of the day! And yet things will soon be so silent for all these noisy, living, life-thirsty ones! How even now everyone's shadow stands behind him, as his dark fellow traveller! It's always like the last moment before the departure of an emigrant ship: people have more to say to each other than ever; the hour is late; the ocean and its desolate silence await impatiently behind all the noise – so covetous, so certain of its prey. And everyone, everyone takes the past to be little or nothing while the near future is everything; hence this haste, this clamour, this shouting and out-hustling one another. Everyone wants to be the first in this future – and yet death and deathly silence are the only things certain and common to all in this future! How strange that this sole certainty and commonality barely makes an impression on people and that they are *farthest* removed from feeling like a brotherhood of death! It makes me happy to see that people do not at all want to think the thought of death! I would very much like to do something that would make the thought of life even a hundred times more *worth being thought* to them.

perfectly happy and contented life, and this meant that they had no interest in or involvement with the human world at all.

Star friendship. – We were friends and have become estranged. But that was right, and we do not want to hide and obscure it from ourselves as if we had to be ashamed of it. We are two ships, each of which has its own goal and course; we may cross and have a feast together, as we did – and then the good ships lay so quietly in one harbour and in one sun that it may have seemed as if they had already completed their course and had the same goal. But then the almighty force of our projects drove us apart once again, into different seas and sunny zones, and maybe we will never meet again – or maybe we will, but will not recognize each other: the different seas and suns have changed us! That we had to become estranged is the law *above* us; through it we should come to have more respect for each other – and the thought of our former friendship should become more sacred! There is probably a tremendous invisible curve and stellar orbit in which our different ways and goals may be *included* as small stretches – let us rise to this thought! But our life is too short and our vision too meagre for us to be more than friends in the sense of that sublime possibility. – Let us then *believe* in our star friendship even if we must be earth enemies.

Architecture for those who wish to pursue knowledge. – One day, and probably soon, we will need some recognition of what is missing primarily in our big cities: quiet and wide, expansive places for reflection – places with long, high-ceilinged arcades for bad or all-too-sunny weather, where no shouts or noise from carriages can penetrate and where refined manners would prohibit even priests from praying aloud: a whole complex of buildings and sites that would give expression to the sublimity of contemplation and of stepping aside. The time is past when the Church had a monopoly on contemplation, when the *vita contemplativa*⁴ always had to be first and foremost a *vita religiosa*:⁵ and everything built by the Church gives expression to that idea. I do not see how we could make do with those buildings, even if they were stripped of their churchly purposes; as houses of God and spaces for ostentatiously

⁴ 'contemplative life'

⁵ 'religious life'

displaying our intercourse with the World-Beyond, these buildings speak much that is too emotional and too partisan for us godless ones to be able to think *our thoughts* here. We want to have *us* translated into stone and plants; we want to take walks *in us* when we stroll through these hallways and gardens.

281

Knowing how to end. – Masters of the first rank are recognized by the fact that in matters great and small they know how to find an end perfectly, be it the end of a melody or a thought; of a tragedy's fifth act or an act of state. The best of the second rank always get restless toward the end, and do not fall into the sea with such proud and calm balance as do, for example, the mountains at Portofino – where the bay of Genoa finishes its melody.

282

Gait. – There are certain tricks of the spirit by which even great minds betray that they come from the mob or half-mob; the gait and stride of their thoughts especially plays the traitor: they cannot *walk*. Thus Napoleon too, was unable, to his great vexation, to walk in a princely and 'legitimate' fashion on occasions that really demanded it, such as great coronation processions; even there, he was always just the leader of a column – proud and hasty at the same time, and very conscious of it. It is laughable to behold those authors who make the ruffled robes of long sentences rustle about themselves: they are trying to hide their *feet*.

283

Preparatory human beings. – I welcome all the signs of a more virile, warlike age approaching that will above all restore honour to bravery! For it shall pave the way for a still higher age and gather the strength that the latter will need one day – the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and *wage wars* for the sake of thoughts and their consequences. To this end we now need many preparatory brave human beings who surely cannot spring from nothingness any more than from the sand and slime of present-day civilization and urbaniza-

tion: human beings who know how to be silent, lonely, determined, and satisfied and steadfast in invisible activities; human beings profoundly predisposed to look, in all things, for what must be *overcome*; human beings whose cheerfulness, patience, modesty, and contempt for great vanities is just as distinctive as their magnanimity in victory and patience with the small vanities of the defeated; human beings with a sharp and free judgement concerning all victors and the share of chance in every victory and glory; human beings with their own festivals, their own working days, their own periods of mourning, accustomed to command with assurance and equally prepared, when called for, to obey – in each case, equally proud, equally serving their own cause; more endangered, more fruitful, happier human beings! For – believe me – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge! Soon the time will be past in which you had to be content living hidden in forests like shy deer! Finally the search for knowledge will reach for its due; it will want to rule and possess, and you with it!

284

Faith in oneself. – Few people have faith in themselves – and of these few, some possess it as a useful blindness or partial eclipse of the mind (what would they behold if they could see the bottom of themselves!), while the rest have to acquire it. Everything good, fine, or great they do is first of all an argument against the sceptic inside them. They have to convince or persuade *him*, and that almost requires genius. These are the great self-dissatisfied people.

285

*Excelsior.*⁶ – ‘You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust; you refuse to let yourself stop to unharness your thoughts before any ultimate wisdom, goodness, or power; you have no perpetual guard and friend for your seven solitudes; you live without

⁶ ‘higher’

ether, like it – not away from the sun but *towards the sun!* That, however, we cannot do. So let us do all we can do: bring light to the earth; be ‘the light of the earth’! And for that, we have our wings and our speed and our severity; for that, we are masculine and even terrifying, like fire. May those be terrified of us who do not know how to gain warmth and light from us!

294

Against the slanderers of nature. – I find those people unpleasant in whom every natural inclination immediately becomes a sickness, something disfiguring or even contemptible – *they* have seduced us into the belief that man’s natural inclinations are evil; *they* are the cause of our great injustice towards our nature, towards *all* nature! There are enough people who could well entrust themselves to their inclinations with grace and without care, but who do not for fear of the imagined ‘evil essence’ of nature! *That* is why there is so little nobility among human beings; its distinguishing feature has always been to have no fear of oneself, to expect nothing contemptible from oneself, to fly without misgivings wherever we’re inclined – we free-born birds! And wherever we arrive, there will always be freedom and sunlight around us.

295

Brief habits. – I love brief habits and consider them invaluable means for getting to know *many* things and states down to the bottom of their sweetnesses and bitternesses; my nature is designed *entirely* for brief habits, even in the needs of its physical health and generally *as far as* I can see at all, from the lowest to the highest. I always believe *this* will give me lasting satisfaction – even brief habits have this faith of passion, this faith in eternity – and that I am to be envied for having found and recognized it, and now it nourishes me at noon and in the evening and spreads a deep contentment around itself and into me, so that I desire nothing else, without having to compare, despise, or hate. And one day its time is up; the good thing parts from me, not as something that now disgusts me but peacefully and sated with me, as I with it, and as if we ought to be grateful to each other and so shake hands to say farewell. And already the new waits at the door along with my faith – the

happiness which, like the evening sun, feels richest when even the poorest fisherman is rowing with a golden oar! This divine feeling would then be called – humanity!

338

The will to suffer and those who feel compassion. – Is it good for you yourselves to be above all else compassionate persons? And is it good for those who suffer if you are compassionate? But let us leave the first question unanswered for a moment. What we most deeply and most personally suffer from is incomprehensible and inaccessible to nearly everyone else; here we are hidden from our nearest, even if we eat from the same pot. But whenever we are *noticed* to be suffering, our suffering is superficially construed; it is the essence of the feeling of compassion that it *strips* the suffering of what is truly personal: our ‘benefactors’ diminish our worth and our will more than our enemies do. In most cases of beneficence toward those in distress there is something offensive in the intellectual frivolity with which the one who feels compassion plays the role of fate: he knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and interconnection that spells misfortune for *me* or for *you*! The entire economy of my soul and the balance effected by ‘misfortune’, the breaking open of new springs and needs, the healing of old wounds, the shedding of entire periods of the past – all such things that can be involved in misfortune do not concern the dear compassionate one: they want to *help* and have no thought that there is a personal necessity of misfortune; that terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as necessary for me and you as their opposites; indeed, to express myself mystically, that the path to one’s own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one’s own hell. No, they know nothing of that: the ‘religion of compassion’ (or ‘the heart’) commands them to help, and they believe they have helped best when they have helped most quickly! Should you adherents to this religion really have the same attitude towards yourselves that you have towards your fellow men; should you refuse to let your suffering lie on you even for an hour and instead constantly prevent all possible misfortune ahead of time; should you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, deserving of annihilation, as a defect of existence, then you have besides your religion of pity also another religion in your

hearts; and the latter is perhaps the mother of the former – *the religion of snug cosiness*. Oh, how little do you know of the *happiness* of man, you comfortable and good-natured ones! For happiness and misfortune (*Glück und Unglück*) are two siblings and twins who either grow up together or – as with you – *remain small* together! But now back to the first question. How is it possible to keep to *one's own* path! Some clamour is constantly calling us aside; rarely does our eye see something there that does not make it necessary to drop our own occupation instantly and spring to assistance. I know, there are a hundred decent and praiseworthy ways of losing myself *from my path*, and, verily, highly 'moral' ways! Yes, the moral teacher of compassion even goes so far as to hold that precisely this and only this is moral – to lose *one's own* way like this in order to help a neighbour. I, too, know with certainty that I need only to expose myself to the sight of real distress and I, too, *am* lost! If a suffering friend said to me, 'Look, I am about to die; please promise to die with me', I would promise it; likewise, the sight of a small mountain tribe fighting for its freedom would make me offer my hand and my life – for once to choose bad examples, for good reasons. Yes, there is a secret seduction even in all these things which arouse compassion and cry out for help, for our own way is so hard and demanding and so far from love and gratitude of others that we are by no means reluctant to escape from it, from it and our ownmost conscience – and take refuge in the conscience of the others and in the lovely temple of the 'religion of compassion'. As soon as any war breaks out, precisely the noblest men in the population immediately begin to experience a delight which is, to be sure, kept secret: they throw themselves rapturously into the new danger of *death* because it seems to offer them that long-desired permission – the permission *to deviate from their goal*; war offers them a detour to suicide, but a detour with a good conscience. And, although I will keep quiet here about some things, I do not wish to keep quiet about my morality, which tells me: Live in seclusion so that you *are able* to live for yourself! Live *in ignorance* of what seems most important to your age! Lay at least the skin of three hundred years between you and today! And let the clamour of today, the noise of war and revolutions, be but a murmur to you. You will also want to help – but only those whose distress you properly *understand* because they share with you one suffering and one hope – your *friends* – and only in the way you help

yourself: I want to make them braver, more persevering, simpler, more full of gaiety. I want to teach them what is today understood by so few, least of all by these preachers of compassion (*Mitleiden*): to share not pain, but joy (*Mitfreude*)!

339

Vita femina.²⁸ – Not even all knowledge and all good will suffice for seeing the ultimate beauties of a work; it requires the rarest of lucky accidents for the clouds that veil the peaks to lift for us momentarily and for the sun to shine on them. Not only must we stand in just the right spot to see this, but our own soul, too, must itself have pulled the veil from its heights and must have been in need of some external expression and parable, as if it needed a hold in order to retain control of itself. But so rarely does all of this coincide that I am inclined to believe that the highest peaks of everything good, be it work, deed, humanity, or nature, have so far remained hidden and covered from the majority and even from the best. But what does unveil itself for us *unveils itself for us only once!* The Greeks, to be sure, prayed: ‘Everything beautiful twice and thrice!’²⁹ Indeed, they had good reason to summon the gods, for ungodly reality gives us the beautiful either never or only once! I mean to say that the world is brimming with beautiful things but nevertheless poor, very poor in beautiful moments and in the unveilings of those things. But perhaps that is the strongest magic of life: it is covered by a veil of beautiful possibilities, woven with threads of gold – promising, resisting, bashful, mocking, compassionate, and seductive. Yes, life is a woman!

340

The dying Socrates.³⁰ – I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in everything he did, said – and did not say. This mocking, love-sick monster and pied piper of Athens, who made the most audacious youths of Athens tremble and sob, was not only the wisest chatterer of all time; he was equally great in silence. I wish he had remained silent also in

²⁸ ‘Life – a woman’

²⁹ Plato, *Gorgias* 498e and *Philebus* 59e–60a

³⁰ See also above, § 36, p. 54.

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the last moments of his life – perhaps he would then belong to a still higher order of minds. Whether it was death or the poison or piety or malice – something loosened his tongue and he said: ‘O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster.’ This ridiculous and terrible ‘last word’ means for those who have ears: ‘O Crito, *life is a disease*.’³¹ Is it possible that a man like him, who had lived cheerfully and like a soldier in plain view of everyone, was a pessimist? He had merely kept a cheerful demeanour while all his life hiding his ultimate judgement, his inmost feeling! Socrates, Socrates *suffered from life*! And then he still avenged himself – with this veiled, gruesome, pious, and blasphemous saying. Did a Socrates really need *revenge*? Was there one ounce too little magnanimity in his overabundant virtue? – O friends! We must overcome even the Greeks!

341

The heaviest weight. – What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have

³¹ See Plato, *Phaedo* 116–18, esp. 118a.5–8. Asclepius was the god of healing and a rooster would have been a usual thank-offering to him from someone whom he had cured of an illness. Nietzsche’s interpretation of what Socrates said was not standard in the ancient world, and became common only in the Renaissance. It is rejected by some modern scholars.

to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

342

*Incipit tragoedia.*³² – When Zarathustra³³ was thirty years old, he left his homeland and Lake Urmi and went into the mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and solitude, and did not tire of that for ten years. But at last his heart changed – and one morning he arose with rosy dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus: ‘You great heavenly body! What would your happiness be if you did not have those for whom you shine! For ten years you have climbed up to my cave; without me, my eagle, and my snake, you would have become tired of your light and of this road; but we awaited you every morning, relieved you of your overabundance, and blessed you for it. Behold, I am sick of my wisdom, like a bee that has collected too much honey; I need outstretched hands; I would like to give away and distribute until the wise among humans once again enjoy their folly and the poor once again their riches. For that I must step into the depths, as you do in the evening when you go behind the sea and bring light even to the underworld, you over-rich heavenly body! Like you I must *go under*, as it is called by the human beings to whom I want to descend. So bless me then, you calm eye that can look without envy upon all-too-great happiness! Bless the cup that wants to overflow in order that the water may flow golden from it and everywhere carry the reflection of your bliss! Behold, this cup wants to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become human again.’ Thus began Zarathustra’s going under.

³² ‘The tragedy begins’. At this point, on completing Book IV, Nietzsche went on to write *Also Sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)*, the most prophetic in style among his philosophical works, in 1883–5. He added Book V to *The Gay Science* in 1887.

³³ Nietzsche takes the name from that of the Persian religious thinker of the seventh/sixth century BC who propagated a strongly dualistic doctrine, sharply distinguishing between good and evil.

In what way we, too, are still pious. – In science, convictions have no right to citizenship, as one says with good reason: only when they decide to step down to the modesty of a hypothesis, a tentative experimental standpoint, a regulative fiction,¹ may they be granted admission and even a certain value in the realm of knowledge – though always with the restriction that they remain under police supervision, under the police of mistrust. But doesn't this mean, on closer consideration, that a conviction is granted admission to science only when it *ceases* to be a conviction? Wouldn't the cultivation of the scientific spirit begin when one permitted oneself no more convictions? That is probably the case; only we need still ask: *in order that this cultivation begin*, must there not be some prior conviction – and indeed one so authoritative and unconditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself? We see that science, too, rests on a faith; there is simply no 'presuppositionless' science. The question whether *truth* is necessary must get an answer in advance, the answer 'yes', and moreover this answer must be so firm that it takes the form of the statement, the belief, the conviction: '*Nothing is more necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value.*' This unconditional will to truth – what is it? Is it the will not to let oneself be deceived? Is it the will *not to deceive*? For the will to truth could be interpreted in this second way, too – if 'I do not want to deceive *myself*' is included as a special case under the generalization 'I do not want to deceive.' But why not deceive? But why not allow oneself to be deceived? Note that the reasons for the former lie in a completely different area from those for the latter: one does not want to let oneself be deceived because one assumes it is harmful, dangerous, disastrous to be deceived; in this sense science would be a long-range prudence, caution, utility, and to this one could justifiably object: How so? Is it really less harmful, dangerous, disastrous not to want to let oneself be deceived? What do you know in advance about the character of existence to be able to decide whether the greater advantage is on the side of the unconditionally distrustful or of the unconditionally trusting? But should both be necessary – a lot of trust *as well as* a lot of mistrust – then where might science get the

¹ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B 670, 799.

unconditional belief or conviction on which it rests, that truth is more important than anything else, than every other conviction? Precisely this conviction could never have originated if truth *and* untruth had constantly made it clear they they were both useful, as they are. So, the faith in science, which after all undeniably exists, cannot owe its origin to such a calculus of utility; rather it must have originated *in spite of* the fact that the disutility and dangerousness of 'the will to truth' or 'truth at any price' is proved to it constantly. 'At any price': we understand this well enough once we have offered and slaughtered one faith after another on this altar! Consequently, 'will to truth' does *not* mean 'I do not want to let myself be deceived' but – there is no alternative – 'I will not deceive, not even myself'; *and with that we stand on moral ground*. For you have only to ask yourself carefully, 'Why do you not want to deceive?' especially if it should seem – and it does seem! – as if life aimed at semblance, i.e. error, deception, simulation, blinding, self-blinding, and when life on the largest scale has actually always shown itself to be on the side of the most unscrupulous *polytropoi*.² Charitably interpreted, such a resolve might perhaps be a quixotism, a slight, enthusiastic folly; but it could also be something worse, namely a principle that is hostile to life and destructive. 'Will to truth' – that could be a hidden will to death. Thus the question 'Why science?' leads back to the moral problem: *Why morality at all*, if life, nature, and history are 'immoral'? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense which faith in science presupposes *thereby affirm another world* than that of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this 'other world', must they not by the same token deny its counterpart, this world, *our world*? . . . But you will have gathered what I am getting at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we knowers of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take *our* fire, too, from the flame lit by the thousand-year old faith, the Christian faith which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth; that truth is divine . . . But what if this were to become more and more difficult to believe, if nothing more were to turn out to be divine except error, blindness, the lie – if God himself were to turn out to be our longest lie?

² 'sly, knowing all the tricks, devious'. Nietzsche uses the plural of this word which in the singular is used in the *Odyssey* (e.g. Book 1, line 1) to describe Odysseus.