

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

Sickness and Saviours

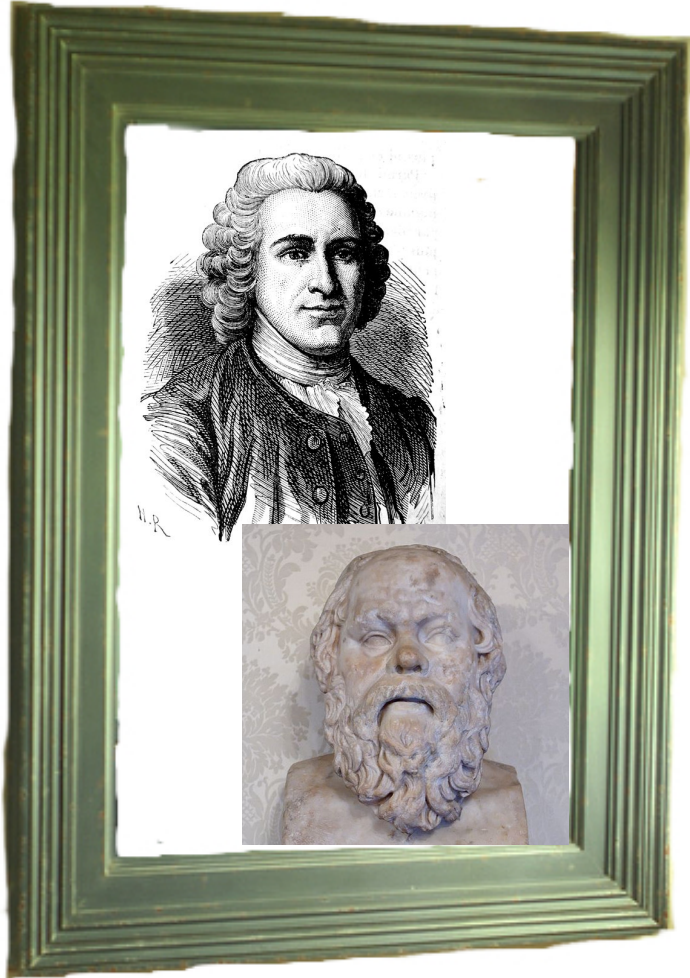
Christina Hendricks
Arts One, January 2015

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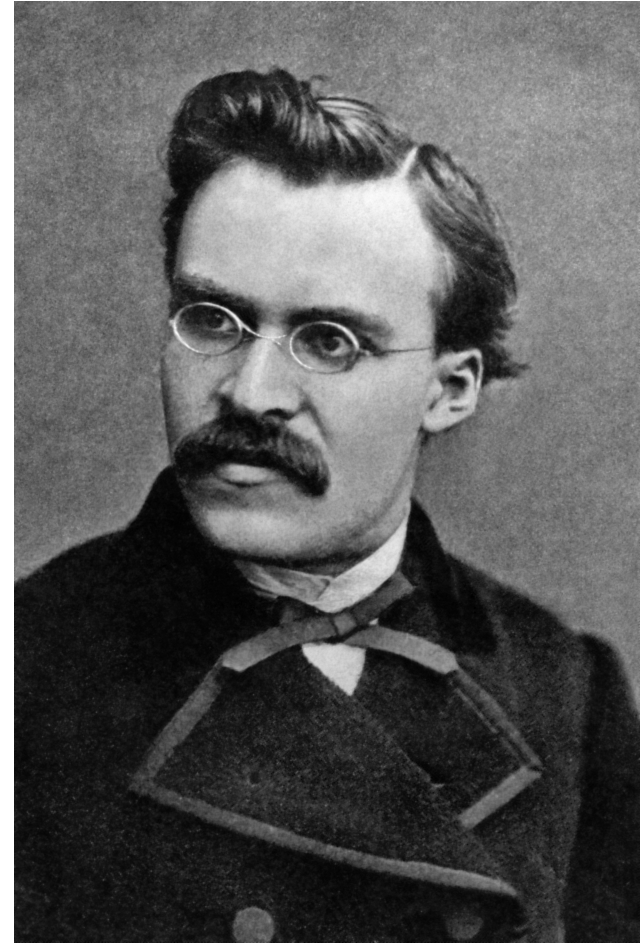


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Nietzsche's mirror



Plain mirror, by Chalon
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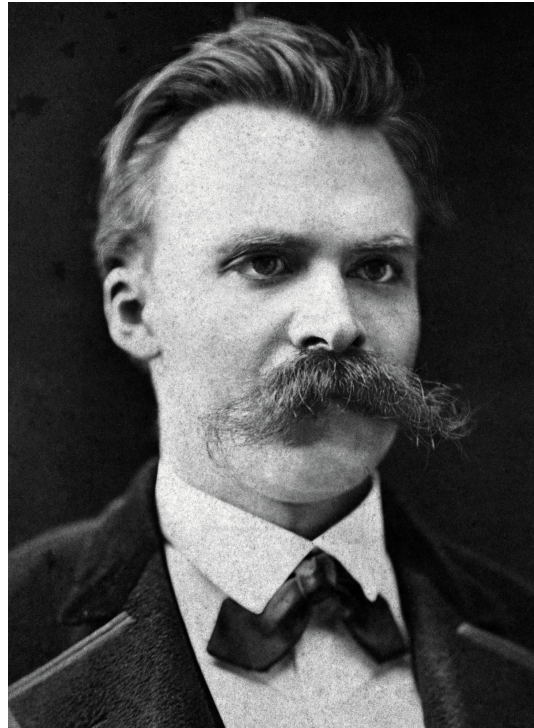


c. 1869

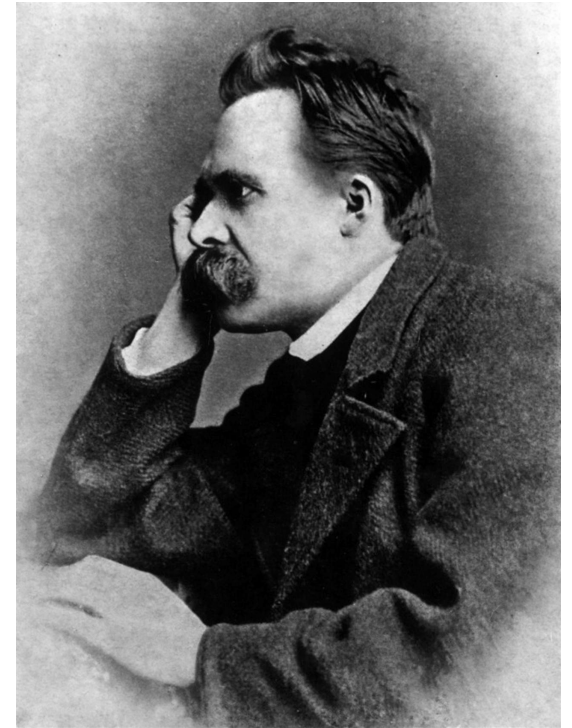
Nietzsche, 1844-1900



c. 1864



c. 1875



c. 1882

Nietzsche does not rhyme with Nazi

“One of the greatest stupidities you have committed—for yourself and for me! Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to *my* whole way of life which fills me ever again with ire or melancholy. ... It is a matter of honor to me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal regarding anti-Semitism, namely *opposed*, as I am in my writings.”

-- 1887 Letter to N's sister, after she marries an anti-Semite and tries to set up an Aryan colony in Paraguay

Does Nietzsche rhyme with misogyny?

- “Women are taken to be deep—why? Because with them, one never gets to the bottom of things. Women aren’t even shallow.” (Epigrams & Arrows 27, p. 9)
- “If a woman has masculine virtues, it’s enough to make you run away from her; and if she has no masculine virtues, away she runs herself” (Epigrams and Arrows 18, p. 9)

Does Nietzsche rhyme with misogyny?

But...

- “Man created woman—but out of what? Out of a rib of his God—of his ‘ideal’ ...” (Epigrams & Arrows 13, p. 6)
- "It is men ... who corrupt women; and everything that women lack should be atoned for and improved in men for man creates for himself the ideal of woman, and woman moulds herself according to this ideal." (*The Gay Science*, Sect. 68)

Nietzsche's style

What strikes you about his style?



Epigrams

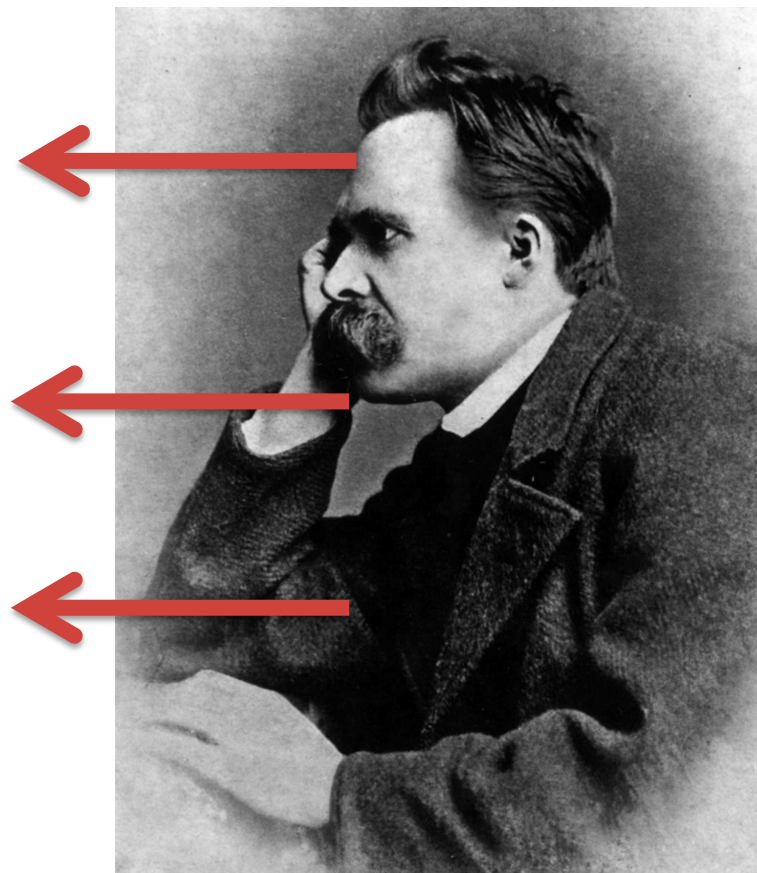
- "Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog Which I Gave to His Royal Highness" – Alexander Pope, 1738
 "I am his Highness' dog at Kew;
 Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?"
- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."
- Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young": "The well-bred contradict other people. The wise contradict themselves."

Epigrams

- “Help yourself: then everyone will help you. Principle of neighborly love.” (Epigrams and Arrows 9, p. 6)
- “Posthumous human beings—like me, for example—are understood worse than timely ones, but they are *listened to* better. More accurately: we are never understood—and *that’s* the source of our authority ...” (E&A 15, p. 17)

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N's text as therapeutic?

- Some ancient Greek and Roman philosophy as a way of life, as therapeutic (e.g., Epicureanism, Stoicism)
 - used short sayings to help remember precepts & put them into practice
- For Nietzsche (*Genealogy of Morality*, 1887): how we have used pain to create memory:
 - “One burns something in so that it remains in one’s memory: only what does not cease *to give pain* remains in one’s memory” (Treatise II, sect. 3)

Arthur C. Danto and Bernd Magnus articles in: Solomon, Robert C. and Kathleen Higgins, eds. *Reading Nietzsche*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

N's text as therapeutic?

- **Foreword (3)**

- “even wounds can have the power to heal”
- “With a wound, spirits soar and virtue thrives”
- “This book ... is a recovery ...”

- **The value of pain for growth and creation**

- “all becoming and growth, everything that vouches for the future *requires* pain ... For there to be the eternal joy of creation, for the will to life to affirm itself eternally, there *must* also eternally be the ‘torment of the childbearer’ ...” (What I Owe to the Ancients, Sect. 4, p. 90)

Aphorisms and the Reader

Intro to our text, xiv-xix

- Depend on the response of the reader: if they seem nonsensical, or false, or obvious, we will ignore them
- Fragmentary, leave much to be interpreted by the reader
- We can thereby critically reflect on ourselves (Which do we pay attention to & why? What meaning do we give to aphorisms?)

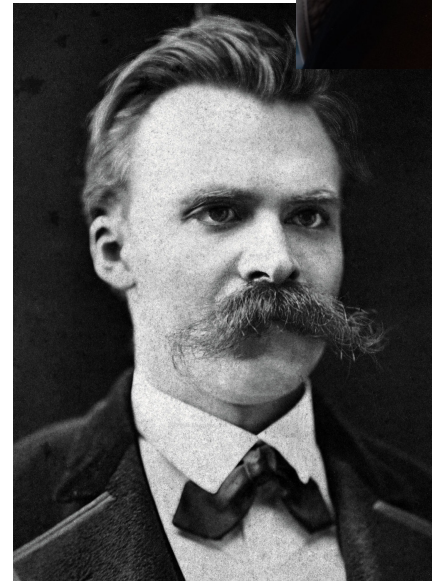
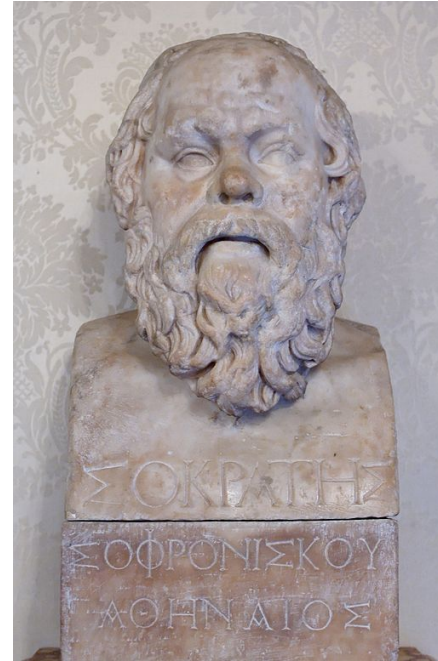
Morality as Anti-Nature

Anti-Natural Morality

- “turns ... *against* the instincts of life” (Morality as Anti-Nature, sect. 4, p. 27)
- How does morality or religion attempt to eradicate some of our instincts, our passions?
 - the Church attempts to eradicate “**sensuality, pride, the ambition to rule, covetousness, vengefulness**” (Morality, sect. 1, p. 25)
 - “altruistic” morality: a morality in which **selfishness** is denigrated, even “*wastes away*” (Raids, sect. 35, p. 70)

The Will to Power

- E.g., *Twilight* pp. 74, 88
- *Genealogy of Morality* Treatise II:
 - “life operates *essentially*—that is, in its basic functions—through **injury, assault, exploitation, destruction** and simply cannot be thought of at all without this character”
 - In life there is an “essential pre-eminence of the spontaneous, attacking, infringing, **reinterpreting, reordering, and formative** forces”



[Le Bateau Viking d'Oseberg](#), by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra,
Flickr, [CC-BY](#)

The value of enemies

- in politics: “Almost every part grasps that its own interest, its own self-preservation, depends on the opposing party’s not losing its strength” (Morality, sect. 3, p. 26)
- inner enemies: “One is *fruitful* only at the price of being rich in oppositions; one remains *young* only under the condition that the soul not slacken, not yearn for peace One has relinquished *great* life when one relinquishes war ...” (Morality, Sect. 3, p. 27)

Eliminate the will to power?

If we try to eliminate our instincts for power, for victory, for superiority...

- They'll come out in other ways
- Including against ourselves—believing our instincts are “evil”, feeling self-hatred
 - We try to “tame” ourselves and end up sick (Those Who Improve Humanity, Sect. 2, pp. 38-39)
 - E.g., the criminal (Raids, Sect. 45, p. 80)

Another way we denigrate life

True vs. apparent worlds

Aiming for some “other,” “true” world as opposed to the “apparent” one we are in (Reason in Philosophy)

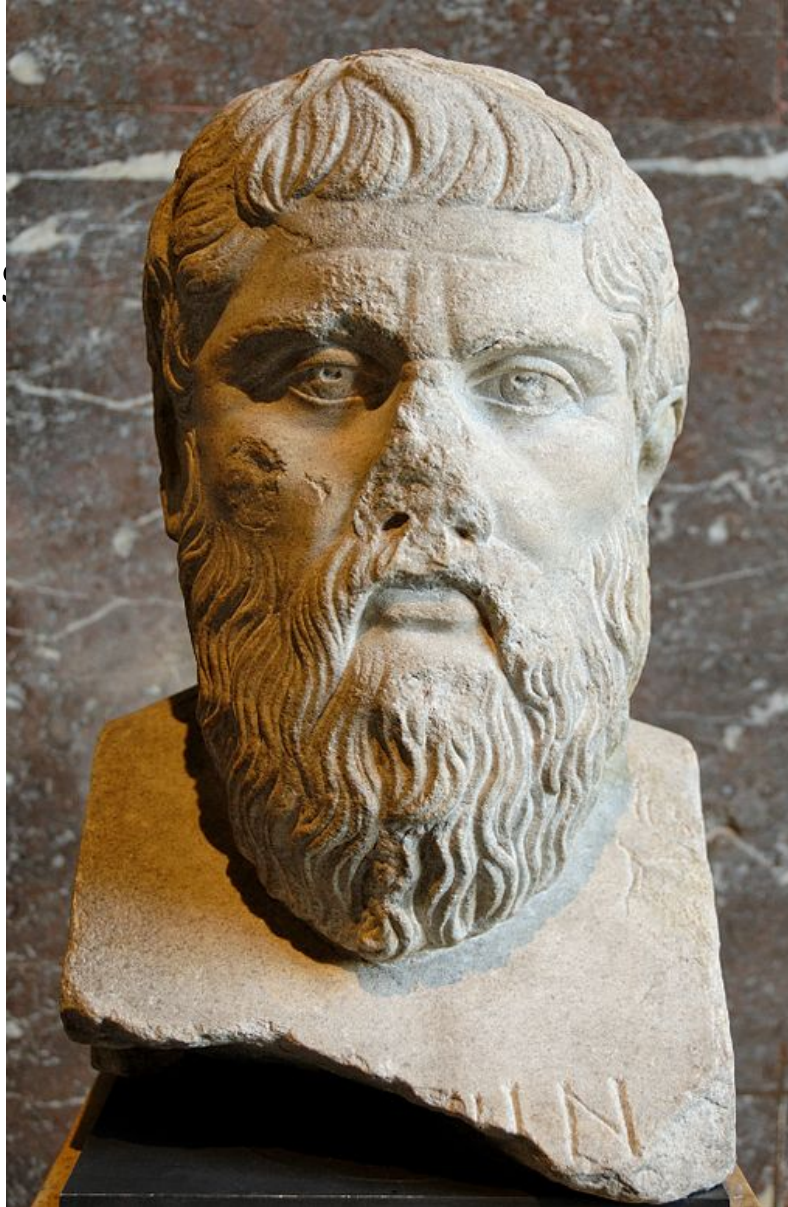
- “It makes no sense whatsoever to tell fictional stories about ‘another’ world than this one, as long as the instinct to slander, trivialize, and look down upon life is not powerful within us: in that case, we *revenge* ourselves on life with the phantasmagoria of ‘another,’ ‘better’ life” (Reason, Sect. 6, p. 21)

“True”

worlds

Who suggests

and how?



Nietzsche and Plato

- For philosophers, “death, change, and age, like reproduction and growth, are objections —refutations, even. Whatever is does not *become*; whatever becomes *is not ...*” (Reason, Sect. 1, p. 18)
- philosophers “mummify” things, “They kill and stuff whatever they worship”; “nothing real escaped their hands alive” (Ibid.)

Nietzsche and Plato

- We shouldn't believe our senses, they "deceive us about the *true* world" (Reason, Sect. 1, p. 18).
- "And above all, away with the *body*, this pathetic *idée fixe* [obsession] of the senses, afflicted with every logical error there is, refuted, even impossible ..." (Ibid.)

Plato, *Phaedo*

- “the philosopher more than other men frees the soul from association with the body as much as possible” (65a)
- “the soul reasons best when none of [the] senses troubles it ... taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality” (65c)
- “if we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe things in themselves with the soul by itself. It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely, wisdom, as our argument shows, not while we live ...” (66e)

Animosity towards life!

Nietzsche and Plato

- “Insofar as the senses display becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie” (Reason, sect. 2, p. 19)
- the lie, the illusion, is not change, becoming, but “unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, thinghood, being ...” (Reason, Sect. 5, p. 20)
- “the ‘true world’ has been construed by contradicting the actual world: this ‘true world’ is in fact an apparent world ...” (Reason, Sect 6, p. 21)

Nietzsche and Plato

“We have done away with the true world: what world is left over? The apparent one, maybe? ... But no! *Along with the true world, we have done away with the apparent!*” (How the “True World” Finally Became a Fiction, p. 24)

- What does this mean?

Nietzsche's perspectivism

“Let us guard ourselves better from now on ... against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge’ ...: here it is always demanded that we think an eye that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something are to be shut off” (*Genealogy of Morality* Treatise III, Sect. 12)

Nietzsche's perspectivism

“There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival ‘knowing’; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear ..., that much more complete will our ‘concept’ of this matter, our ‘objectivity’ be.” (*Genealogy of Morality* Treatise III, Sect. 12)

**Why do we use life to condemn
life?**

Weakness, *décadence*

- “... castration, eradication, is instinctively chosen in the struggle against a desire by those who are **too weak-willed, too degenerate** to moderate their own desire ...” (Morality, sect. 2, p. 26)
- altruism: “To choose instinctively what is harmful to *oneself*, to be *enticed* by ‘disinterested’ motives, is virtually the formula for ***décadence*** [degeneration, decay, decline]” (Raids, sect. 35, p. 70)
 - this is a sign of **physiological decline**: “‘I don’t know how to *find* my own advantage anymore’” (ibid)

Weakness, *décadence*

Have we “improved” morally?

- We have just changed our morals b/c we’ve become too weak for other ones
- Our increase in “considerateness, in helpfulness, in mutual trust” is just due to “a weaker, more tender, more easily wounded constitution, which necessarily gives rise to a *considerate* morality” (Raids, Sect. 37, p. 72)
- “Our virtues are conditioned, are *demandé* by our weakness ...” (Raids, Sect. 37, p. 73)

Thrasymachus?

The Problem of Socrates

What is this “problem”?

- Socrates as also hostile to life, as thinking that life was worthless—is it that *he* is a problem?
- A different problem: why did he get himself listened to?
 - Why did the Greeks end up going along with the hyper-focus on reason that he (and Plato) represent?

Socrates as doctor

Socrates provided a treatment for controlling the instincts, for a people who were not able to do so in any other way

- “Everywhere, the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere, people were five steps away from excess ‘The drives want to play the tyrant; we have to invent a stronger *counter-tyrant*’ ... (Problem, Sect. 9, p. 15)

Socrates as poisoner

But this treatment makes people sicker:

“The most glaring daylight, rationality at all costs, a life clear, cold, careful, aware, without instinct, in resistance to the instincts, was itself just a sickness, another sickness ...” (Problem, Sect. 11, p. 17)

Reason ≠ virtue ≠ happiness

Socrates as saviour nevertheless

Genealogy of Morality Treatise III, sect. 13 and 28

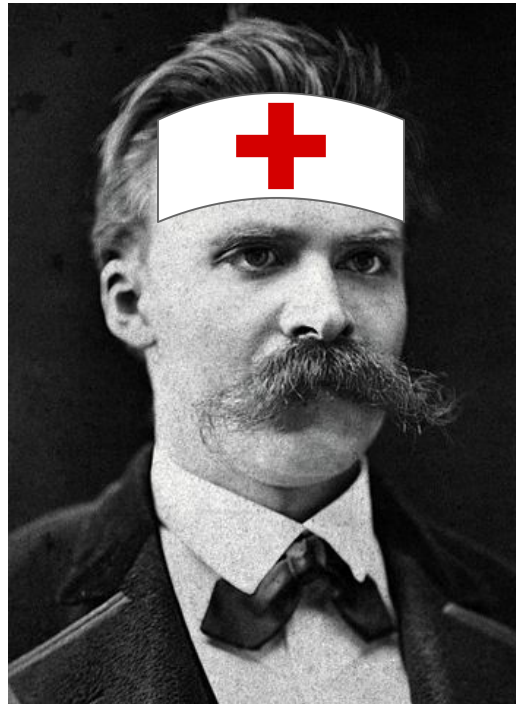
- Aims, ideals, idols that turn us against life are nevertheless means to *preserve* life
- Using will to power against ourselves means we are still able to use our instincts of life; they still thrive to some degree
- What we need is not to eliminate suffering, but to find a *meaning* for it
- “If you have your *why* for life, you can get by with almost any *how*.—Humanity does *not* strive for happiness; only the English do.” (Epigrams, Sect. 11, p. 6)

Nietzsche and Socrates

- S showed people that they don't know what they think they do
- He was a “gadfly,” annoying, angering, not letting people rest in contentment of what they think they know
- Did not tell others what to think (at least in early dialogues); prodded them with questions & objections to get *them* to come to different conclusions on their own

Nietzsche as saviour?

- Socrates, Plato, Christianity, even perhaps Rousseau give us a “why” for life, a meaning to suffering
- Does Nietzsche?



The Hammer Speaks

Saying yes

What would it mean to *not* use life to condemn life, to *not* deny some of our instincts?

- Saying “yes” rather than “no,” even to those things that are terrible
 - Morality as Anti-Nature, Sect. 6, p. 29
 - Reason in philosophy, Sect. 6, p. 22
 - What I Owe to the Ancients, Sect. 5, p. 91
 - Raids of an Untimely Man, Sect. 49, p. 84

Repetition (*Gay Science* Sect. 341)

The greatest weight.—What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you 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 more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to 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 upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

Repetition (*Gay Science* Sect. 341)

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 possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. *Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?*

Become Hard!

Last section of *Twilight*: kitchen coals vs. diamond

- Coals are burning, but not very hot; they are soft, dying & will just turn to ashes
- Diamonds are made of the same material, but suffered through immense pressure and heat to become hard
 - They can cut and shape, create through the will to power

Become Hard!

But how does one become strong, hard?

- “one must need to be strong; otherwise, one never becomes strong” (Raids, Sect. 38, p. 75)
- Through overcoming strong resistance: “One would have to look for the highest type of free human beings wherever the highest resistance is constantly being overcome” (Ibid.)

Become Hard!

We need war, opposition, battles, wounds and pain

- Arrows, perhaps?
- *Twilight of the Idols*, perhaps?