

The illustrations on the preceding three pages show (1) the title page of the original edition of 1882 (the Emerson quotation is discussed in the Translator's Introduction), (2) the back cover of the same edition (a translation follows below), and (3) the title page of the second edition of 1887 (translated on the next page).

Here is what Nietzsche said on the back of the original edition:

This book marks the conclusion of a series of writings by FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE whose common goal it is to erect *a new image and ideal of the free spirit*. To this series belong:

Human, all too human. With Appendix: Mixed Opinions and Aphorisms.

The Wanderer and his Shadow.

Dawn: Thoughts about the prejudices of morality.

The Gay Science.

Earlier writings by the same author:

The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music.

Untimely Meditations. 1. David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer. 2. Of the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life. 3. Schopenhauer as Educator. 4. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth.

THE GAY SCIENCE

("la gaya scienza")

BY
Friedrich Nietzsche

*I live in my own place,
have never copied nobody even half,
and at any master who lacks the grace
to laugh at himself—I laugh.*

OVER THE DOOR TO MY HOUSE

NEW EDITION
WITH AN APPENDIX:
Songs of Prince Vogelfrei

LEIPZIG
E. W. Fritsch
1887

25

Not predestined for knowledge.— There is a stupid humility that is not at all rare, and those afflicted with it are altogether unfit to become devotees of knowledge. As soon as a person of this type perceives something striking, he turns on his heel, as it were, and says to himself: "You have made a mistake. What is the matter with your senses? This cannot, may not, be the truth." And then, instead of looking and listening again, more carefully, he runs away from the striking thing, as if he had been intimidated, and tries to remove it from his mind as fast as he can. For his inner canon says: "I do not want to see anything that contradicts the prevalent opinion. Am I called to discover new truths? There are too many old ones, as it is."

26

What is life?— Life—that is: continually shedding something that wants to die. Life—that is: being cruel and inexorable against everything about us that is growing old and weak—and not only about *us*. Life—that is, then: being without reverence for those who are dying, who are wretched, who are ancient? Constantly being a murderer?—And yet old Moses said: "Thou shalt not kill."

27

*The man of renunciation.*²³— What does the man of renunciation do? He strives for a higher world, he wants to fly further and higher than all men of affirmation—he throws away much that would encumber his flight, including not a little that he esteems and likes; he sacrifices it to his desire for the heights. This sacrificing, this throwing away, however, is precisely what alone becomes visible and leads people to call him the man of renunciation: it is as such that he confronts us, shrouded in his hood, as if he were the soul of a hairshirt. But he is quite satisfied with the impression he makes on us: he wants to con-

²³ *Der Entsagende*. Cf section 285.

ceal from us his desire, his pride, his intention to soar *beyond* us.—Yes, he is cleverer than we thought and so polite to us—this man of affirmation. For that is what he is, no less than we, even in his renunciation.

28

To be harmful with what is best in us.— At times, our strengths propel us so far forward that we can no longer endure our weaknesses and perish from them. We may even foresee this outcome without wishing to have it otherwise. Thus we become hard against everything in us that desires consideration, and our greatness is also our lack of compassion.

Such an experience, for which we must pay in the end with our lives, is a parable for the whole effect of great human beings on others and on their age: precisely with what is best in them, with what only they can do, they destroy many who are weak, unsure, still in the process of becoming, of striving; and thus they are harmful. It can even happen that, everything considered, they are only harmful because what is best in them is accepted and absorbed by those alone whom it affects like a drink that is too strong: they lose their understanding and their selfishness and become so intoxicated that they are bound to break their limbs on all the false paths on which their intoxication leads them astray.

29

*Add lies.*²⁴— When people in France began to attack the Aristotelian unities²⁵ and others therefore began to defend them, one could see once again what is to be seen so often but what people hate to see: one lied, mendaciously inventing reasons for these laws, simply to avoid admitting that one had become *used* to these laws and no longer wanted things to be different. The same process occurs, and always has occurred, in every

²⁴ *Die Hinzu-Lügner* are those who rationalize, adding lies.

²⁵ Unity of time, place, and plot in tragedy. Aristotle himself had not demanded the first two.

prevalent morality and religion: the reasons and purposes for habits are always lies that are added only after some people begin to attack these habits and to *ask* for reasons and purposes. At this point the conservatives of all ages are thoroughly dishonest: they add lies.

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What others know about us.—What we know about ourselves and remember is not so decisive for the happiness of our life as people suppose. One day that which *others* know about us (or think they know) assaults us—and then we realize that this is more powerful. It is easier to cope with a bad conscience than to cope with a bad reputation.

54

The consciousness of appearance.—How wonderful and new and yet how gruesome and ironic I find my position vis-à-vis the whole of existence in the light of my insight! I have discovered for myself that the human and animal past, indeed the whole primal age and past of all sentient being continues in me to invent, to love, to hate, and to infer. I suddenly woke up in the midst of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish—as a somnambulist must go on dreaming lest he fall. What is “appearance” for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown *x* or remove from it!

Appearance is for me that which lives and is effective and goes so far in its self-mockery that it makes me feel that this is appearance and will-o'-the-wisp and a dance of spirits and nothing more—that among all these dreamers, I, too, who “know,” am dancing my dance; that the knower is a means for prolonging the earthly dance and thus belongs to the masters of ceremony of existence; and that the sublime consistency and inter-relatedness of all knowledge perhaps is and will be the highest means to *preserve* the universality of dreaming and the mutual comprehension of all dreamers and thus also *the continuation of the dream.*⁴⁴

57

To the realists.— You sober people who feel well armed against passion and fantasies and would like to turn your emptiness into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you only, and you yourselves were perhaps the best part of it—O you beloved images of Sais!¹ But in your unveiled state are not even you still very passionate and dark creatures compared to fish, and still far too similar to an artist in love? And what is “reality” for an artist in love? You are still burdened with those estimates of things that have their origin in the passions and loves of former centuries. Your sobriety still contains a secret and inextinguishable drunkenness. Your love of “reality,” for example—oh, that is a primeval “love.” Every feeling and sensation contains a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some unreason, some ignorance, some fear, and ever so much else has contributed to it and worked on it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What is “real” in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you *can!* If you can forget your descent, your past, your training—all of your humanity and animality. There is no “reality” for us—not for you either, my sober friends. We are not nearly as different as you think, and perhaps our good will to transcend intoxication is as respectable as your faith that you are altogether incapable of intoxication.

Only as creators!— This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for—originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin—all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out this origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called “*reality*.” We can destroy only as creators. —But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new “*things*.”

What should win our gratitude.— Only artists, and especially those of the theater, have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself, experiences himself, desires himself; only they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters; only they have taught us the art of viewing ourselves as heroes—from a distance and, as it were, simplified and transfigured—the art of staging and watching ourselves. Only in this way can we deal with some base details in ourselves. Without this art we would be nothing but foreground and live entirely in the spell of that perspective which makes what is closest at hand and most vulgar appear as if it were vast, and reality itself.

Perhaps one should concede a similar merit to the religion that made men see the sinfulness of every single individual through a magnifying glass, turning the sinner into a great, immortal criminal. By surrounding him with eternal perspectives, it taught man to see himself from a distance and as something past and whole.

New struggles.— After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead;¹ but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. —And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.

Let us beware.— Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed? How could it grow and multiply? We have some notion of the nature of the organic; and we should not reinterpret the exceedingly derivative, late, rare, accidental, that we perceive only on the crust of the earth and make of it something essential, universal, and eternal, which is what those people do who call the universe an organism. This nauseates me. Let us even beware of believing that the universe is a machine: it is certainly not constructed for one purpose, and calling it a “*machine*” does it far too much honor.

Let us beware of positing generally and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars;

¹ This is the first occurrence of this famous formulation in Nietzsche's books. We encounter it again in section 125 below, which has been anthologized again and again after it was quoted in the chapter on “The Death of God and the Revaluation” in the first edition of Kaufmann (1950), and then included in *The Portable Nietzsche*. It even brought into being a predictably stillborn movement in Christian theology that created a short-lived sensation in the United States. But most of those who have made so much of Nietzsche's pronouncement that “God is dead” have failed to take note of its other occurrences in his works which obviously furnish the best clues to his meaning. The most important passages include section 343 below and seven passages in *Zarathustra* (VPN, pp. 124f., 191, 202, 294, 371–79, 398f., and 426). This list includes only places in which death or dying are mentioned expressly. No less important are sections 109–56.

even a glance into the Milky Way raises doubts whether there are not far 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 relative duration that depends on it have again made possible an exception of exceptions: the formation of the organic. The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms. Judged from the point of view of our reason, unsuccessful attempts are by all odds the rule, the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune² which may never be called a melody—and ultimately even the phrase “unsuccessful attempt” is too anthropomorphic and reproachful. But how could we reproach or praise the universe? Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness and unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man. None of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it. Nor does it have any instinct for self-preservation or any other instinct; and it does not observe any laws either. Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purposes that the word “accident” has meaning. Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.

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.³ But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will

² This is an allusion to the doctrine of the eternal recurrence (see sections 285 and 341 below).

³ A group of early Greek philosophers who lived in Southern Italy. The most famous among them, Parmenides, was born about 510 B.C.

all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds?⁴ When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to “*naturalize*” humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?⁵

114

How far the moral sphere extends.—As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences, *depending on the degree* of our honesty and justice. All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense perception.⁸

117

Herd remorse.—During the longest and most remote periods of the human past, the sting of conscience was not at all what it is now. Today one feels responsible only for one's will and actions, and one finds one's pride in oneself. All our teachers of law start from this sense of self and pleasure in the individual, as if this had always been the fount of law. But during the longest period of the human past nothing was more terrible than to feel that one stood by oneself. To be alone, to experience things by oneself, neither to obey nor to rule, to be an individual—that was not a pleasure but a punishment; one was sentenced “to individuality.”¹⁰ Freedom of thought was considered discomfort itself. While we experience law and submission as compulsion and loss, it was egoism that was formerly experienced as something painful and as real misery. To be a self and to esteem oneself according to one's own weight and measure—that offended taste in those days. An inclination to do this would have been considered madness; for being alone was associated with every misery and fear. In those days, “free will” was very closely associated with a bad conscience; and the more unfree one's actions were and the more the herd instinct rather than any personal sense found expression in an action, the more moral one felt. Whatever harmed the herd, whether the individual had wanted it or not wanted it, prompted the sting of conscience in the individual—and in his neighbor, too, and even in the whole herd. —There is no point on which we have learned to think and feel more differently.

Life no argument.— We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error.¹⁴

In the horizon of the infinite.— We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity.¹⁵ Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel

¹⁴ Cf. the poem "Toward New Seas" in the Appendix.

Here the conclusion of the immediately preceding section is seen in a new light. The attempt to vanquish the shadow of God, heralded in section 108, is felt to be awesome—and in the next section the terror is spelled out more fully.

homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*—and there is no longer any "land."

The madman.— Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" —As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? —Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we 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? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves."

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"²⁰

153

Homo poeta.—"I myself, having made this tragedy of tragedies all by myself, insofar as it is finished—I, having first tied the knot of morality into existence before I drew it so tight that only a god could untie it (which is what Horace demands)—I myself have now slain all gods in the fourth act, for the sake of morality. Now, what is to become of the fifth act? From where am I to take the tragic solution? —Should I begin to think about a comic solution?"³⁷

154

Different types of dangerous lives.— You have no idea what you are living through; you rush through life as if you were drunk and now and then fall down some staircase. But thanks to your drunkenness you never break a limb; your muscles are too relaxed and your brain too benighted for you to find the stones of these stairs as hard as we do. For us life is more dangerous: we are made of glass; woe unto us if we merely bump ourselves! And all is lost if we fall!³⁸

276

For the new year.— I still live, I still think: I still have to live, for I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum*.¹ Today everybody permits himself the expression of his wish and his dearest thought; hence I, too, shall say what it is that I wish from myself today, and what was the first thought to run across my heart this year—what thought shall be for me the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth. I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*:² let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation.³ And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.⁴

277

Personal providence.— There is a certain high point in life: once we have reached that, we are, for all our freedom, once more in the greatest danger of spiritual unfreedom, and no matter how much we have faced up to 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 idea of a personal providence confronts us with the most penetrating force, and the best advocate, the evidence of our eyes,

¹ I am, therefore I think: I think, therefore I am. The second half of this statement is quoted from Descartes who made this formulation famous.

² Love of fate. This important concept is introduced here for the first time. The idea is developed further in Book IV; also in *Zarathustra* and in *Ecce Homo*.

³ Cf. *Zarathustra* III, "On Passing By" (VPN, 287–90).

⁴ Cf. *Zarathustra* III, "Before Sunrise" (VPN, 276–79) and "The Seven Seals (Or: The Yes and Amen Song)" (VPN, 340–43); also *Ecce Homo*, *passim* (see the Index in BWN under "Yes-saying").

fession, conjuring of souls, and forgiveness of sins; what is needful is a new *justice!* And a new watchword. And new philosophers. The moral earth, too, is round. The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist. There is yet another world to be discovered—and more than one. Embark, philosophers!¹⁵

290

One thing is needful.— To “give style” to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed—both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!

It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own; the passion of their tremendous will relents in the face of all stylized nature, of all conquered and serving nature. Even when they have to build palaces and design gardens they demur at giving nature freedom.

Conversely, it is the weak characters without power over

¹⁵ The call to embark picks up the Columbus theme of sections 124 and 283. But above all this section leads into the next. The theme of fashioning evil into good, the garden imagery (bloom, ripen, weeds), and the discussion of what is not needful and what is—all this is taken up in the next section. What is ultimately needful is much less than was claimed here: “only” giving style to one’s character.

themselves that *hate* the constraint of style. They feel that if this bitter and evil constraint were imposed upon them they would be demeaned; they become slaves as soon as they serve; they hate to serve. Such spirits—and they may be of the first rank—are always out to shape and interpret their environment as *free* nature: wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising. And they are well advised because it is only in this way that they can give pleasure to themselves. For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight. For the sight of what is ugly makes one bad and gloomy.¹⁶

299

What one should learn from artists.— How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not? And I rather think that in themselves they never are. Here we could learn something from physicians, when for example they dilute what is bitter or add wine and sugar to a mixture—but even more from artists who are really continually trying to bring off such inventions and feats. Moving away from things until there is a good deal that one no longer sees and there is much that our eye has to add if we are still to see them at all; or seeing things around a corner and as cut out and framed; or to place them so that they partially conceal each other and grant us only glimpses of architectural perspectives;²² or looking at them through tinted glass or in the light of the sunset; or giving them a surface and skin that is not fully transparent—all this we should learn from artists while being wiser than they are in other matters. For with them this subtle power usually comes to an end where art ends and life begins; but we want to be the poets of our life—first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters.

tables of what is good, and let us stop brooding about the "moral value of our actions"! Yes, my friends, regarding all the moral chatter of some about others it is time to feel nauseous. Sitting in moral judgment should offend our taste. Let us leave such chatter and such bad taste to those who have nothing else to do but drag the past a few steps further through time and who never live in the present—which is to say the many, the great majority. We, however, *want to become those we are*⁶⁶—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves. To that end we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order to be able to be *creators* in this sense—while hitherto all valuations and ideals have been based on *ignorance* of physics or were constructed so as to *contradict* it. Therefore: long live physics! And even more so that which *compels* us to turn to physics—our honesty!⁶⁷

340

The dying Socrates.— I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in everything he did, said—and did not say. This mocking and enamored monster and pied piper of Athens, who made the most overweening youths tremble and sob, was not only the wisest chatterer of all time: he was equally great in silence. I wish he had remained taciturn also at the last moment of his life; in that case he might belong to a still higher order of spirits. Whether it was death or the poison or piety or malice—something loosened his tongue at that moment 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.*" Is it possible that a man like him, who had lived cheerfully and like a soldier in the sight of everyone, should have been a pessimist? He had merely kept a cheerful mien while concealing all his life long his ultimate judgment, his inmost feeling. Socrates, Socrates *suffered life!* And then he still revenged himself—with this veiled, gruesome, pious, and blasphemous saying. Did a Socrates need such revenge? Did his overrich virtue lack an ounce of magnanimity? —Alas, my friends, we must overcome even the Greeks!⁷⁰

341

*The greatest weight.*⁷¹— 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!"

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

rates, in his notes as well as his books, pro or con, and called it, "Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates." This title was retained when a revised version of the article was incorporated in my *Nietzsche* as Chapter 13.

Since then the subject has been taken up by several writers—there are entire books on the subject. Some writers have been misled by the title of my discussion and assume that it deals only with the passages expressing admiration. Actually, it deals, at length, not only with the "negative" references but also places the whole problem in the setting of a full-scale examination of Nietzsche's thought—including his views of reason, passion, and Christianity. In any case, the first sentence of this section (340) is as striking a tribute as Nietzsche, or anyone else, ever paid to anyone.

For a better understanding of Nietzsche's attitude to Socrates it is also illuminating to follow his references to Epicurus through the present book, beginning with section 45 and the long note on it.

⁷¹ *Das grösste Schwergewicht.* Literally, the noun means heavyweight, and this term is actually used to designate the heaviest class in boxing; but it is also used quite commonly for "main emphasis" or "stress." In an earlier version of this aphorism, I rendered the title "The greatest stress." My reasons for concluding that "weight" is better are spelled out in the section on the Eternal Recurrence in the Introduction.

Nietzsche himself considered section 341 the first proclamation of "the basic idea of *Zarathustra*" (*Ecce Homo*, BWN, 752), meaning the eternal recurrence. But see also sections 109, 233, and 285.

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?*

342

*Incipit tragoedia.*⁷²—When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and Lake Urmi and went into the mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of that. But at last his heart changed—and one

⁷² *The tragedy begins.* Cf. the end of section 1 of Nietzsche's Preface. This aphorism, which concludes Book IV and thus stood at the end of the original edition of *The Gay Science*, is almost identical with section 1 of "Zarathustra's Prologue," which opens Nietzsche's next book. But in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche printed it as a single paragraph, like all of the numbered sections of *The Gay Science*, regardless of their length, while in *Zarathustra* it is broken up into twelve very short paragraphs, in keeping with the style of *Zarathustra*. Thus the text in *Zarathustra* has periods and then begins a new sentence after "serpent" and "receive it." The only substantive difference is that in *Zarathustra* "Lake Urmi" is changed to "the lake of his home." (Other differences between the text above and my translation of *Zarathustra* are due to the fact that I have tried to improve on my old version instead of simply copying it.)

Lake Urmi or Urmia is a lake in northwestern Iran, between the massif of Ararat, whose highest peak rises to almost 17,000 feet, and Mt. Savalan, which is also over 15,000 feet. The original readers of *The Gay Science* might well be put in mind of the historical Zarathustra, the founder of the religion of ancient Iran, who is also known as Zoroaster. The ancient Greeks thought he had lived 6,000 years before Xerxes invaded Greece in the fifth century B.C.; some recent scholars have dated him around 1,000 B.C.; but most scholars now consider him a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah and believe that Zarathustra's religious reforms, around 600 B.C., helped to trigger the Persian conquest of the Babylonian empire which, incidentally, put an end to the Babylonian exile of the Jews.

Nietzsche's reasons for choosing "Zarathustra" as his mouthpiece are discussed by him in *Ecce Homo* (BWN, 783f.); also somewhat differently by Kaufmann, 198f.

morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus:

"You great star, 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: You would have become weary of your light and of the journey had it not been for me and my eagle and my serpent; but we waited for you every morning, took your overflow from you, and blessed you for it. Behold, I am sick of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it; I want to give away and distribute until the wise among men enjoy their folly once again and the poor their riches. For that I must descend to the depths, as you do in the evening when you go behind the sea and still bring light to the underworld, you over-rich star. Like you I must go under,⁷³ as men put it to whom I wish to descend. Bless me then, you calm eye that can look without envy even upon an all too great happiness. Bless the cup that wants to overflow in order that the water may flow from it golden and carry the reflection of your rapture everywhere. Behold, this cup wants to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become man again." —Thus Zarathustra began to go under.

⁷³ In German, the last word of this section is *Untergang*; and here the German word is *untergehen*, emphasized in the original. These German words recur often in "Zarathustra's Prologue"—along with other "under-" and "over-" words. Even in the present section they are immediately preceded by "underworld" and "over-rich." Among the other "over-" words the most important are "overcome" (*überwinden*) and "overman" (*Übermensch*). There is no English equivalent for *untergehen* (literally, going under). The German verb is used for the setting of the sun, for drowning, and above all for perishing. In German, Spengler's *Decline of the West* was called *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*; and *Untergang* generally suggests decline and destruction.

Nietzsche is not suggesting that it would have been better for Zarathustra to stay in the mountains instead of returning among men. See section 4 of "Zarathustra's Prologue": "I love those who do not know how to live, except by going under, for they are those who cross over [the bridge to the overman]." Cf. also section 283 above on living dangerously.