

GUIDE TO NIETZSCHE'S *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL*

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MISTAKEN VIEWS ABOUT THE SOURCES OF HUMAN VALUES

- ⇒ **God**: there is no God, so clearly that is no longer a possible source of values. "God is dead".
- ⇒ **The Absolute**: the enormous variety of human cultures and values that have been discovered shows that there are no absolute and fixed values (i.e. relativism), and the Platonic world of unchanging ideas does not exist. [*mid-Preface, mid-186*]
- ⇒ **Reason**: whenever you trace reasoning back you find that it starts in intuitions and unquestioned prejudices. Therefore values are in place before reasoning starts. [*186,191,196; also start of 17*]

THE TRUE SOURCE OF HUMAN VALUES

- ⇒ In keeping with modern scientific views, the only possible source of values is human beings. We create our own systems of values, and they are selected by **taste, instinct and sheer force of personality**. [*191; also 3*]

UNSATISFACTORY CANDIDATES FOR HUMAN VALUES

- ⇒ **Humility and pity**: [*Judaism and Christianity*] This is the result of the inversion of moral standards, so that the values of the 'slave' replace those of the 'master'. [*195,201,202; also 250 on the Jews; also 260*]
- ⇒ **Freedom and equality**: [*Marxism, anarchism and liberal democracy*] They are the consequence of Christian weakness and the stifling of what is best in human nature. [*199,202,203*]
- ⇒ **Duty**: [*Immanuel Kant*] The love of following a strict moral rule is merely a symptom of weakness, a love of obedience, and the denial of the 'will to power'. [*187*]
- ⇒ **Contentment**: [*Mill*] The pursuit of a state of 'happiness' is the worst sort of passive denial of life. Its ideal is a state more like that of a herd-animal than a human being. [*190,198,201*]
- ⇒ **Self-interest**: [*Socrates*] At best this is a totally uninspiring ideal for values, and at the worst it consists of not asserting any values at all. [*190*]

THE VALUES PREFERRED BY NIETZSCHE

- ⇒ **Evolution**: [*Darwin*] He values intense life and energy - the survival of the 'fittest'. [*197,mid-203*]
- ⇒ **Self-Discipline**: The ideal is to be both dynamic and restrained, because all achievement needs restraint. [*188,189,198*]
- ⇒ **Nobility**: [*Plato*] The finest individuals show leadership, ambition, sincerity and ruthlessness. [*197,200,203; also mid-258; also 153*]
- ⇒ **Heroic Individuals**: The role models are Alcibiades, Caesar, Leonardo, Cesare Borgia, Frederick II, and Napoleon. [*200*]
- ⇒ **Great Civilisations**: The finest people are conquerors and creators, in art, science, law, literature and philosophy. [*188*]

OBJECTIONS TO NIETZSCHE'S VIEWS

- ⇒ He wants self-discipline, but surely that means that reason must rule?
- ⇒ His ideas lead to a world which either contains no values at all, or is actually evil.
- ⇒ He misinterprets Darwin, seeing 'fitness' as a virtue, instead of as a mere fact.
- ⇒ He reveals the characteristic romantic prejudices of a late nineteenth century thinker.
- ⇒ As he offers no arguments to support his views, we can just reject them if they don't appeal to us.
- ⇒ His dream of powerful leaders is out of date; it was understandable in the age of the sword, but not of the machine gun, the bomber and the hydrogen bomb.