

# [Nietzsche – the genealogy of morals essay](https://assignbuster.com/nietzsche-the-genealogy-of-morals-essay/)

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We need to be able to do this in order to make promises and thus have control over the future. It is important for man to anticipate the future and calculate what may happen – to develop reliability and regularity so that he can be answerable for his own future. Nietzsche goes on to explore the eventual end of man in light of the origins of responsibility. In order to for man to have the right to promise, he must be predictable, so that he can be assured in keeping his promise.

Society and morality perform this role, and will eventually produce the sovereign individual – one who is ere from the morality of custom. This individual will be autonomous and above ethics because he will have his own will: he will have the right to promise. This man will be aware of his own power, freedom and superiority over others and will merit mastery over all others’ without as strong a will as his. He will respect others whose word can be relied upon, and willing to punish those who make promises without having the right, and those who break their word.

The sovereign individual is conscious of his own responsibility – his freedom and power – and this conscience becomes his dominant instinct. Nietzsche then goes on to tackle the history of the conscience. The oldest psychology on earth posits that in order for something to remain in the memory, it must hurt. The most effective aid to memory is pain, so German society created a memory with this tool and were able to master their instincts. Once man could retain which things they were not supposed to do, they could legitimately give a promise and enjoy the advantages of society. People eventually came to reason, but a lot of pain had to be caused through punishment to make this happen. Nietzsche explores how consciousness of guilt came to happen, and explains that any genealogists of morals did not understand the link between guilt and debt, or that societal ideas of retribution were not influenced by modern ideas about free will. In order for society to differentiate between actions performed intentionally or merely negligently, a high degree of humiliation had to take place.

Retribution used to stem from the anger of being wronged rather than because the criminal could have done otherwise. In times gone past, compensation for wrongs was frequently achieved through the debtor causing pain to the creditor – this intercultural relation is the root of the equivalence between injury and pain. In this relationship, the debtor makes a memory to ensure that a promise is kept – the debtor derives pleasure from violating the creditor. In this way, conscience and duty began with blood and violence, with suffering as compensation for debt. In fact, cruelty was a large part of the life of the ancients – people were entertained by executions; violence was festive. Nietzsche posits that life on earth was more cheerful when man did not feel shame about manifestations of his cruelty; man is taught to be ashamed of his instincts.

Nietzsche goes on to explain that civilization has this buyer/seller relationship – man is a creature who measures values. When humans discovered that everything could be compensated for, basic Justice had planted its seeds. Nietzsche ever-present hierarchy emerges again in this section: Justice is those who are equals coming to a settlement and forcing lesser people to come to an agreement themselves. In this account, the community has the same basic relationship to its members as the creditor to the debtor. Individuals enjoy the benefits of being part of the community ND must fulfill certain obligations to legitimate their membership – otherwise the community will make you pay up. In this case, the offender has broken the social contract – at its most basic, society revokes its benefits and the offender returns to the savage state that he was protected from. As a community becomes more powerful, it protects wrongdoers from the anger of the injured party.

With further development, society begins to see crimes as things which can be paid off, and penal law becomes more lenient. The creditor – society – becomes more and more humane as it becomes wealthier, and Justice eventually obligates itself – a powerful society has the luxury of mercy. Nietzsche notes that this is not always the account of Justice given – many try to claim that it is merely a development of the feeling of being wronged; that it is linked to revenge. However, most people cannot be Just to those who have directly injured them. The point of justice is to view injuries in an objective light, so that those clouded by prejudice and anger are not those who decide what should be done with an offender. When a law broken, it is society prerogative to punish this transgression, because Justice has been contravened. Concepts are only imbibed with purpose when forces and wills act upon them.

Punishment seems to have been around for so long that we do not always fully remember why we punish – it seems so natural that we feel no guilt for it. Punishment is not the origin of bad conscience – the evolution of our societies is to blame for this. Once we formed larger settlements we no longer needed many of our instincts, and we had to suppress them in order to live in a society in which we decided how to live using our conscious minds. These cruel and hostile instincts were turned inwards and we developed bad conscience. This is reliant upon a very particular account of the origins of society: a minority group forced the majority into communities, and bad conscience further developed from the former feeling indebted to the latter.

As the benefits of being a part of the community grew, so did reverence towards societal founders. This translates into the creation of gods, towards whom people feel the same sort of debt. The Christian God and the concepts of punishment we have about him stem from this feeling of debt towards ‘ creators’ as a whole – we developed a religious account of inherent human imperfection in light of this. God is the creditor and we are the debtors – but he sacrifices himself for us out of love. The Christian God is highly indicative of our psychological development – we are constantly racked with guilt and suppressing the animal part of ourselves. The Greeks, who had much less problem with their instincts, had gods that reflected this. Christianity is not healthy or good for our development – we should not suppress o natural instincts in the way we do. We should not direct conscience inwardly, but rather direct it towards those things that are hostile to life.

Nietzsche is not suggesting that we return to our way of life before we developed bad conscience, he is merely suggesting that we direct it elsewhere.