

Lightening is not a
wolf



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The pattern of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* revolves around the deconstruction and consequent rebuilding of common thought relationships; within these differentiations we find both the thematic basis for and the huge diversity of Nietzsche's philosophic scope. Deleuze and Guattari assert that Nietzsche constructed the concept of bad conscience and "could see in this what is most disgusting in the world and yet exclaim, 'This is where man begins to be interesting!'" What these two authors lose in this analysis is that the essential function of bad conscience is the alleviation of what we consider disgusting through an extremely interesting medium. There is nothing new about being both disgusting and interesting, many things are, but being the product of those qualities renders bad conscience to be one of the most compelling concepts of Nietzsche. Within his argument, Nietzsche creates a problematization of this idea that can be viewed as a recognition of both the disgusting and the interesting, yet it ultimately finds itself inhabiting a no man's land in between these two poles. In it within this step that we are stuck, along with the argument of Deleuze and Guattari. The first aspect of Nietzsche's argumentative patterning, his penchant for differentiation, can be seen from the very beginning in Book 1 of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The concept of resentment is fundamental to an understanding of bad conscience, and it is interesting how Nietzsche structures their conceptual introductions similarly. He focuses on the origin of resentment primarily before delving into the idea itself. Central to this discussion of this origin is the lightning metaphor within the bird of prey allegory. Nietzsche asserts that "just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an action...so popular morality separates strength from expressions of strength" (45). This

statement must be understood as it ties directly into Nietzsche's argument that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (45). Thus the bird of prey has no choice but to be a bird of prey, and thus the lambs must create the belief of that choice so they can name themselves good and the birds of prey evil, creating the parallogism that sets up the context for the idea of ressentiment in the first place. Nietzsche structures the whole basis of this idea around the primary deconstruction and reframing of the common idea of free will within the false inference of the evil / good slave outcry: "let us be different from the evil, namely good!" (46). The slave morality is centered in this origin of the weak triumphing as the weak over the strong. Nietzsche reveals this as the essence of ressentiment: "the inversion of the value-pointing eye...in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, psychologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction" (37). Fiction can become fact, as the idea of free will was created by the weak and has ultimately become fact. Nietzsche problematizes this characteristic of society through an analysis of its origins, but also finds its presence in modern society. The idea of bad conscience is part of this larger slave morality, and this very relationship adds to its divergent nature of being both disgusting and interesting. Bad conscience is in fact structured in the exact way that Deleuze and Guattari analyze Nietzsche's perception of it—it is something that is based in the disgusting and yet also serves as a mechanism that allows society to push people to a higher level—yet this higher level is laid out in the skewed morality of a system that embraces self-torture in the first place. Nietzsche unpacks these aspects of bad conscience through a detailed

set up of its schematic context. He begins this exploration at the beginning of Book 2 by declaring that man differs from other animals by our “right to make promises” (57). This right hinges upon our “real memory of the will: so that between the original ‘I will,’... and the actual discharge of the will, its act, a world of strange new things, circumstances, even acts of will may be interposed without breaking this long chain of the will” (58). Once again, Nietzsche is mapping the landscape between the action and its expression like in the lightening metaphor, yet this time he is telling the story of how bad conscience originated through the complex equations of human moral evolution. Starting with this landmark of promises, Nietzsche establishes that this precisely is the long story of how responsibility originated: “...the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task the that one first makes men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable” (58-9). He asserts, tantalizingly, that “at the end of this tremendous process...the ripest fruit is the sovereign individual,” namely the end result of the transference of free will’s instillation into fact from fiction. Alas, we are still stuck inside this process. Hence bad conscience comes into play. This memory of the will is formed by promises, turns into responsibility, and penetrates “the profoundest depths and becomes instinct, the dominating instinct” (60). This instinct, Nietzsche claims, is what we call our conscience. Yet how do we remember? “Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself” (61). Thus our oldest impulses to remember were all structured around the idea of a violent consequence to forgetting. Yet this is not all. This notion of conscience ties into the chief moral idea of guilt, which personifies the bad conscience.

Nietzsche argues that “ the major moral concept Schuld has its origin in the very material concept Schulden” (62-3). He deconstructs our modern notion of punishment through this prism, as the idea of “ an equivalence between injury and pain...[evolved] in the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor” (63). This relationship gets at the very seed of both the slave morality and the pattern of deconstruction within Nietzsche’s argument that lends itself to the construction of dualities: “ in punishing the debtor, the creditor participates in the right of the masters: at last, he, too, may experience...the exalted sensation of being allowed to despise and mistreat someone ‘ beneath him'” (65). Thus punishment is conceptualized within the system of slave/master morality and illustrates the ugliness of human nature. Yet it is within the unpacking of punishment’s relation to its purpose that we find the greatest example of the repetitive patterns within Nietzsche’s argument that create, and eliminate, dualities within moral concepts. Section 12 of Book 2 is the thematic climax of the gradual crescendo of deconstruction of common thought relationships Nietzsche has written into his *On the Genealogy of Morals*. It serves as both a model and an end in itself to the pattern of uncommon interpretation that has fertilized the mind for the complex idea of guilt. This section is tied to the metaphor of lightening within the bird of prey allegory through its desire to differentiate the origin from its expression, yet it delves even further into this exploration in that it sets up a model of clarification that can be used to break down any false equalization between meaning and manifestation. “ The cause of an origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart...however well one has understood the utility of any physiological organ (or of [anything else]), this means nothing

regarding its origin" (77). Nietzsche really pulls the rug out from under his reader with this assertion (he wryly acknowledges that it may sound "uncomfortable and disagreeable" to "older ears"). In disregarding this fundamental truth, "the essence of life, its will to power, is ignored; one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions" (79). Nietzsche even goes so far as to spend a page listing various motivations, and manifestations, for punishment. This passage is hugely important because it guides the reader in how to comprehend the rest of Nietzsche's argument. Being admonished, and enlightened, thusly, we return with Nietzsche to the origins of bad conscience. This breakdown of purpose versus action becomes very important when Nietzsche opens up his analysis of bad conscience. "Punishment is supposed to possess the value of awakening the feeling of guilt in the guilty person; one seeks it in the actual instrumentum of that psychical reaction called 'bad conscience,' 'sting of conscience'" (81). So we recognize what is meant to elicit this feeling, and we have explored the moral chain of its manifestation, its push through promise and responsibility into the conscience. Yet what were guilt's origins? Nietzsche offers the following explanation: "I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and of peace" (84). These final sections of Book 2 are littered with exclamation marks—the reader can almost palpably feel Nietzsche's excitement at unveiling this new concept for man, his interest brought forth in the analysis of such a hideous truth of human nature. The most vital part of this

enclosure within society is that it “ brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward against man himself. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting...all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: that is the origin of bad conscience” (85). Within the confines of society and its customs “ this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the bad conscience” (85). This assertion falls beautifully into the Nietzschean concept pattern that allows the interpretation of bad conscience as both profoundly disgusting and highly interesting: as we become more and more stuck in the process of the transference of free will’s instillation into fact we create illusions in order to feel power; these creations ultimately end up reigning us in even more, like the false inference of the slave morality and the invention of guilt. This disgusts Nietzsche. “ There is so much in man that is hideous! Too long, the earth has been a madhouse!” he cries (93). There is almost a feel of wretchedness within the final pages of his analysis of bad conscience—Nietzsche points out that “ there resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the will of a man to find himself guilty...his will to erect an ideal—that of the ‘ holy God’—and in the face of it to feel the palpable certainty of his own absolute unworthiness” (93). Nietzsche blasts God as the ultimate masochistic masturbatory creation of the guilt-ridden conscience. Yet even with his great cries of disgust, his passionate usage of exclamation points, Nietzsche ends this great pattern of de- and then re-construction with an actually quite compelling call for hope. “ Some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, this redeeming man...so that...[he] will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea” (96). Yet this

man is also a man of “ great love and contempt” (96). Thus even in hope it is only in the embrace, and enlightenment, of such great dualities that progress is possible. Bad conscience is not the only thing that finds itself being two things at once.