Twofold prehistory of good and evil. – The concept good and evil has a two-fold prehistory: firstly in the soul of the ruling tribes and castes. He who has the power to requite, good with good, evil with evil, and also actually practises requital – is, that is to say, grateful and revengeful – is called good; he who is powerless and cannot requite counts as bad. As a good man one belongs to the ‘good’, a community which has a sense of belonging together because all the individuals in it are combined with one another through the capacity for requital. As a bad man one belongs to the ‘bad’, to a swarm of subject, powerless people who have no sense of belonging together. The good are a caste, the bad a mass like grains of sand. Good and bad is for a long time the same thing as noble and base, master and slave. On the other hand, one does not regard the enemy as evil: he can requite. In Homer the Trojan and the Greek are both good. It is not he who does us harm but he who is contemptible who counts as bad. In the community of the good goodness is inherited; it is impossible that a bad man could grow up out of such good soil. If, however, one of the good should do something unworthy of the good, one looks for excuses; one ascribes the guilt to a god, for example, by saying he struck the good man with madness and rendered him blind. – Then in the soul of the subjected, the powerless. Here every other man, whether he be noble or base, counts as inimical, ruthless, cruel, cunning, ready to take advantage. Evil is the characterizing expression for man, indeed for every living being one supposes to exist, for a god, for example; human, divine mean the same thing as diabolical, evil. Signs of goodness, benevolence, sympathy are
received fearfully as a trick, a prelude with a dreadful termination, a means of confusing and outwitting, in short as refined wickedness. When this disposition exists in the individual a community can hardly arise, at best the most rudimentary form of community: so that wherever this conception of good and evil reigns the downfall of such individuals, of their tribes and races, is near. – Our present morality has grown up in the soil of the ruling tribes and castes.

1, 92

*Origin of justice.* – Justice (fairness) originates between parties of approximately *equal power*, as Thucydides correctly grasped (in the terrible colloquy between the Athenian and Melian ambassadors): where there is no clearly recognizable superiority of force and a contest would result in mutual injury producing no decisive outcome the idea arises of coming to an understanding and negotiating over one another’s demands: the characteristic of *exchange* is the original characteristic of justice. Each satisfies the other, inasmuch as each acquires what he values more than the other does. One gives to the other what he wants to have, to be henceforth his own, and in return receives what one oneself desires. Justice is thus requital and exchange under the presupposition of an approximately equal power position: revenge therefore belongs originally within the domain of justice, it is an exchange. Gratitude likewise. – Justice goes back naturally to the viewpoint of an enlightened self-preservation, thus to the egoism of the reflection: ‘to what end should I injure myself uselessly and perhaps even then not achieve my goal?’ – so much for the *origin* of justice. Since, in accordance with their intellectual habit, men have *forgotten* the original purpose of so-called just and fair actions, and especially because children have for millennia been trained to admire and imitate such actions, it has gradually come to appear that a just action is an egoistic one: but it is on this appearance that the high value accorded it depends; and this high value is, moreover, continually increasing, as all valuations do: for something highly valued is striven for, imitated, multiplied through sacrifice, and grows as the worth of the toil and zeal expended by each individual is added to the worth of the valued thing – How little moral would the world appear without forgetfulness! A poet could say that God has placed forgetfulness as a doorkeeper on the threshold of the temple of human dignity.
Custom and what is in accordance with it. – To be moral, to act in accordance with custom, to be ethical means to practise obedience towards a law or tradition established from of old. Whether one subjects oneself with effort or gladly and willingly makes no difference, it is enough that one does it. He is called ‘good’ who does what is customary as if by nature, as a result of a long inheritance, that is to say easily and gladly, and this is so whatever what is customary may be (exacts revenge, for example, when exacting revenge is part of good custom, as it was with the ancient Greeks). He is called good because he is good ‘for something’; since, however, benevolence, sympathy and the like have throughout all the changes in customs always been seen as ‘good for something’, as useful, it is now above all the benevolent, the helpful who are called ‘good’. To be evil is ‘not to act in accordance with custom’, to practise things not sanctioned by custom, to resist tradition, however rational or stupid that tradition may be; in all the laws of custom of all times, however, doing injury to one’s neighbour has been seen as injurious above all else, so that now at the word ‘evil’ we think especially of voluntarily doing injury to one’s neighbour. ‘Egoistic’ and ‘unegoistic’ is not the fundamental antithesis which has led men to make the distinction between ‘in accordance with custom’ and ‘in defiance of custom’, between good and evil, but adherence to a tradition, a law, and severance from it. How the tradition has arisen is here a matter of indifference, and has in any event nothing to do with good and evil or with any kind of immanent categorical imperative; it is above all directed at the preservation of a community, a people; every superstitious usage which has arisen on the basis of some chance event mistakenly interpreted enforces a tradition which it is in accordance with custom to follow; for to sever oneself from it is dangerous, and even more injurious to the community than to the individual (because the gods punish the community for misdeeds and for every violation of their privileges and only to that extent punish the individual). Every tradition now continually grows more venerable the farther away its origin lies and the more this origin is forgotten; the respect paid to it increases from generation to generation, the tradition at last becomes holy and evokes awe and reverence; and thus the morality of piety is in any event a much older morality than that which demands unegoistic actions.
The innocent element in so-called evil acts. – All ‘evil’ acts are motivated by the drive to preservation or, more exactly, by the individual’s intention of procuring pleasure and avoiding displeasure; so motivated, however, they are not evil. ‘Procuring pain as such’ does not exist, except in the brains of philosophers, neither does ‘procuring pleasure as such’ (compassion\(^1\) in the Schopenhauerian sense). In conditions obtaining before the existence of the state we kill the creature, be it ape or man, that seeks to deprive us of a fruit of the tree if we happen to be hungry and are making for the tree ourself: as we would still do to the animals even now if we were travelling in inhospitable regions. – The evil acts at which we are now most indignant rest on the error that he who perpetrates them against us possesses free will, that is to say, that he could have chosen not to cause us this harm. It is this belief in choice that engenders hatred, revengefulness, deceitfulness, all the degrading our imagination undergoes, while we are far less censorious towards an animal because we regard it as unaccountable. To do injury not from the drive to preservation but as requital – is the consequence of a mistaken judgment and therefore likewise innocent. In conditions obtaining before the existence of the state the individual can act harshly and cruelly for the purpose of frightening other creatures: to secure his existence through such fear-inspiring tests of his power. Thus does the man of violence, of power, the original founder of states, act when he subjugates the weaker. His right to do so is the same as the state now relegates to itself; or rather, there exists no right that can prevent this from happening. The ground for any kind of morality can then be prepared only when a greater individual or a collective individuality, for example society, the state, subjugates all other individuals, that is to say draws them out of their isolation and orders them within a collective. Morality is preceded by compulsion, indeed it is for a time itself still compulsion, to which one accommodates oneself for the avoidance of what one regards as unpleasurable. Later it becomes custom, later still voluntary obedience, finally almost instinct: then, like all that has for a long time been habitual and natural, it is associated with pleasure – and is now called virtue.

Of Christian asceticism and holiness. – However much individual thinkers have exerted themselves to represent those strange phenomena

\(^1\) Mitleid: changed to compassion, and on following pages to page 144.
of morality usually called asceticism and holiness as a marvel and miracle to attempt a rational explanation of which is almost a sacrilege and profanation: the urge to commit this sacrilege is, on the other hand, every bit as strong. A mighty drive of nature has at all times prompted a protest against these phenomena as such; science, insofar as it is, as aforesaid, an imitation of nature, permits itself at least to register a protest against the alleged inexplicability, indeed inapproachability, of the said phenomena. So far, to be sure, it has done so in vain: they are still unexplained, a fact that gives great satisfaction to the above-mentioned votaries of the morally miraculous. For, speaking quite generally, the unexplained is to be altogether inexplicable, the inexplicable altogether unnatural, supernatural, miraculous—thus sounds the demand in the souls of all religious people and metaphysicians (in those of the artists, too, when they are also thinkers); while the scientific man sees in this demand the ‘evil principle’.

– The first general probability one arrives at when reflecting on holiness and asceticism is that its nature is a complex one: for almost everywhere, within the physical world as well as in the moral, the supposedly marvelous has successfully been traced back to the complex, to the multiply caused. Let us therefore venture first to isolate individual drives in the soul of the saint and ascetic and then conclude by thinking of them entwined together.

**Volume 11, Assorted Opinions and Maxims, section 89**

*Custom and its sacrifices.* – The origin of custom lies in two ideas: ‘the community is worth more than the individual’ and ‘an enduring advantage is to be preferred to a transient one’; from which it follows that the enduring advantage of the community is to take unconditional precedence over the advantage of the individual, especially over his momentary well-being but also over his enduring advantage and even over his survival. Even if the individual suffers from an arrangement which benefits the whole, even if he languishes under it, perishes by it— the custom must be maintained the sacrifice offered up. Such an attitude originates, however, only in those who are not the sacrifice— for the latter urges that, in his own case, the individual could be worth more than the many, likewise that present enjoyment, the moment in paradise, is perhaps to be rated higher than an insipid living-on in a painless condition of comfort. The philosophy of the sacrificial beast, however, is always noised abroad too late: and so we continue on with custom and morality [*Sittlichkeit*]: which latter is nothing other than simply a feeling for the whole content.
of those customs under which we live and have been raised – and raised, indeed, not as an individual, but as a member of the whole, as a cipher in a majority. – So it comes about that through his morality the individual outvotes himself.

Volume II, The Wanderer and His Shadow, section 22

Principle of equilibrium. – The brigand and the man of power who promises to defend a community against the brigand are probably at bottom very similar beings, except that the latter obtains what he wants in a different way from the former: namely through regular tributes paid to him by the community and not by imposts levied by force. (It is the same relationship as that between merchant and pirate, who are for a long time one and the same person: where one function does not seem to him advisable he practises the other. Even now, indeed, merchant’s morality is really, only a more prudent form of pirate’s morality: to buy as cheap as possible – where possible for no more than the operational costs – to sell as dear as possible.) The essential thing is: this man of power promises to maintain an equilibrium with the brigand; in this the weaker perceive a possibility of living. For they must either combine together to produce an equivalent power or subject themselves to one already possessing this equivalent power (perform services for him in exchange for his protection). The latter proceeding is easily the preferred one, because at bottom it holds two dangerous beings in check: the former through the latter, the latter through considerations of advantage; for the latter derives benefit from treating the subject community with kindness or restraint so that they may feed not only themselves but their master too. In reality the people can still have a hard enough time of it even under this arrangement, but when they compare it with the perpetual possibility of complete destruction that preceded it they find even this condition endurable.

– The community is originally the organization of the weak for the production of an equilibrium with powers that threaten it with danger. An organization to produce preponderance would be more advisable if the community could thereby become strong enough to destroy the threatening power once and for all: and if it were a matter of a single powerful depredator this would certainly be attempted. If, however, he is the head of a clan or has a large following his speedy and decisive destruction is unlikely to be accomplished and what is to be expected is a long-drawn-out feud: but this state of things is the least desirable one for the
community, since it must deprive them of the time they need for the provision of their subsistence with the regularity it requires and be attended by the ever-present threat that they will be deprived of all the products of their labours. That is why the community prefers to bring its power of defence and attack up to precisely the point at which the power possessed by its dangerous neighbour stands and then to give him to understand that the scales are now evenly balanced: why, in that event, should they not be good friends with one another? – *Equilibrium* is thus a very important concept for the oldest theory of law and morality; equilibrium is the basis of justice. When in ruder ages justice says: ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’, it presupposes that equilibrium has been attained and seeks through this retribution to preserve it: so that when one man now transgresses against another, the other no longer takes on him the revenge of blind animosity. On the contrary, by virtue of the *jus talionis* the equilibrium of the disturbed power relationship is restored: for in such primeval conditions one eye, one arm more is one piece of power more, one weight more in the scales. – Within a community in which all regard themselves as equivalent there exist disgrace and punishment as measures against transgressions, that is to say against disruptions of the principle of equilibrium: disgrace as a weight placed in the scales against the encroaching individual who has procured advantages for himself through his encroachment and now through the disgrace he incurs experiences disadvantages which abolish these earlier advantages and outweigh them. The same applies to punishment: against the preponderance which every criminal promises himself it imposes a far greater counter-weight, enforced imprisonment for acts of violence, restitution and punitive fines for theft. In this way the transgressor is reminded that through his act he has excluded himself from the community and its moral advantages: the community treats him as one who is not equivalent, as one of the weak standing outside it; that is why punishment is not only retribution but contains something more, something of the *harshness of the state of nature*; it is precisely this that it wants to recall.

11, 26

*Rule of law as a means.* – *Law*, reposing on compacts between *equals*, continues to exist for so long as the power of those who have concluded these compacts remains equal or similar; prudence created law to put an end to feuding and to *useless* squandering between forces of similar
strength. But just as definitive an end is put to them if one party has become decisively weaker than the other: then subjection enters in and law ceases, but the consequence is the same as that previously attained through the rule of law. For now it is the prudence of the dominant party which advises that the strength of the subjected should be economized and not uselessly squandered: and often the subjected find themselves in more favourable circumstances than they did when they were equals. – The rule of law is thus a temporary means advised by prudence, not an end.

II, 33

Elements of revenge. – The word ‘revenge’ is said so quickly it almost seems as if it could contain no more than one conceptual and perceptional root. And so one continues to strive to discover it: just as our economists have not yet wearied of scenting a similar unity in the word ‘value’ and of searching after the original root-concept of the word. As if every word were not a pocket into which now this, now that, now several things at once have been put! Thus ‘revenge’, too, is now this, now that, now something more combined. Distinguish first of all that defensive return blow which one delivers even against lifeless objects (moving machinery, for example) which have hurt us: the sense of our counter-action is to put a stop to the injury by putting a stop to the machine. To achieve this the violence of the counter-blow sometimes has to be so great as to shatter the machine; if, however, it is in fact too strong to be instantly destroyed by a single individual, the latter will nonetheless still deliver the most vigorous blow of which he is capable – as a last-ditch effort, so to speak. One behaves in a similar way towards people who have harmed us when we feel the injury directly; if one wants to call this an act of revenge, all well and good; only let it be considered that self-preservation alone has here set its clockwork of reason in motion, and that one has fundamentally been thinking, not of the person who caused the injury, but only of oneself: we act thus without wanting to do harm in return, but only so as to get out with life and limb. – One needs time if one is to transfer one’s thoughts from oneself to one’s opponent and to ask oneself how he can be hit most grievously. This happens in the second species of revenge: its presupposition is a reflection over the other’s vulnerability and capacity for suffering: one wants to hurt. To secure himself against further harm is here so far from the mind of the revenger that he almost always brings further harm upon himself and very often cold-bloodedly anticipates it. If in the
case of the first species of revenge it was fear of a second blow which made the counter-blow as vigorous as possible, here there is almost complete indifference to what the opponent will do; the vigour of the counterblow is determined only by that which he has done to us. What, then, has he done? And of what use is it to us if our opponent now suffers after we have suffered through him? It is a question of restitution: while the act of revenge of the first species serves only self-preservation. Perhaps we lost property, rank, friends, children through our opponent – these losses are not made good by revenge, the restitution applies only to an attendant loss occasioned by the other losses referred to. Restitutional revenge does not protect one from further harm, it does not make good the harm one has suffered – except in one case. If our honour has suffered through our opponent revenge is capable of restoring it. But our honour has suffered harm in every case in which someone has done us a deliberate injury: for our opponent proved thereby that he did not fear us. By revenging ourself on him we prove that we do not fear him either: it is in this that the compensation, the restitution lies. (The objective of demonstrating the complete absence of fear goes so far in the case of some people that the danger to themselves involved in the revenge – loss of health or life or other deprivations – counts as an indispensable condition of the revenge. That is why they choose the path of the duel even when the courts offer them a means of acquiring compensation for the offence they have sustained: they refuse to regard as sufficient a restitution of their honour that involves no risk because it cannot serve to demonstrate their lack of fear.)

– In the first species of revenge it is precisely fear which directs the counter-blow: here, on the contrary, it is the absence of fear which, as stated, wants to prove itself through the counter-blow. – Nothing, therefore, could appear more different than the inner motives of these two modes of action which are called by the common word ‘revenge’: and yet it very often happens that the revenger is unclear as to what has really determined his action; perhaps he delivered the counter-blow out of fear and to preserve himself but afterwards, when he has had time to reflect on the motive of wounded honour, convinces himself he has exacted revenge on account of his honour: – this motive is, after all, nobler than the other. An essential element in this is whether he sees his honour as having been injured in the eyes of others (the world) or only in the eyes of him who injured it: in the latter case he will prefer secret revenge, in the former public. His revenge will be the more incensed or the more moderate according to how deeply or weakly he can think his way into the
soul of the perpetrator and the witnesses of his injury; if he is wholly lacking in this kind of imagination he will not think of revenge at all, since the feeling of ‘honour’ will not be present in him and thus cannot be wounded. He will likewise not think of revenge if he despises the perpetrator and the witnesses: because, as people he despises, they cannot accord him any honour and consequently cannot take any honour from him either. Finally, he will refrain from revenge in the not uncommon case that he loves the perpetrator: he will thus lose honour in the perpetrator’s eyes, to be sure, and will perhaps become less worthy of being loved in return. But to renounce even all claim to love in return is a sacrifice which love is prepared to make if only it does not have to hurt the beloved being: this would mean hurting himself more than any sacrifice hurts. – Thus: everyone will revenge himself, except if he is without honour or full of contempt or full of love for the person who has harmed and offended him. Even when he turns to the courts he desires revenge as a private person: additionally, however, as a fore-thoughtful man of society, he desires the revenge of society on one who does not honour it. Through judicial punishment, private honour as well as the honour of society is thus restored: that is to say – punishment is revenge. – Undoubtedly there is also in it those other elements of revenge already described, insofar as through punishment society serves its own self-preservation and delivers a counter-blow in self-defence. Punishment serves to prevent further injury, it wishes to deter. Two such various elements of revenge are thus actually united in punishment, and the main effect of this may be to sustain the confusion of concepts referred to by virtue of which the individual who takes revenge usually does not know what he really wants.