

Preface¹

I

One should speak only where one is not permitted to keep silent; and speak only of what one has *overcome*—everything else is chatter, “literature,” lack of breeding. My writings speak *only* of my overcomings: “I” am in them along with everything that was inimical to me, *ego ipsissimus*,² in fact, if a prouder expression is allowed, *ego ipsissimum*.³ One can guess: I already have a great deal—*beneath* me⁴ . . . But it has always first required the time, the convalescence, the remoteness, the distance,⁵ until the desire moved within me to skin, to exploit, to expose, “to represent” (or whatever one wants to call it) retrospectively for knowledge something that had been experienced and survived, any sort of fact or fate. To that extent, all my writings, with one single, yet essential exception, should be *backdated*—they always speak of something “behind-me”—: some of them, such as the first three *Unfashionable Observations*, even back beyond the time of emergence and experience of a previously published book (the *Birth of Tragedy* in this case: as ought not to remain concealed from a subtler observer and comparer). That angry outburst against the Germanomania, self-contentment and linguistic raggedness⁶ of the aged David Strauss, the content of the first *Unfashionable*, gave vent to feelings that I had had long ago as a student, when I sat amid German cultivation and cultivated

Philistinism (I lay claim to the paternity of the now much-used and misused term, “cultivated Philistine”⁷ —); and what I have said against the “historical sickness,” I said as someone who has slowly, laboriously learned how to cure himself from it and who was not at all willing henceforth to renounce “history” because he had once suffered from it. As I then, in the third *Unfashionable Observation*, brought to expression my respect for my first and only educator, for the *great* Arthur Schopenhauer—I would now express it even more strongly, also more personally—I was, for my own part, already into the midst of moral skepticism and dissolution, *that is to say, just as much into the critique as into the deepening of all previous pessimism*—and already believed “in nothing any more,” as the people say, and not in Schopenhauer either: at precisely that time there emerged a piece of writing that was kept secret, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense.” Even my triumphal and festal oration in honor of Richard Wagner, on the occasion of his Bayreuth festival triumph of 1876—Bayreuth signifies the greatest triumph that an artist has ever attained—a work that bears the strongest⁸ *appearance* of “actuality,” was in its background an expression of homage and gratitude toward a piece of my past, toward the most beautiful, also the most dangerous⁹ calmness of my sea-voyage¹⁰ . . . and actually a setting loose,¹¹ a taking leave.¹² (Did Richard Wagner perhaps deceive himself about this? I do not believe so. As long as we still love, we certainly do not paint any such pictures; we do not yet “observe,” we do not place ourselves in that way at a distance, as an observer must do. “Even observation demands a mysterious *antagonism*, an antagonism of looking things in the face” —it says on page 291¹³ of the aforementioned text itself, with a revealing and melancholy¹⁴ turn of phrase, which was¹⁵ perhaps only for a few ears.) The composure of *being able* to speak across long intervening years of the most inward solitude and renunciation first came to me with the book *Human, All Too Human*, to which this second fore- and foreword shall be dedicated,

too.¹⁶ Upon it, as a book “for free spirits,” lies something of the almost cheerful and inquisitive coldness of the psychologist, who retrospectively confirms for himself a multitude of painful things that he has¹⁷ *beneath* him, *behind* him, and *fixes*¹⁸ them fast with the point of a needle, as it were:— is it any wonder if, with such sharp and ticklish work, some blood occasionally flows, too, if the psychologist doing it has blood on his fingers and not always only— on his fingers? . . .

2

The *Mixed Opinions and Maxims* were, like *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, first published *individually* as continuations and appendices of that just-mentioned human, all too human “book for free spirits”: at the same time¹⁹ a continuation and doubling of a spiritual cure, namely the *anti-romantic* self-treatment that my instinct, which had remained healthy, had itself discovered, itself prescribed for me against a temporary sickness from the most dangerous form of Romanticism.²⁰ May it now be acceptable, after six years of convalescence, for the same texts to be *united* as the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*: considered together, they perhaps teach their lessons more strongly and more clearly—a *lesson of health*, which may be recommended to the more spiritual natures of the race just now arising for their *disciplina voluntatis*.²¹ From them, there speaks a pessimist who has often enough gone forth from his own skin, but always returned inside it once again, a pessimist, therefore, with good will *toward* pessimism— thus in any case no longer a Romantic: what? should a spirit who understands the serpent’s cleverness *in changing its skin*²² not be permitted to give a lecture to the pessimists of today, who are all still in danger from Romanticism? And to show them²³ at least how one— *does* it? . . .

3

—It was in fact high time then *to take leave*: I immediately received proof of this. Richard Wagner, seemingly the most

triumphant, but in truth a decaying, despairing Romantic, suddenly sank down, helpless and shattered, before the Christian cross . . . Did no German have eyes in his head or sympathy in his conscience at that time for this terrifying spectacle? Was I the *only* one who—suffered from it? Enough, this unexpected event, like a flash of lightning, gave me clarity about the place that I had forsaken—and also the belated terror felt by everyone who has passed through a colossal danger unaware. As I alone went farther, I was trembling; not long afterward, and I was sick, more than sick, that is, weary from the ceaseless disillusionment about everything that remained for the inspiration of us modern human beings, at the energy, labor, hope, youthfulness, love everywhere being *wasted*; weary from disgust at the feministic and dreamily dissolute quality of this Romanticism, at all of the idealistic deceitfulness and softening up of conscience that had here, once again, carried off the victory over one of the most courageous ones; weary finally, and not least, from the sorrow of a relentless suspicion—that I, after this disillusionment, was condemned to mistrust more deeply, to despise more deeply, to be more deeply alone, than ever before. My *task*—where had it gone? What? did it not now seem as if my task was drawing away from me, as if for a long time now²⁴ I would have no right to it? What was to be done in order to endure *this* greatest renunciation?—I began by thoroughly and fundamentally *forbidding* myself all Romantic music, this ambiguous, swaggering, oppressive art that destroys the spirit's severity and mirth and makes every sort of vague desire and fungal covetousness proliferate. "*Cave musicam*"²⁵ is, even today, still my advice to everyone who is man enough to maintain cleanliness in matters of the spirit; such music enervates, softens, feminizes, its "eternal feminine" draws *us*—downward! . . . At that time, my first suspicion, my proximate caution turned *against* Romantic music; and if I still hoped for anything at all from music, it was in the expectation that there might appear a musician, bold, subtle, mischievous,

southerly, overly healthy enough *to take revenge* upon that music in an immortal way.

4

Solitary henceforth and badly mistrustful of myself, I took sides in this way,²⁶ not without anger, *against* myself and *for* everything that caused *me* pain and was difficult:—so I found the way once again to the courageous pessimism that is the opposite of all Romantic deceitfulness and also, as it now seems to me, the way to “myself,” to *my* task. That concealed and dictatorial something for which for a long time we have no name, until it finally reveals itself as our *task*—this tyrant in us takes a terrible²⁷ revenge for every attempt that we make to evade or to escape it, for every premature determination, for every time we set ourselves equal to those to whom we do not belong, for every activity, however estimable, if it diverts us from our primary matter, indeed, even for every virtue that would like to protect us against the harshness of our most personal responsibility. Sickness, every time, is the answer when we wish to doubt our right to *our* task—when we begin to make things easier for ourselves in any way whatsoever. Strange and frightening at the same time! Our *alleviations* are what we must pay for most harshly! And if we wish to get back to health, there remains only one choice for us: we must burden ourselves *more heavily* than we have ever been burdened before . . .

5

It was at that time that I first²⁸ learned the hermit’s way of speaking, which only the most silent and most suffering people understand: I spoke without witnesses, or rather, indifferent toward witnesses, in order not to suffer from silence; I spoke only of things that meant nothing to me, but as if they did mean something to me. It was at that time that I learned the art of *presenting* myself as if cheerful, objective, inquisitive, above all, healthy and malicious—and for a sick person, isn’t this, as it seems to me, his “good taste”?²⁹ What perhaps

constituted the attractiveness of these writings will nonetheless not escape a subtler eye and sympathy—that a sufferer and a renouncer speaks here as if he were *not* a sufferer and a renouncer. Here balance, composure, even gratitude toward life *shall* be upheld; here rules a strict, proud, constantly vigilant, constantly sensitive will, which has set itself the task of defending life *against* pain and breaking down all of the inferences that tend to grow like poisonous fungus out of pain, disillusionment, annoyance, isolation and other swampy ground. Does this perhaps give, precisely to our pessimists,³⁰ a hint for their self-examination?—for it was at that time that I extracted for myself the proposition: “a sufferer does not *yet* have *any right* to pessimism!”, it was at that time that I waged a wearily patient campaign with myself against the unscientific basic tendency of every Romantic pessimism to puff up and to interpret³¹ individual personal experiences into general judgments, indeed, into world-condemnation³² . . . in short, it was at that time that I turned my gaze *around*. Optimism, for the purpose of recovery, in order at some time to *be permitted* to be a pessimist once again—do you understand that? Just as a doctor puts his sick patient into totally alien surroundings, so that he will be removed from his entire “up to now,” his cares, friends, letters, duties, stupidities and the martyrdom of memories, and learn to stretch his hands and senses toward new nourishment, a new sun, a new future, so I forced myself, as doctor and patient in a single person, into a reversed, untested *climate of the soul*, and especially into a diverting wandering abroad, into the unknown, toward a curiosity about every sort of strangeness . . . A long period of moving about, seeking, changing followed from this, an aversion toward everything settled, toward every blunt affirmation and denial; likewise a dietetic and discipline that wanted to make it as easy as possible for the spirit to run far, to fly high, above all, to fly away again and again. Actually a minimum of living, an unchaining from all coarser desires, an independence amid every sort of external misfortune, together with the pride in

being able to live under this misfortune; a bit of cynicism, perhaps, a bit of “the tub,”³³ but just as certainly a lot of³⁴ cricket-happiness, cricket-cheerfulness, a lot of quiet, light, subtler foolishness, hidden enthusiasm—all of this ultimately resulted in a great spiritual strengthening, an increasing pleasure and abundance of health. Life itself *rewards* us for our stubborn will to life, for a long war such as I waged at that time against the pessimism of weariness with life, indeed, for every attentive glance of our gratitude in not allowing the smallest, gentlest, most fleeting gift of life to escape. We eventually receive in return for this its *great* gift, perhaps even the greatest one that it is capable of giving—we receive *our task* back once again. —

6

—Should my experience—the history of a sickness and recovery, for it did lead to a recovery—have been only my personal experience? And really only *my* “human, all too humanness”? I would like today to believe the opposite; the confidence comes to me again and again that my wanderer’s books were not designed only for me, as sometimes appeared to be the case—. Do I now dare, after six years of increasing confidence, to send them anew on the experiment of a voyage? Do I dare to lay them especially on the heart and ear of those who are burdened with any sort of “past” and have spirit enough left over to suffer, too, from the *spirit*³⁵ of their past? Above all, however, you³⁶ who have it the worst, you rare ones, most endangered ones, most spirited ones, most courageous ones, you who must be the *conscience* of the modern soul and as such must have its *knowledge*, in whom all of the existing sickness, poison and danger comes together—whose fate wants you to have to be sicker than any individual can be, because you are not “*only*”³⁷ individuals” . . . whose comfort it is to know and to go the way of a *new* healthiness, ah! a healthiness of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, you predestined ones, you triumphant ones, you overcomers of time, you healthiest ones, you strongest ones, you *good Europeans!* —

7

—Let me finally bring into a formula my opposition to *Romantic pessimism*, that is, to the pessimism of those who renounce, have experienced misfortune, have been overcome: there is a will to the tragic and to pessimism that is as much the sign of severity as of strength of intellect (of taste, feeling, conscience). With this will in our breast, we do not fear the frightening and questionable aspect characteristic of all existence; we even seek it out. Behind such a will there stands courage, pride, the longing for a *great* enemy.— This has been *my* pessimistic perspective from the start—a new perspective, it seems to me? one that today, too, is still new and strange? Even to this moment I hold fast to it and, if you are willing to believe me, just as much for myself as, occasionally at least, *against* myself . . . You just want to see this proven? But what else would, with this long preface, have been—proven?³⁸

Sils-Maria, OBERENGADIN,
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