



Twilight of the Idols: How to Philosophize with a Hammer

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Twilight of the Idols

Friedrich Nietzsche [1895]

Text prepared from the original German and the translations by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale

Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer (German: *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt*) is a book by Friedrich Nietzsche, written in 1888, and published in 1889.

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Maintaining cheerfulness in the midst of a gloomy task, fraught with immeasurable responsibility, is no small feat; and yet what is needed more than cheerfulness? Nothing succeeds if prankishness has no part in it. Excess strength alone is the proof of strength.

A revaluation of all values: this question mark, so black, so huge that it casts a shadow over the man who puts it down — such a destiny of a task compels one to run into the sunlight at every opportunity to shake off a heavy, all-too-heavy seriousness. Every means is proper to do this; every "case" is a case of luck. Especially, war. War has always been the great wisdom of all spirits who have become too introspective, too profound; even in a wound there is the power to heal. A maxim, the origin of which I withhold from scholarly curiosity, has long been my motto:

Increscunt animi, virescit volnere virtus.

["The spirits increase, vigor grows through a wound."]

Another mode of convalescence (in certain situations even more to my liking) is sounding out idols. There are more idols than realities in the world: that is my "evil eye" upon this world; that is also my "evil ear." Finally to pose questions with a hammer, and sometimes to hear as a reply that famous hollow sound that can

only come from bloated entrails — what a delight for one who has ears even behind his ears, for me, an old psychologist and pied piper before whom just that which would remain silent must finally speak out.

This essay — the title betrays it — is above all a recreation, a spot of sunshine, a leap sideways into the idleness of a psychologist. Perhaps a new war, too? And are new idols sounded out? This little essay is a great declaration of war; and regarding the sounding out of idols, this time they are not just idols of the age, but eternal idols, which are here touched with a hammer as with a tuning fork: there are no idols that are older, more assured, more puffed-up — and none more hollow. That does not prevent them from being those in which people have the most faith; nor does one ever say "idol," especially not in the most distinguished instance.

Turin, September 30, 1888, on the day when the first book of the Revaluation of All Values was completed.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

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