

The Philosophy of  
**Friedrich Nietzsche**

*The Battle of God vs. Superman*



By Alan DeSantis

# His Life

- Born in 1844, Nietzsche came from a long line of Lutheran ministers (*father, grandfather*)
- Studied “Classics” and became a brilliant professor
- Left the University to live in solitude and write
- By his mid-40s, Nietzsche began his life-long battle with mental illness (*engendered by syphilis*)
- By the 1890s, he became internationally known, although he knew nothing of success
- In 1900, at age of 56, Nietzsche died in an insane asylum
- His Life-Long Goal: He was committed to teaching us how to live life to the fullest
  - This could best be done in a godless, meaningless world!

# The Horizon

(In *The Use and Abuse of History*)

- Every society has a *Moral* Horizon
  - These are absolute statements about how we should live
  - They inform citizens what is morally right and wrong
- Great men create horizons for us (p.833)
  - Plato, Locke, Hegel, Buddha, Jefferson, and Jesus
  - They all believe they “discovered,” not created truths
- In the best Civilizations, the Moral horizon allowed the weak, the incompetent, and the stupid to be eliminated through a natural process
  - Survival of the species
- Moralists like Jesus said these values are wrong—that laws should protect the weak

# The Consequences of Christianity's Moral Horizon

- This code became the dominant moral “horizon” in Europe
  - Christianity triumphed over Rome (*a strong culture*)
  - Today, Christian morals go unquestioned and unchallenged by most of us
- How: The process of condemning strength and encouraging a welfare state has been accomplished by convincing society that this new Christian moral code is the perfect, absolute, divine code of the Universe
  - Society now unquestionably accepts Christian morality as a transcendent “moral horizon”
- The Consequence: Natural leaders, the confident, the courageous, & the innovators are shackled by a value system that makes them equal with the masses

# Horizons are only Perspectives

- For Nietzsche, all horizons (*including Christianity*) are man-made *perspectives* in constant *flux*—*not absolute Truths* (p. 832)
  - 1) All horizons are “created” by men
    - There is no truth outside man and society
    - Life has no meaning before we give it meaning
  - 2) Each are mistaken as perfect & absolute
  - 3) There are many possible perspectives one can take on any moral issue (p. 834)
  - 4) Every perspective is limiting and incomplete
    - Use History and a soda can as examples

# And Since Moral Horizons are Only Illusions . . .

- Since there are no transcendental (*coming to us from anywhere outside this world*) ethics or values for us to use, we must create our own
- Once we realize that we are the creators of human values, we are free to choose whatever values are best
- And surely, we will choose the value system that has led us to greatness before Christianity
  - The natural process of weeding out the weak and empowering great men to do great things

But we diverge. . . Back to Christianity's  
Moral Code and its impact on our society

# Slave vs. Master Morality

(In *Beyond Good and Evil*)

- *For Nietzsche, Christianity replaced a Master Morality with a Slave Morality*
- A) Slave Morality of Christianity
  - Be caring and sensitive to all—place others first—don't be selfish—be meek—help the less fortunate—sacrifice
    - For this is how a good slave is to act
  - Slave Morality imposes this will on the strong
    - Don't be strong, assertive, aggressive, selfish
    - Work in the service of others, not yourself
  - Those who do not, are going to hell and are evil



# Slave vs. Master Morality

(In *Beyond Good and Evil*)

- *Nietzsche wants us to get back to a form of the old Master Morality*
- B) Master Morality of Nietzsche (p. 836)
  - To be great, we must break away from that *false* thinking
  - This thinking prevents men from being great individuals
    - Christianity creates mediocrity
    - It shackles great men to the mundane and average
  - Master Morality would encourage us to be unequals, warriors, and rise above the weak, stupid, and meek
    - Let the strong rise to the top of the heap

# Slave vs. Master Morality

- Nietzsche hates Christianity

- 1) It is a social construct but the masses blindly follow it as if it were “T”ruth
- 2) It forces men to following the teachings of God, not their greater and more powerful instinct (the *Will to Power*)
- 3) Under threat/fear, it forces men to value Humility not Pride, Equality not Individualism, Timidity not Aggression, and Others not Yourself

- He hates Democracy, Socialism, and Communism

- 1) They let the idiots run the system
- 2) All are based on equality—even though we are not all equal—some men are greater!(p. 837)
- 3) The masses of weak always win out while the few strong thinkers are forced to comply

# Turning Good into Evil

## *(Christianity's Moral Inversion)*

- Christianity turned the old category of “**Good and Bad**” on its head and replaced it with “**Good and Evil**”
- *Before* Christianity, following our natural instinct to be great (master morality) was “**Good**”
  - Suppressing it was “**Bad**”
  - There was no concept of evil associated with nature
- *After* Christianity, our instinct to be great became “**Evil**” (slave morality)
  - Suppressing it became “**Good**”
  - Now, our nature is inherently evil

# Turning Good into Evil

*(Christianity's Moral Inversion)*

- The Romans & Pre-Socratics Greeks followed their Natural Instinct
  - **GOOD** was strong, assertive, individualistic, bold, powerful, and vigorous
  - **BAD** was the weak, timid, sacrificial, and passive
- The primary focus was on striving for **GOOD**

# Turning Good into Evil

*(Christianity's Moral Inversion)*

- Christianity forces us to deny our Natural Instinct and view it as evil
  - GOOD is the meek, timid, sacrificial, passive, nurturing
  - EVIL is strong, assertive, individualistic, bold, powerful, and vigorous
- The primary focus is on fighting EVIL (*or the old Roman's notion of GOOD*)

# Turning Good into Evil

*(Christianity's Moral Inversion)*

- 1) In the end, Christianity turns our human drive into an evil desire
- 2) This leads man to hate himself and battle against himself
- 3) This leads all of society to suffer for man can no longer strive for individual greatness and boldness without overwhelming guilt and fear of hell

# The Wasted Possibilities

- Think how much greatness & human potential has been lost and squandered over the centuries
- For every one Van Gough, Free Jazz Musician, Dreamer, Rugged Individualist, and Experimental Poet following their “call to greatness,” billions of others have done nothing because of the foolish Christian mentality that told them “to serve others” for “their reward is in heaven”
- God, and his morality, must DIE if things are going to change and man is to be FREE to follow his *Will To Power*

# The Death of God

(In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)

- Nietzsche hated what Christianity had done to the world
  - It zapped it of its greatness
- Nietzsche was an Open Atheist (p. 839 top)
  - The first politically right atheist
- He believed that God would Die
  - God dies when men realize they created God—not vice versa
  - And with God’s death, also comes the death of Universal ideas and Truths (p. 839 bottom)
- How God Dies (p. 840 top)
  - Christianity makes us strive for perfection to relieve guilt
  - Thus we use science to obtain order & perfection
  - **Our Science** kills God and our belief in Absolutes
    - Science explains everything from creation to the Big Bang



# The Last Man

- After God's death, there will be a crisis
  - Without false horizons, *most* will be lost (p. 840 bottom)
  - Most (*the weak*) need this illusion of stability
    - Existentialism and suicide
- The Last Man (*the herd*) in the Crisis
  - He is a despicable coward
  - He knows that there are no moral "T"ruths, but is afraid to live authentically and think for himself
  - Even though he should feel "liberated," he repeats the same mistakes and refuses to give up the old oppressive code (p. 842 top)

# Superman & His *Will To Power*

- The Death of God will liberate others
  - For some, God's death is a glass half full!
  - It is a great opportunity to do great things
  - A godless, meaningless world is FREEDOM!
  - Life becomes a blank page for us to write our own life story
    - Not a coloring book in which we have to stay in the lines
  - God's death gives us Liberation:
    - 1) from guilt
    - 2) to be creative
    - 3) to construct one's own horizon
    - 4) to follow your own *will to power* (p. 842 bottom)

# Superman & His *Will To Power*

- What is our *Will To Power*?
  - For Nietzsche, it is man's internal drive for greatness and creativity
  - For centuries, it has been suppressed by Christianity
  - It is the voice in our head/heart that tells us to strive to rise above the masses (*not take care of them*) and to master everything (p. 843)

# The Superman

- What is a Superman
  - Part poet, part philosopher, part saint (p. 846-47 top)
  - He is the one that sees possibilities in the lost horizon
  - He even may need to be cruel and disconnected
  - He follows his *Will to Power* and is FREE for the first time!!
- Not all Supermen are alike
  - They must be true to themselves—each taking a different path
  - Break away from society—Don't lead!
    - To lead 1) forces you to take care of others again, 2) risks making yourself into a new god, 3) may stifle others from being their own supermen.
- But what should a Superman do?
  - Nietzsche is purposely vague (p. 847)
  - If he told us, we would follow him—not our own Will

# The Danger in Nietzsche

- Nietzsche wrote some dangerous things (p. 848 top)
  - 1) Men should withdraw from society & public responsibility
  - 2) He invites the apocalypse & war of the herd
  - 3) He advocates eugenics (selective breeding)
  - 4) He tells us to not care for others
- The Abuse of his writings by Hitler (*and others*)
  - Nietzsche is linked with fascism (p. 848 bottom)
  - He would have hated Hitler (849 top)
    - His leading, his small ideas, his Nationalism
  - But his writings are easily abused (849 bottom)
    - Nietzsche was a bold, careless provocateur
    - What we say and write have consequences

# Closing Thoughts

- Is Nietzsche just giving us another “T”ruth
  - He is giving us his perspective—not Truth
  - But his is the best yet, for it understands perspectives (p. 845)
- Nietzsche gives us radical new ideas:
  - 1) Perspectivism—all social truth is subjective
  - 2) Arguing against the ideas of benevolence, brotherhood, charity, and pity (for who has ever questioned those)
  - 3) Arguing for the “GOOD” of Christian “EVIL”
  - 4) The Excitement and freedom of a meaningless world
- Most importantly, Nietzsche reminds us to seize the day
  - Most of our lives are spent doing nothing—we wake up, go to work, go to bed
  - Follow your “Will To Power”—Think outside the Social Box
  - Don’t be part of the herd—Make your mark on history!

# Shakespeare's Richard III

Conscience is but a word that cowards use  
devised at first to keep the strong in awe.

Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!