

Friedrich Nietzsche, Solomon

I. Overview

- a. Like Kierkegaard, his philosophy is meant for the few who can understand him.
- b. “The goal of humanity cannot lie in the end [of men], but only in its specimens” (107).
- c. Attack on systematic philosophy
 - i. Like Kierkegaard, he writes unsystematically on purpose
 - ii. It is the business of philosophy to question all assumptions and perspectives
 - iii. “For Nietzsche, systems are one-sided – it is not they give us only truth (that is, objective truth), and we want subjective truth – but that system does not give us truth at all, just a systematically distorted and one-sided account (109).
- d. Like Kierkegaard, he focused on a philosophy that is lived

II. Values and Nihilism

- a. Moral values (including religious values) cannot be rationally justified
- b. There are not absolute values of good and evil
- c. Nihilism “is the thesis that there is nothing of absolute value” (113).
- d. “He does not argue that no values have justification, but only that traditional moral and religious (Christian) values have no rational defense (112).

III. Epistemological Nihilism

- a. The attack on the word-of-appearance and real world distinction
- b. The apparent world is the only world, and that the 'real world' is merely an added lie
- c. "The thesis that there exist objects independent of our experiences... is a 'linguistic fiction'" (113).
- d. There are not facts, only interpretations
- e. "What is need is that something must be held to be true – not that something is true" (Will to Power).
- f. "The true world is simply the world of our experiences and our interpretations" (113).

IV. Moral Nihilism: The "Death of God"

- a. "...for Nietzsche, morality and religion are logically interdependent and stand or fall together" (116).
- b. He claims that supernatural values are irrelevant to the discussion of morality, therefore, God, whether He exists or not, does not matter.
- c. Therefore, he is not saying that God does not exist, but only that God is irrelevant.
- d. He is opposed to any value system that is taken for granted, and that is not rigorously examined.

V. The Nature of Morality

- a. The purpose is not to destroy all of one's moral beliefs and start anew, but only to critically examine them.
- b. Morality, for Nietzsche, is a very pragmatic issue. In other words, what is right is what benefits me and what is bad is what undermines me.
- c. This function of moral values brings philosophy into close alliance with psychology, and for this reason, Nietzsche was also viewed as a psychologist.
- d. The construction of morality deals with individual psychology. The purpose is to create virtue for oneself and virtue is relative to the person; it is what benefits the person.
- e. The Role of Reason
 - i. Nietzsche agreed with Socrates and Kant that Reason plays an important role in morality.
 - ii. The problem is not Reason itself, but rather when Reason is preferred over the Passions or when Passions are destroyed.
 - iii. Nietzsche also attacked those who believed that the world is rational. He claims that it is irrational because there is no significance, no 'facts', no 'good' and 'evil', and that the world is what we make of it.
 - iv. Both reason and passion plays a role in morality.
 - v. He may conclude that there is no such act that does not involve passion.
- f. The limitations of Reason
 - i. "Reason itself has not motivational powers and thus cannot act independently of the passions..." (124).
 - ii. "Reason cannot even weaken or change passions, but it can determine their object of expression." (124).

- g. What is wrong with Christian morality?
 - i. Christian ethics attempts to condemn the life-stultifying passions but mistakenly, and tragically, condemns all passions. The saintly ideal of Christianity, according to Nietzsche, is not the powerful man who *controls* and uses well his effects, but the impotent man who is 'moral' only because of a *poverty* of feeling..." (124 – 125).

VI. The Will to Power

- a. Interpretations
 - i. "To "overcome oneself and it is the standard of self-overcoming which lies implicit in every morality, Greek, Chinese, Christian, or Kantian" (125).
 - ii. The basic life striving force
 - iii. Overcoming ourselves has greater significance than overcoming someone else
 - 1. "The striving for 'excellence' reaches its pinnacle not with those who conquer or overwhelm their neighbors, but with those who overcome themselves" (129).
 - 2. This is the highest 'Will to Power'
- b. The Need to Undermine Others
 - i. It is sometimes necessary to sacrifice others in the process of self development.
 - ii. However, Nietzsche does not condone cruelty for its own sake.
 - iii. He values nobility and strength in the noble person
 - iv. The strong seldom resort to cruelty
 - v. It is the obligation of the strong to protect the weak

VII. Slave Morality and Master Morality

- a. Distinction between Master Morality and Slave Morality
 - i. Master morality: recognition of the Will to Power
 - ii. Slave morality: the denial of power
- b. Master morality
 - i. The 'good' in master morality is strictly relative
 - ii. "Something is good if it fulfills its design" (131).
 - iii. This has nothing to do with other people.
 - iv. What is good is that it is good for me.
 - v. Bad "refers to failure, defeat, and loss of power" (132).
 - vi. The self-determining factor does not require egoism or selfishness
 - 1. "...dedication to great cause or great artistic projects is very often central to master morality" (131).
 - vii. However, sometimes it does
 - 1. "But the master does take his own goals to be beyond compromise, and cruelty, and inhumanity may be necessary means to satisfying this enterprising and often reckless life style" (131).
 - viii. On the issue of the Ego
 - 1. There is no such thing as the metaphysical ego
 - 2. The 'ego' is only represented as the dominant value

c. Slave morality

i. Does not create own values

1. The 'slave' does not create his own values, but begins by having a set of values forced on him, those values of the master by which he finds it impossible to become virtuous" (132).

ii. "Master morality tells him to be strong, but he is weak; it tells him to be courageous, but he is cowardly; it tells him to be creative and assert himself, but he is dull and unassertive.

iii. "The slave finds himself threatened with defeat in battle, so he 'turns the other cheek'; he finds himself incapable of doing great deeds, so he becomes a 'good citizen'" (133).

iv. "Good, for the slave, is thus the avoidance of evil, that which makes one feel safe, and secure (for example, weakness, humility, kindness, and charity)" (133).

VIII. The Übermensch

a. This is "the creator – the ultimate synthesis of Dionysian passion and Apollonian control – the one who actually does 'live his life as a work of art'" (134).

b. This is the person "who overcomes himself, he who master's (through sublimation) all of the beastly, destructive; especially self-destructive, drives within himself; the all-too-human passions and fears would lead him to be comfortable and secure rather than creative" (134).

c. It is "he who succeeds in the rational mastering of his instincts" (134).

d. It is the person who lives life as a 'work of art' and the style of living is more important than the content.

IX. Eternal Recurrence

a. The idea that everything will occur again exactly as it did in the past.

b. This is meant to be a test "for the worth of one's life" (136).

- c. "The ideal life – the life of the Ubermensch – is a life which can treat the prospect of eternal repetition with delight..." (136).