

## What of the World

Nietzsche provides an account of the genealogy of morals of current-day Christians via tracing back to the slave morality of the priestly society of ancient Judaism. He asserts morals are used as a tool to make people feel guilty for asserting their will to power on the world and thus allow the weak to overtake the strong. While this brand of morality has its place in the Christian tradition, Schleiermacher presents an alternative brand of religion, and in this Christianity, that rejects the emphasis on morality as well as emphasizing something greater than the world. Thus while Christianity may lead one away from enjoyment of worldly existence, with the proper focus on the divine, one is not suffering but flourishing. I will first outline Nietzsche's argument asserting Judaism and thus Christianity denies one one's will to power and enjoyment of worldly existence. I will then complicate this by injecting Schleiermacher's argument that ethics is not in the domain of religion. Then I will go on to show that the proper focus is indeed not on the world nor how one behaves within it but beyond the world and any properly religiously derived morals are a result of that and not the world. I will conclude that Nietzsche's genealogy fits even within a defense of Christianity, but Schleiermacher makes a strong case for a focus beyond the world.

In his first essay in *On The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche explains how slave morality was constructed by the weak to better their position. He draws a clear analogy to lions and sheep to demonstrate the difference between the ideal form of good and bad versus the slave morality of good and evil. To lions eating sheep is good because it's exactly what they want and to starve is bad because it's not what they want. Exertion of one's will to obtain one's desires is good and

not doing so is thus not good, ergo bad. This system has been used by many societies throughout history, for example, the Vikings. However, sheep do not desire to be eaten by lions. No reasonable lion is going to say eating sheep is bad though—as established, eating sheep is what they desire. However, the sheep can say what the lions are doing is *evil* and condemn them for their eating actions. Likewise a tribe that is weak will grow to hate those that overpower it. The weak tribe still has the natural desire to be strong and exert its will but cannot so hate is able to fester within. This is why Nietzsche explicitly describes the priests as the “*most evil enemies*” (Nietzsche 33): because of their being the weakest and most impotent class of people their hatred festers into a venomous monster that consumes their spirit and seeks revenge on the world. Because the Jews were a race of people battered about by surrounding peoples and ruled by priests, they collectively embraced the morality of the sheeplly priests.

This pressing of morality that rewards the weak and admonishes the strong is clearly present within Christianity. After all, statements such as “blessed are the meek” and “the last shall be first” are direct encouragements to the weak from scripture. Moreover messages such as a camel passing through a needle before a rich man enters Heaven suggest punishment for those who do well in the world. In addition to these sorts of scriptural passages, Nietzsche looks to Aquinas and Tertullian who both say the joy of Heaven is made greater by witnesses the damned suffer in Hell (Nietzsche 49-52). Thus Nietzsche seems to have a reasonable level of accuracy for some significant portion of the tradition regarding their morality and hate. These explicit statements of enjoyment of watching the strong suffer and rewarding the weak reinforce his point: Christian morals are against exerting strength in the world.

While Nietzsche paints this model of morality opposed to worldly strength as a bad thing, he does so in ignorance of other possible models. If one accepts his idea that achieving worldly

desires is the principle good and failing to is the principle bad then obviously accepting Christian morality as presented is bad. Moreover since that morality is merely a concoction of the weak to try to overtake the strong, the strong can safely toss it aside to pursue worldly goals. However, this dichotomy is not comprehensive: as we see in Schleiermacher's speeches *On Religion* the world is not the ultimate end. Thus even though this Christian morality may lead one away from worldly accomplishment, it may not lead one away from goods beyond the world that are ultimately more worthwhile than those in the world.

Schleiermacher expresses agreement with Nietzsche that people desire to succeed in the world. At the outset of his first speech he acknowledges the state of affairs: "You have succeeded in making your earthly lives so rich and many-sided that you no longer need the eternal" (Schleiermacher 3). From his perspective the modern movement to a mechanical world understandable through reason and science has negated the earlier focus on the religious. However this concerns Schleiermacher as he believes more exists beyond the world. Let us assume he is correct for the sake of working within the Christian tradition and exclude pantheistic models as they are not representative of the tradition. Presuming that God lies outside the world as well, regardless of whether he lies inside it too, we can conclude the ultimate good lies outside the world. Thus Schleiermacher is justified in his concern for society focusing on earthly goods and asserting their will to power.

While Nietzsche asserts the priests are merely the weak who exert moral influence to make up for their lack of power, Schleiermacher asserts the true priests are those who have contact with the infinite and spread that message to the masses. He describes the artists and poets as "the Most High, for they bring deity closer to those who normally grasp only the finite and trivial" (Schleiermacher 7). Here we can see a diversion away from the preaching of ethics and

prophecy of a propositional kind and towards those who express feeling. While at first this comes across as odd as spreading messages through plain language seems to be a cornerstone of Christianity, throughout scripture we can see parables and poetry, and reiterated through the central message that God is love. God is not said to be ethics, metaphysics, logic, or any other field of propositional thought but something that can only be understood through feeling. These expressers of feeling are not characterized by weakness, thus the true priests are not characterized by weakness in this model.

As we have a model for artists rather than weaklings as the bearers of Christianity, we can go on to show morals is not their domain and thus Nietzsche's moral complaints can in fact be distanced from Christianity itself. In his second speech Schleiermacher explains the essence of religion. In doing so he divides human knowledge into a number of spheres. In this he explicitly partitions metaphysics and morals away from religion as worldly human constructions. However, religion is not humans looking out nor acting out but the divine reaching in to humans (Schleiermacher 22). Thus morals are separate from religion and ergo separate from Christianity. As Nietzsche's complaints are regarding morals, if morals are not a component of Christianity then the complaints regarding them are not actually targeting Christianity but merely something masquerading as such.

Thus we can see that throughout the tradition of Christianity while slave morality has a solid foundation, it's not a necessary component. If one accepts Schleiermacher's emphasis on feelings then the leadership of the priestly morals Nietzsche bemoans are no more integral to the tradition than particular metaphysical conclusions. Furthermore if morals are indeed split from religion then Nietzsche's objections are historically valid, but not actually targeting Christianity itself but some people within. Because of these two facts, Nietzsche's complaints are not

fundamentally opposed to Christianity and the two can in fact be reconciled. If one then goes on to place proper focus on things greater than the world, then his complaints become yet more applicable. People are indeed seeking to assert their will to power and slave morality is a factor in that overall model being a tool of the weak to overpower the strong. However both the strong and the weak are misplacing their focus on the world. Thus while Nietzsche's explanation of morals works within Schleiermacher's model of religion, the disconnect is only at Nietzsche's poorly-placed focus on the world.

In conclusion, Nietzsche's explanation of some within the tradition as nay-saying holds true even within an explicit defense of the tradition. However, rather than being a symptom of Christianity itself, it's a symptom of the good-bad morals Nietzsche himself advocates. Furthermore the strong-weak divide need not be abolished. The issue is with the focus on the world and if one looks to those who are contacted by true religion then one is better off as one becomes closer to the divine.