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# A Critique of Frederick Nietzsche's Philosophy on Law, God, and Morality

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### Citation Information

Vaughn, Rebekah, "A Critique of Frederick Nietzsche's Philosophy on Law, God, and Morality" (2022). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. 47.

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# A Critique of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy on Law, God, and Morality

An Honors Thesis  
Presented to  
The University Honors Program  
Gardner-Webb University  
# November 2022

by

Your Name Goes Here

**Accepted by the Honors Faculty**

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## **Acknowledgments**

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Without Jesus, I would not have a passion for academics, morality, or arguing with those who wish to deny His very existence.

To Nietzsche,

Even though he is very dead, his philosophy is still very evident today. Without his philosophy being so contradictory to what I believe this thesis would not exist.

To Dr. Amato,

Without her careful and patient guidance, I never would have had the strength to pursue a thesis. She is a guiding light and the best advisor I could have ever asked for. Without her I would not have such an amazing academic career

To Eliza Bradley,

For convincing me to write this in the first place, always being willing to listen, and never letting me convince myself I could not do it.

### **Abstract**

Friedrich Nietzsche is the last of the modern philosophers. His philosophy has influenced fields such as literature, psychology, and ethics. Nietzsche's philosophy on ethics is primarily what will be covered. Nietzsche wishes to sever the connection between western civilization and God. He sees that people may no longer believe in God, but they still follow Christian morality. Nietzsche argues for a new morality, one humanity will create themselves. His famous line "God is dead" is an expression of what humanity needs to do with God. Nietzsche then argues the Overman will take over humanity, leading towards a world with a tyrannical leader. Nietzsche's philosophy is everywhere in the modern world and people do not realize how much it is. Different thinkers have argued against Nietzschean philosophy and his stance on ethics. Thomas Aquinas, Soren Kierkegaard, C.S Lewis, and Alexis De Tocqueville have arguments against Nietzsche. Each of these thinkers will be used to argue against Nietzschean philosophy on law, God, and morality.

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Fredrick Nietzsche is arguably one of the most well-known modern philosophers. This is just a reputation. His philosophy has embedded itself into many corners of the modern world. He has influenced the way people view religion, history, and even popular culture. A google search of his name would bring up movies, memes, and gifs. Nietzsche's main idea is that God is dead, and morality does not exist. He is not unique in the idea that morality must change or look different than the Christian Bible says it is. What makes Nietzsche unique is his single-minded focus on disconnecting morality from any source of authority, founding it on human will alone. To declare that God is dead, and morality is a matter of human convention will give rise to many problems. Morality is the foundation of society and cannot be stripped away as Nietzsche wishes. Morality needs a foundation for human beings and to have productive lives.

People find Nietzsche attractive as his philosophy promises freedom and authority over our lives. The problem is Nietzsche cannot deliver freedom and authority over our lives. As dystopian movies like *The Hunger Games* and *The Giver* show, societies with no foundation in morality become totalitarian and require deception to justify rule. Instead, grounding morality in God can deliver us the things people are trying to find in Nietzsche. God is not that easy to dispense of. Nietzsche's philosophy has many flaws and different philosophers pick those flaws apart. What I will do is put Nietzsche in conversation with other thinkers who are capable of intelligent arguments in favor of basing morality in theistic belief. Thomas Aquinas' ideas concerning natural and eternal law directly oppose the idea that God is dead, giving stability, flexibility, and freedom instead. Soren Kierkegaard gives the idea that life would be meaningless without God. Alexis De Tocqueville does not want to radically forget religion and sees the value it can bring to a society.

To understand Nietzsche's appeal, we first need to discuss how morality can be separated from God. Nietzsche argues that morality is human made. Morality is a social construct created by an oppressed class needing to overthrow their masters. All morality is a reflection of the ruling class. Law cannot be from a non-existent God but from a society desperate to control their surroundings. Love, mercy, and justice do not guide the law but desperation and power. The problem with this is if humanity created law, law can be whatever humanity wants. If there is no foundation for law, it breaks apart into whatever the person using it wants. In Nietzsche's world law is useless. Nietzsche wants to finally sever the cord between society and God once and for all. God is dead but the west has not gotten with the program. Nietzsche believes it is his personal duty to inform the west. To Nietzsche, the west needs to be made aware of the death of God so they can be free.

Nietzsche says his concept of the overman should be good enough to keep society from going into complete anarchy. The problem is that the overman is just a man like everyone else. He is only more involved as he realizes the death of God. The overman may be able to use the will to power to control certain people, but it will be no more than a glorified dictatorship. In Nietzsche's perfect world the overman is the perfect dictator, without self-sacrifice, mercy, or love. Some examples of overman are 20th century tyrannical leaders who have absolute political power. Nietzsche wishes to introduce a whole new set of values into society that will only benefit these types of men. "A man who counsels men to live dangerously must expect to have dangerous men like Mussolini heed his counsel"<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche may not have intended for tyrants like these to take his advice, but with the advice he gives it was inevitable. While not all the actions of these types of men can be blamed on Nietzsche, he is certainly responsible for many of

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<sup>1</sup> Strauss, Leo, and Joseph Cropsey. *History of Political Philosophy*. 3rd ed. N.p.: The University of Chicago, 1987, pg. 849

their ideas. Anyone who can introduce a new system of belief into society is dangerous. People who try to do this are mass murders. Nietzsche opens the door to people like these, and he is responsible for them. Morality is dead under the overman and gives way to leaders such as these.

Nietzsche's ideas here may seem harsh and as if no one would follow them. What most people do not realize is that Nietzsche's ideas have been affecting society for a long time. While Nietzsche did not invent atheism, the idea that God only existed when people believed in Him is becoming more and more popular. Some popular phrases that one might see on a T-shirt at Target are from Nietzsche's ideas. Phrases like "follow your heart" or "do what pleases you" are all from Nietzsche. Many prominent thinkers have also been influenced by Nietzsche and then in turn influence society. "The more did morality become their true domain. It now became the task of the gods to even out the defects and evils of civilization"<sup>2</sup> As Sigmund Freud states, without God morality ceases to exist. Most of Freud's thought is taken from Nietzsche. People see the argument from the *Genealogy of morals* as beneficial to their lives and to society. The idea that there can be multiple truths is Nietzschean. Pop-Nietzscheanism includes the idea of doing your own thing as there is no objective truth. Without an objective truth it becomes more than phrases on a coffee mug but a recipe for tyranny.

Nietzsche coined the idea that it doesn't matter what you do. If what you are doing brings pleasure to you, that is perfectly fine. If killing someone brings you pleasure or if adultery makes you happy then it is fine. These phrases may seem harmless but the ideas they were meant to give way to are far from harmless. Nietzsche despises self-sacrifice. The idea of going off to serve your country is horrible to him. Nietzsche's ideas have made an impact on popular culture

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<sup>2</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *The future of an illusion*. N.p.: Norton, d.



as well. Movies like the Hunger Games and the Matrix are Nietzschean societies. A Nietzschean society is something in practice no one wants to live in but has become romanticized.

Nietzsche has made a great impact on the world. His ideas heavily influenced Nazi Germany. The idea that the Jews are a lesser people and should be eliminated came from Nietzsche's works. While fascism is an abuse of Nietzsche's words, it is not hard to abuse them. Nietzsche's philosophy is full of consequences for anyone who wishes to follow it. He teaches a radical individualism that brings people away from society and allows them to do whatever they want. "He teaches men to abdicate their public responsibility, to despise the pettiness of day-to-day politics, and to abstain from the ordinary duties of the citizen."<sup>3</sup> These are the type of people Nietzsche's philosophy will produce. Nietzsche may not have intended his politics to influence people like this as he would have preferred a more wide-spread influence; it certainly has happened. Looking at each of Nietzsche's main philosophies, God is dead, the overman, destroying idols, and mortality is nonexistent; Thomas Aquinas, Soren Kierkegaard, and Alexis De Tocqueville will prove that Nietzsche's philosophies are not just harmful to society but wrong.

Nietzsche's works follow a philosophy with a slow decline in the usefulness of morality. While they do not necessarily follow a chronological order, people can follow his thoughts. Nietzsche's destruction of morality starts with the death of God. Nietzsche believes that God has never existed in the first place, therefore the foundation for morality is gone. Nietzsche will then go into his doctrine of the overman who acts as a replacement for God. Nietzsche then declares morality and law never existed and were made up. All of this will add up to Nietzsche writing that life is meaningless and there is no need for law. Law will be created by humanity to follow

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

the demands of the Overman. The larger counter argument is for natural law. Natural law declares all law and morality is founded upon a higher power. This is the opposite of what Nietzsche thinks but has far less consequences.

### **Chapter one: “God is Dead”**

“God is dead”, this is the central part of Nietzsche’s teaching on law and morality. Many people understand God to be the creator of morality and if God is dead then this eliminates that problem. Nietzsche declared “God is dead” in one of his most comprehensive works, *The Gay Science*.<sup>4</sup> In this work, he starts with a madman. This madman is one who believes in God and seeks him. Those who do not believe in God laugh around Him and make fun of Him. The madman suddenly jumps right into the middle of the crowd and declares that God has been killed and even more surprisingly by us. These few lines change the way morality is looked at by Nietzsche.

There were people before Nietzsche who did not believe in God, but he put it into a system of belief, atheism. While he did not create atheism, he created a reason for it. Nietzsche believed God never existed in the first place and society has moved past the need for him. The connection between God and civilization will be eradicated once and for all. The way he is writing it is almost as if Nietzsche finds it silly that society needed God to build law and morality around, but he acknowledges that society did. He believes society created an idol not a great creator to build your life around. Humans have made up this idol and everything that comes with it. Humans will then need to destroy which comes up in *Twilight of the Idols*.

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "*The Gay science*." Edited by Walter Kaufman, Translated by Walter Kaufman. N.p.: Vintage books, 1974.

Nietzsche says humanity is just “straying as through an infinite nothing.”<sup>5</sup> Humanity is drifting through the world with no purpose. The world contains nothing of meaning or value without God. After God has been killed humanity has no underlying meaning to their lives. This is what it means for God to be dead. He says humanity is not going anywhere, we are only those who are burying God. While this may seem harsh, this is the outcome of not believing in God. Now to Nietzsche this is a good thing as God never existed in the first place. Humanity should not be mourning something they never had. Each of these things are part of Nietzsche’s idea that God is dead. His major problem with morality is that it is all just secularized Christianity. Humanity has no reason to believe in Christian ethics if God does not exist, yet they still do. To truly have law (or not have law at all) humanity must first kill God. To fully explore Nietzsche’s problematic view on law and morality we must first look at God being dead.

One of Nietzsche’s major declarations in *the Gay Science* is that God is dead. A “madman” declares this in front of a group of people calling them all murders.<sup>6</sup> This “madman” is not really a madman as he is the one who is truly aware of reality. Nietzsche calls him a madman because that is what the world full of Christianity would call him. Humanity views him as mad but to Nietzsche he is the sanest person in the world. In Nietzsche’s view of the world those declaring God being dead would be considered mad even though they deliver the truth. The madman asks where God is and declares they have all killed him. This is not actually what Nietzsche means. God's not dead but it is simply a dramatic way of saying God never existed in the first place. God is an idol that humanity invented to explain morality and law. God is not a great and loving Savior, but an idea that humans need to destroy. Humanity must kill God and

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<sup>5</sup> Gay science, pg. 181

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

everything that comes with Him. God never existed and therefore His ideals must be dismantled. Christian morality does not need to be followed as God's morality dies with Him.

God is not actually dead. Nietzsche is nothing if not dramatic and wishes to catch the world's attention by making a big declaration. God in fact never existed in the first place. Humanity has tricked themselves into thinking they needed God and that He was ever there. The 'big man in the sky', the "good Father watching over you", are all just human ideas according to Nietzsche. Nietzsche cannot understand a self-sacrificing God. He also finds fault in that each God is a denial of another. He sees this as a problem with individual liberty.<sup>7</sup> He sees that individuals have too much freedom to just create gods whenever they wish and declare it blasphemy when you speak against one. He does not see this as a god worth creating let alone believing in. As declared by the madman once God no longer exists the universe is devoid of meaning. Society is going in all directions with nowhere to end up. Nietzsche wishes humanity to stare into the void and enjoy it, just as he does. Life should not have any meaning or direction; therefore, God never existed in the first place. God takes away humanities purpose, just as Nietzsche intended.

#### Where did the idea for God come from?

God never existing in the first-place flies in the face of any morality. This Nietzsche would agree with, as everyone should be able to create their own morality. Nietzsche has many problems with the existence of God. First, God is selfless. Nietzsche does not understand why anyone would be self-sacrificing let alone a god.<sup>8</sup> He says that selflessness just leads into your own praise and pride. He also makes a notion that the world is not living and breathing, so therefore neither can its creator. He also makes the point that people should not praise their

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<sup>7</sup> The Gay science, pg. 191

<sup>8</sup> The Gay science, pg. 94

creator.<sup>9</sup> In his opinion this deconstructs the need for a God entirely. He also does not like anything that denies someone something. The Biblical idea of dying to yourself is restrictive and chaining according to Nietzsche and no reason to believe in God. All of these are arguments that God never existed in the first place according to Nietzsche.

Since according to Nietzsche, God never existed in the first place all he must do is convince society that they no longer need God. Society must recognize God does not exist and move on from Him. This is what Nietzsche thinks humanity must realize concerning God. He understands God had a place, but he no longer thinks this is the case. Society must simply recognize God was a created being and therefore destroying the idea of Him. Once something as powerful as God is believed to be nothing more than a creation of man it loses all its appeal. Nietzsche knows this and uses it to expose Christianity's plot to keep God alive. Since Nietzsche believes God was a created idea, he must understand that idol came from something. His answer to this is that God is an idol.

#### God as an idol

To Nietzsche many things are idols. He believes an idol is anything society puts above themselves. Idols are those deemed greater than the people who created them. Examples would include history, sex, religion, property, and even health. God is just another history; the biggest idol society has created. Idol ship is something Nietzsche considers almost stupid for the intelligent person. He cannot understand denying yourself the pleasures of life for an idol you created yourself. God is not a great creator but just another idol. Idols like this need only to be destroyed.

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<sup>9</sup> The Gay science pg. 191

If God did not exist in the first place and society must 'kill' God, how would society go about doing that? According to Nietzsche God did not exist and humans made Him up.

Humanity needed to have an answer to the conflicts of society. They needed a reason for creation, for pain, and for love. Humanity needed an answer for all the suffering Humanity's answer was God and Nietzsche's answer was nothing. Suffering is good and something that should be praised. Nietzsche even gives a reason as to when God started in the *Genealogy of Morals* reaching back to Ancient Rome.

The fact that society made up God has huge consequences. According to Nietzsche humanity must now come to grips with the fact that God never existed. As Nietzsche states "What was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives?"<sup>10</sup> A holy and loving God will bleed and die under humanities abandonment. In other words, Nietzsche is saying that upon finding out humanity killed God he is deeply pained. The madman states that the best and holiest person is killed by humanity. Nietzsche is alluding to the fact that the dirty and unholy created beings were able to kill the beloved and holy creator. To him this speaks to the fact that God is neither creator or holy but merely an object of human greed and imagination. Humans made God up to satisfy their needs for law, protection, and a desire to deny themselves. There are extreme consequences from God being dead.

God being dead is detrimental to human existence. God is an existing foundation for law, mortality, and the human psyche. If Nietzsche can convince humanity that God truly has never existed, then he must acknowledge the consequences of that and have an answer for them. He must have someone to replace God. Nietzsche understands the hole it leaves in society to remove God and the influence of Christianity. The immense consequences of God being dead can cause

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<sup>10</sup> The Gay Science, pg. 181

loss of morality, inability to enforce law, disturbances to the factions in society, and the functions of the individual. God being dead leaves a whole in the world that someone must fill. Nietzsche does understand someone needs to replace God but first goes into how society killed Him.

### **Counter arguments for God being dead**

#### Introduction of Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard is one of the foremost theologians and modern philosophers. Kierkegaard focuses on topics such as the meaning of life, significance of faith, and the importance of loving God. While he has many philosophical points, his main arguments surround the sacrifice of Isaac. In "*Fear and Trembling*" he outlines the importance of this sacrifice and its implications on the Christian faith. His arguments on faith are revolutionary. He argues that faith and reason are compatible, yet faith will always support reason. He makes the perfect person to argue against Nietzsche as he focuses on faith and how life does not have meaning without God.

The sacrifice of Isaac is a central piece of the Christian faith as it mirrors the later sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Kierkegaard argued that this sacrifice was integral to a person's view of faith. In this sacrifice Abraham displays an extreme amount of faith. Kierkegaard argued that it would have been a sin to have Isaac sacrificed but the fact that he was not is critical. The act of an almost sin makes the forgiveness for it even more important. Abraham then knew what it was like to sin and to be forgiven. Kierkegaard argued that there is no man greater than Abraham. Abraham knew how to love God so much that you would sacrifice anything for him. The love he had for God was greater than the love he had for his son. Loving God is greater than any type of love.

Kierkegaard continues to go through the story of Abraham making remarks about different points in his life. Abraham was chosen by God to endure these tests and was promised

blessings because of that. Abraham knew there was no sacrifice too large when God asked it of him. He had faith greater than anyone and would never move beyond that faith. Kierkegaard also points out that the world is an imperfect place, but God loved it so much He would send His Son. A central point of Kierkegaard's teaching is the love of God towards the world. He offers that faith and love are good things, unlike Nietzsche. Nietzsche would highly disagree with most if not all of Kierkegaard's teaching. They do go head-to-head in writing about the meaning of life and God's role in it.

### Kierkegaard v. Nietzsche

Soren Kierkegaard gives a great argument for the existence of God. Kierkegaard argued that without God life would be completely devoid of meaning.<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche considered life having no meaning a good thing while Kierkegaard argued against him. Kierkegaard says if there is no God nothing matters, including Nietzsche's thoughts. "How empty and devoid of comfort would life be!"<sup>12</sup> Life is meaningless without God, but unlike Nietzsche this is the worst possible thing to have. Kierkegaard makes this statement to agree with Nietzsche's idea that if God were dead life would have no direction. Thankfully, Kierkegaard gives a solution, God as creator.

Humanity can do nothing but admire what has been done. They can remember the greatness of creation but never become the creator. God is where everything starts, "God becomes an invisible, vanishing point, and impotent thought, and His power is to be found only in the ethical, which fills all existence."<sup>13</sup> God cannot be separated from His creation. No matter how much Nietzsche wishes to get rid of God, it is not possible as God fills everything.

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<sup>11</sup> Kierkegaard, Soren. "Fear and trembling." Translated by Alastair Hannay. N.p.: Penguin Classics, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 49

<sup>13</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 96



Kierkegaard makes the point that creation must have a creator, that creator being God. If it is not God, life is devoid of meaning and we are floating in oblivion.

### A selfless God and a selfless life

Another argument against the existence of God is that according to Nietzsche a self-sacrificing God is impossible. “‘God on the cross,’ that mystery of an unimaginable ultimate cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the salvation of man?”<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche cannot comprehend the faith it would take to believe God sent His Son for humanity. Faith is a large element of Kierkegaard’s philosophy, and it enhances his view of God. Kierkegaard disagrees completely and says that the idea of a self-sacrificing God is the best kind of God.

The entirety of *Fear and Trembling* focuses on the ethical paradox of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. New Testament Bible readers know that the sacrifice of Isaac is a metaphor and a foreshadowing of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Kierkegaard knows this as he quotes the Genesis 19 passage “son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” God is willing to sacrifice His own son to save the world, Nietzsche would consider this absurd. Kierkegaard would reply “... on the strength of the absurd, on the strength of the fact that for God all things are possible.<sup>15</sup>” Sacrificing your only son may seem absurd but to a God known for resurrections is far from it. Sacrifice is a foreign concept to Nietzsche. He does not understand why people would serve a God who sacrifices Himself. Kierkegaard explores this concept in his book. A God who gives up Himself out of love is the best kind of God to serve according to Kierkegaard.

Nietzsche not only does not like a selfless God he dislikes self-sacrificing people. He does not understand why anyone would sacrifice for God. “‘selflessness’ has no value either in

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<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Genealogy of Morals." Edited by Walter Kaufman, Translated by Walter Kaufman. N.p.: Vintage books, 1989, pg. 35

<sup>15</sup> *Fear and Trembling*, pg. 75

heaven or on earth.”<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche completely dismisses the idea of love for the sake of love. To him, everything must have a selfish motive. Nietzsche talks about the concept of martyrdom and giving everything, you have to a God that does not exist. “The praise of the selfless, the self-sacrificial, the virtuous that is, of those who do not apply their whole strength... would manifest his selflessness by not calling it good”<sup>17</sup> To Nietzsche selflessness is a manifestation of the facade of the belief in God. This is a very dangerous idea to him. This is the idea that people who are selfless are not actually selfless but are pretending to be for their own gain. There is no act purely for selfless reasons, everything must have its own motive.

Kierkegaard also has an argument for this. As *Fear and Trembling* is all about Abraham being willing to sacrifice his only son, the one he had waited for his whole life, the moment God asked. This makes Kierkegaard very familiar with sacrifice as he believes Abraham one of the greatest men to have ever lived. What would be puzzling to Nietzsche is that Abraham did not “challenged heaven with his prayers”, he never protested.<sup>18</sup> Abraham knew what God wanted of him and did not hesitate. As Kierkegaard puts it, “no sacrifice was too hard when God demanded it.”<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche would say that a God asking you to sacrifice anything, let alone your only son, is not worth following. Nietzsche cannot comprehend Abraham and dismisses him as myth. A God who asks the most of you is because He has already given you the most. Kierkegaard would say that is exactly the kind of God you should be following.

God asking the best of you is not an argument that God is dead but an argument that God is alive, breathing, and involved in human affairs. Nietzsche would say this is what makes a person insane. Kierkegaard argues that “his greatness was that he so loved God that he was

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<sup>16</sup> The Gay Science, pg. 283

<sup>17</sup> The Gay science, 94

<sup>18</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 55

<sup>19</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 55

willing to offer him the best he had.”<sup>20</sup> Giving God all that you have is what makes you great. What makes life great and meaningful is the fact that God does ask us to sacrifice and in turn sacrifices Himself. Nietzsche is not wrong in that life would be meaningless without a God like that to serve, he only misses how horrid that life would be. Nietzsche celebrates a meaningless life, but humanity will not.

Another problem Nietzsche has with the existence of God is that God asks you to deny yourself and your desires. Nietzsche believes in a life full of pleasure and freedom. He wants society to follow whatever they wish with no restraints. “Those moralists who command man first of all and above all to gain control of himself thus afflict him with a peculiar disease...”<sup>21</sup> Morality is a disease trying to control yourself. The concept of sin that humanity denies in nothing worth a sacrifice. Kierkegaard would greatly disagree with Nietzsche, in that self-hatred and denial is a good thing. “Great in that hope whose outward form is insanity, greater that love which is hatred of self.”<sup>22</sup> Denying yourself is further evidence God exists and that humanity should serve Him.

Kierkegaard goes even further and states “The person who denies himself and sacrifices himself for duty gives the finite in order to grasp on to the infinite...”<sup>23</sup> The person who sacrifices himself has a better understanding of the world than someone who does not. Someone who gives up the small treasures in life for the bigger prize is going to have found the greatest of treasures. Kierkegaard goes on to say that freedom with no restraints is not a good thing as Nietzsche suggests. “That there may be some who need coercion, who if given free rein would

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<sup>20</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 58

<sup>21</sup> The Gay science, pg. 244

<sup>22</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 50

<sup>23</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 89

riot in selfish pleasure like unbridled beasts”, while that may seem harsh Kierkegaard is right; most people cannot handle unbridled freedom.

Nietzsche believes that a God who sacrifices for you, asks you to sacrifice yourself, and deny yourself is not worth serving. This God could not possibly exist. Kierkegaard argues that since life must have meant this type of God is one that must exist and is worth serving. God's not dead, nor did humanity kill Him, they simply are not serving God in full force of faith as Abraham did. Living a life full of faith is the path of least resistance, not something to be abounded.

### God is not an idol

Nietzsche believes God is an idol created by humanity. There was a point in time when God was created out of a need for order and a stop for conflict. To Nietzsche, God is a created being, an idea, or idol not something that existed from the beginning of time. Since Nietzsche believes God was a created idea, he must understand that idol came from something. God is not something known by faith but a created idea. Kierkegaard has an argument for that too. As already pointed out, the created cannot create. God cannot be reduced to an idol. God is a being with immense love and control over all of reality. “God’s love is for me, both in a direct and inverse sense, incommensurable with the whole of reality.”<sup>24</sup> Reality is created by God not the other way around.

Kierkegaard argued that God created man not man created God. “... God created man and women...” God knows the struggles of the world as He created it. Kierkegaard also makes the argument that humanity could not create God as an idol. “This man was no thinker, he felt no need to go further than faith.”<sup>25</sup> Faith is as far as man can go, man could not think as far as to

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<sup>24</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 63

<sup>25</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 44

create God. Men do not need to look beyond faith for their answers, they have no need to create a God. God created man to use faith to love Him. A God like that could not possibly be an idol, but Nietzsche is not looking at God's character or the inability of man to create, only his problems with God.

Another problem with God being an idol is that according to Nietzsche idols are those deemed greater than the people who have created them. This makes sense, as if humanity was going to worship something it would be greater than themselves. The problem with that is that if society creates something they would be in power over it. The created cannot have power over the creator. “- the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of love (can one credit that?), out of love for his debtor!”<sup>26</sup> This is exactly what God does and Nietzsche cannot understand it at all. God clears the debt we owe, instead of wanting us to pay it back in double. An idol worth serving must have created those you worship, which makes God not an idol. Though Nietzsche would say humanity created God, then would mean He is not an idol. If God created man, He is not an idol and is someone worth serving. Kierkegaard would say God created man, hence making God not an idol.

The idea that according to Nietzsche what makes man great is freedom and His ability to recognize God is dead. Kierkegaard would say that “He who loved God became greater than all.”<sup>27</sup> What makes humanity great is not their ability to recognize God as an idol and destroy Him but to follow their creator. “For duty is precisely the expression of God’s will”, we all have a duty to love and follow our creator.<sup>28</sup> Humanity feels this duty to love and follow not to destroy

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<sup>26</sup> Genealogy of Morals, pg. 92

<sup>27</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 50

<sup>28</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 88

God as an idol. Humanity wishes to do things for God, and this is not a bad thing as Nietzsche argues. Humanity is not defined by the idea of God being an idol but by loving God.

Another part of God being an idol is that God is an object of human need and ideas. God is neither created or holy but merely an object of human greed and imagination. Humans needed God to serve a purpose. They needed Him to satisfy their needs of law, mortality, and order in a chaotic world. “Christian Morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously.”<sup>29</sup> Christianity confirms its own truth. Morality is a by-product of God being created, according to Nietzsche. Kierkegaard would say humanity could not create such an idol or philosophy such as Christianity. “Philosophy cannot and should not give us an account of faith but should understand itself and know just what it has indeed to offer.”<sup>30</sup> Humanity would not create a religion that requires them to deny themselves and curb their own pleasures. Humanity and their ideas cannot understand faith and therefore cannot create it. According to Kierkegaard “- yet God is love and for me continues to be so.”<sup>31</sup> A God that is love cannot be the creation of human greed and imagination.

Nietzsche makes the argument that God is dead. Humanity created God as an idol and must kill Him. Humans must make the effort to kill God and realize they created Him. Kierkegaard realizes humanity cannot create something as they are created. He also points out that without God life would be completely devoid of meaning and comfort. God is the foundation for all things good and love. Humanity must not kill God otherwise there is no reason to live. He also argues that God existed first then created man and women. While Nietzsche

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<sup>29</sup> The Gay Science, pg. 307

<sup>30</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 63

<sup>31</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 64

seems to enjoy the fact that life has no meaning without God, that is the world he wants with God being dead.

### **If God is dead, how did He die?**

After Nietzsche has introduced the idea for God never existing in the first place, he must then explain how God ‘died’. The idea for God had to originate from somewhere. Nietzsche declares in *Twilight of the Idols* that God is an idol created by humanity to fulfill needs.<sup>32</sup> Since humanity created God, they must kill Him. Humanity must smash their own idol. Humanity does this by forgetting the need for God. According to Nietzsche, humanity forgets God. Humanity must forget God by using their own memory. Once society forgets the past, they can finally move on from it. Once humanity realizes God is an idol they can move on from God and live in the future. Nietzsche acknowledges this will be a hard task but believes humanity will be better off without God holding them back. Kierkegaard and Alexis De Tocqueville disagree with Nietzsche. They would both say you cannot forget God and that forgetting your past will only negatively impact your future. Humanity must learn from the past not forget it.

### How does humanity kill God?

Nietzsche has already declared God is dead in *the Gay Science*. He has analyzed why he believes God never existed in the first place. Since Nietzsche believes his reasons are indisputable, he therefore must explain how humanity should ‘kill’ God. Humanity created God so therefore, they must kill Him. The creator can only destroy the created. After humanity realizes they created God, they must kill Him. Humanity must acknowledge God is an idol just like history, love, and any object of worship.

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<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Twilight of The Idols.” In *The Portable Nietzsche*, Edited by Walter Kaufman, 103-439. 62<sup>nd</sup> ed. Translated by Walter Kaufman. New York City: Penguin Books, 1976. Pg. 463-563

Nietzsche gives humanity the command to “kill” God. Nietzsche says, “We deny God, we deny the responsibility in God: only thereby do we redeem the world.”<sup>33</sup> Instead of God redeeming us, we redeem ourselves by eliminating Him. This is the concept illustrated in *Twilight of the Idols*. This concept is even further seen in the title of the book. To Nietzsche a ‘twilight’ signifies the end of something. A twilight is the final end, something that should never occur again. This is how Nietzsche views idols; they once had their time, but it is over now. The other part of the title is “how to philosophize with a hammer.” A hammer acts like a tuning fork to see if the idols are worth something. Nietzsche concludes that all idols are hollow. The idol known as God was created by humanity so therefore it must be killed by humanity. This is the charge he gives the philosopher. “My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he takes his stand beyond good and evil and leave the illusion of moral judgment beneath himself.” In other words, a good philosopher must leave morality and religion beyond as it is beneath him. Once man leaves God, they enter the dawn.

Once the era of idols has ended (twilight) the dawn comes. The dawn is when humanity creates new values. They move beyond the need for God and all idols and start a new world. It is worth noting that this is a big critique of history and Karl Marx. Marx believed history is what humanity should follow. Nietzsche says history has become another god and needs to be slaughtered. Nietzsche states humanity made these idols and can destroy them, making something new. This is a connection to the golden calf from Exodus. In Exodus, the Israelites are supposed to be waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain. The Israelites get impatient and decide to melt down all their jewelry and build a golden calf to worship. This is an idol made by humanity that they could destroy just as they made it. This can be found in “*Thus spoke*

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<sup>33</sup> *Twilight of the Idols*, pg. 501



*Zarathustra*.<sup>34</sup> “God is a thought that makes crooked all that is straight and makes turn whatever stands.”<sup>35</sup> God makes humanity worse. Zarathustra announces the death of God to humanity. He then urges humanity to destroy the God they made. Humanity must create new values aside from God and therefore destroy God forever.

Nietzsche has given his instructions. God is an idol and must be destroyed by humanity. If humanity created God, they could smash that idol. Idols are the foundation for morality and once God is gone so is morality. “When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one’s feet.”<sup>36</sup> Christianity can be destroyed as soon as humanity decides to do so. According to Nietzsche, humanity's next step is to forget God. Once God has been killed humanity must forget they did so. The guilt of killing God is too great and Nietzsche hates guilt so it must be gotten rid of. Humanity cannot handle the death of God so they must forget Him. It is now the time for humanity to forget God and all idols.

### Forgetting God

In the “*on the Genealogy of Morals*” Nietzsche says that humanity must kill God by forgetting Him. Nietzsche believes the power to forget is the greatest power humanity possesses. While forgetfulness may seem like a bad thing to the average person, Nietzsche would disagree. If you forget something, then it no longer controls you. God is the biggest control factor in most people’s life. God controls their morality, law, and behavior. If humanity were able to forget God, then they would no longer be controlled by a limited morality.

Nietzsche calls whoever still believes in God ‘the herd’. This herd is guided by a shepherd who defends them against what would normally come against them. The herd or the

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<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." 103-439. Translated by Walter Kaufman. Nap: penguin classics, 1968

<sup>35</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 198

<sup>36</sup> Twilight of the Idols, pg. 515

‘sick’ must attach a reason for their guilt over the suffering in the world. The sick are those responsible for creating the idol known as God. “Every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a quality agent who is susceptible to suffering.”<sup>37</sup> Everyone wants a reason for their suffering and someone to blame for it. That person to blame is God, hence the need to create Him. The sick cannot defend themselves against “... spite, malice, and whatever else is natural to the ailing and sick and smolder within the herd itself.”<sup>38</sup> God is their agent to help them against all the troubles of the world. The sick need an answer for pain, and once God is gone, they must forget the pain used to create Him. This is how forgetting God starts.

“To close the doors and windows of consciousness for a time; to remain undisturbed by the noise and truffles of our underworld of utility organs working with and against one another...”<sup>39</sup> This is what Nietzsche thinks about forgetfulness. He believes humanity must repress and forget their conscience to be done with all religion. Nietzsche compares humanity to animals in our need for a conscience. This conscience is what enables humanity to create God and therefore what is stopping humanity from forgetting Him. Nietzsche acknowledges it was hard to create this memory and will be even harder to get rid of it, but it is possible.

Memory is one of Nietzsche’s biggest problems. “Only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory.”<sup>40</sup> Memory is created to protect humanity from pain. “Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself.”<sup>41</sup> Man’s answer to pain and sacrifice is to create the memory of religion. Nietzsche believes there

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<sup>37</sup> Genealogy, pg. 127

<sup>38</sup> Genealogy, pg. 126

<sup>39</sup> Genealogy, pg. 57

<sup>40</sup> Genealogy, pg. 61

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

are two types of memory. There is the type of 'fixed' which cannot be forgotten and active memory which can be forgotten. God is part of the active memory and can be forgotten.

Nietzsche notices that the worse man's memory becomes the more man notices the problems with God. Memory has blinders up to keep man from getting rid of God. Once humanity starts to forget religion starts to become less powerful. Man becomes afraid of his traditions and of his desires. Nietzsche considers this to be a good thing, man is waking up. Once man can smash the idol that is God and forget Him man can move on. Man can look to what comes next in society and not be controlled by a deity.

### Introduction of Tocqueville

Tocqueville was an aristocrat that lived shortly after the American revolution. His book *Democracy in America* outlines the successes and failures of American democracy. He was a French aristocrat who understood the failures of monarchy. Tocqueville was sent by France to observe the American jail system. Tocqueville observed American democracy instead. Tocqueville argued the Americans had mastered democracy better than Ancient Athens and it was something to be noted. Tocqueville observed the effects of freedom, equality, individualism, federalism, and religion.

Tocqueville made many comments about religion and morality. Tocqueville, as a practicing Catholic argued that religion was essential to democracy and the function of government. Religion could not be taken away from people and society would still function, as Nietzsche argued. Religion was the foundation of morality and morality was essential to government. Tocqueville also addressed what is called "self-interest well understood." This is similar to Nietzsche's view on selfishness, but it does benefit all involved. Tocqueville does not believe this is the ideal way to conduct yourself. Tocqueville metaphorically argues with

Nietzsche on many things, but his most useful idea is of religion being necessary for a functioning society.

### Counter arguments for God as an idol and forgetting Him

The best counter arguments for God not being an idol and not forgetting God are found in two different philosophers. Kierkegaard, as discussed before, would disagree that God is an idol. He would agree with Nietzsche in the idea that idol ship is bad but does not view God as one. Alexis De Tocqueville in writing “*Democracy in America*” gives a good view of the past.<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche would wish to erase every part of the past while Tocqueville would say there are things to be learned from the past. While Tocqueville does not necessarily believe in God himself, he recognizes the many benefits of religion. Each of these philosophers would disagree with Nietzsche and his view of God and memory.

Starting with Kierkegaard, he would argue against Nietzsche’s idea of God as an idol created by humanity. Kierkegaard believes that God created man. “But for that reason, it is not so, and as God created man and woman...” By definition an idol must be created by those it is worshiped by. Humanity did not create God. Humanity follows God in faith. According to the Bible, humanity cannot ignore God’s existence as His laws are written in their hearts. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”<sup>43</sup> There is evidence for God in us that cannot be ignored. This verse is where Kierkegaard gets his idea that without God as creator, Nietzsche would indeed be right, and life would be meaningless. Idols are meaningless as they are created just with words alone, “whatever people want to exalt with

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<sup>42</sup> Tocqueville, Alexis. “Democracy in America.” Edited by Harvey C. Mansfield, 40-44. Vol. 1. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Romans 1:20, New King James version

empty and hollow phrases, that they themselves reduce to nothing.”<sup>44</sup> Worship of God is far from empty, only someone who wishes to deny it’s worth would argue it has none. Worship of God is based on something, faith, which Nietzsche cannot comprehend. “It is God who demands absolute love”, eliminating the need for other idols.<sup>45</sup> To Nietzsche, faith is blind and only used by those who are too unintelligent to understand pain. God alone is to be worshiped, in faith, as the creator.

Tocqueville would disagree with Nietzsche in the idea that the past is always bad. While he would not go as far as Karl Marx in idolizing history, he notes it has worth. Tocqueville has the advantage of growing up in an aristocratic society and then getting to observe a democratic one. While he states the democratic society is a much better society, he does not forget the good things aristocracy has. He remembers that in aristocratic societies, everyone knows their place and people are bound to help their communities. They are devoted to their fellow man. “As in aristocratic society all citizens are placed at a fixed post...”<sup>46</sup> In those societies people know their place and their duty to help their fellow man. There is significantly less exploration in an aristocracy. Tocqueville understands the need for God in society when understanding your place in it.

Tocqueville is not held captive by history but also does not ignore it completely. One of Tocqueville’s critiques of democracy is that one starts to forget the individual person and their duties to the community. Tocqueville argues that forgetfulness and ignorance of the past will lead man to be selfish. Selfishness is the greatest enemy to growth and democracy. As Nietzsche has stated before, selfishness is something people should follow. He does not agree with

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<sup>44</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 93

<sup>45</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 101

<sup>46</sup> Democracy in America, pg. 483

anything that makes a person deny oneself. Both Tocqueville and Kierkegaard disagree.

Selfishness is the enemy of all thriving governments. Selfishness comes from the ability to forget and not learn from the creation and the mistakes of humanity. Selfishness will cause you to believe you are above everyone else's mistakes.

Nietzsche believes that God is used as a control factor. God is the biggest control factor in most people's life. God controls their morality, law, and behavior. If humanity were able to forget God, then they would no longer be controlled by a limited morality. Kierkegaard would argue that humanity is not controlled by God. If humanity was controlled by God, then there would be no free will or original sin. Humanity follows God by faith not by control. "Faith is a passion", not something to be used against people to gain moral control over.<sup>47</sup> Faith is the duty of humanity, not something they are commanded to do. "It is therefore correct to say that all duty is ultimately duty to God..."<sup>48</sup> Humanity does have a duty to God, but it is ultimately about faith, not control. If faith was a command, everyone would believe in God, including Nietzsche.

Nietzsche introduces the idea of "the herd" or "the sick." "The herd" or "the sick" must attach a reason for their guilt over the suffering in the world. The sick are those responsible for creating the idol known as God. Those that are sick need to have an answer for the suffering in the world. Nietzsche would tell them to get over it and accept the world is flawed and rejoice in their pain and sufferings. Kierkegaard would be greatly against this notion. He would say the precise reason why humanity needs God is because they are sick. Unlike Nietzsche, he sees all of humanity in need of help and healing.

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<sup>47</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 95

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg. 96

“It is human to complain, human to weep with one who seeps, it is greater to have faith and more blessed to behold the believer.”<sup>49</sup> Humanity should not be ashamed to have pain or weakness. Pain will come but it is easier to endure if you have faith. Suffering is inevitable and faith will only aid in it. Suffering is not an argument against God but an argument for Him. The sick are not the ones who created God, just the first ones who noticed they needed Him. While Nietzsche hates the sick and those willing to admit they need something other than themselves. Kierkegaard would argue those people would live a happier and more fulfilled life than anyone else. Everyone in this world will need God as some point, those willing to accept that will live a more blessed life.

Another part of forgetting God is the problem of memory. Memory is created to protect humanity from pain. “Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself.”<sup>50</sup> Man’s answer to pain and sacrifice is to create the memory of religion. This brings Nietzsche’s two types of memory, active and fixed. God is part of the active and can be forgotten. Kierkegaard would say that yes pain and sacrifices do exist. “It is human to sorrow with the sorrower, but great to have faith and be more blessed to behold the believer.”<sup>51</sup> Faith helps us give meaning to the suffering. Religion and faith do not need to be forgotten amongst pain, neither could they be. Religion cannot be served from pain but is the solution to it.

Memory is humanity's greatest tool, not something that holds them back. Kierkegaard believes that no one will be forgotten if they love God. “No one shall be forgotten who was great in this world; ... but he who loved God became greater than all.”<sup>52</sup> Humanity should not forget

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<sup>49</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 51

<sup>50</sup> Genealogy, pg. 61

<sup>51</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 51

<sup>52</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 50

those who had great faith but learn from them. What makes people great is not their ability to forget, but their ability to remember. Remembrance of God and what He has done makes humanity better. Nietzsche is wrong in that memory is something that is bad, it is something that makes humanity great.

Tocqueville also adds to the value of memory. He looks at the founding of America and notes the value religion had in its founding. He believes the puritans to be the founders of America. "Puritanism was not only a religious doctrine; but it blended at several points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories."<sup>53</sup> He urges current Americans to not forget their roots in religion. Government cannot be separated from God. The puritans escape England from religious persecution and there are things to be learned from that. Unlike Nietzsche, Tocqueville does not want to radically destroy the past. Nietzsche also cannot ignore the religious founding most countries have. Religion has always been embedded in government, including Nietzsche's own government in Germany. Tocqueville believes that the government could not succeed without embracing its religious past. "And what makes a people master of itself if it has not submitted to God?"<sup>54</sup> People will not be able to control themselves or obey law without God. Morality and law will not succeed with religion. Tocqueville advises leaders to learn from this, not forget it. Both him and Kierkegaard agree memory is one of humanity's strongest weapons, not their greatest downfall.

Nietzsche believes once God is dead then humanity must realize He is an idol and forget Him. He believes humanity is ready to move on from God. humanity no longer needs an answer to their pain, suffering, and lawlessness. Humanity does not need God to control them but is ready to smash that idol. The question that is left is that once God is gone who does humanity

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<sup>53</sup> Democracy in America, pg. 32

<sup>54</sup> Democracy in America, pg. 282



look to? There must be someone above humanity that will lead and control the world. God is no longer the foundation for morality and law. Humanity is almost in a state of anarchy and is greatly confused. Nietzsche does have an answer for this. Nietzsche will now replace God with “the overman.” The overman is the new law giver, ready to rule over humanity with the will to power.

### **The Overman and the will to power**

#### The overman

God is dead and humanity has realized it. Humanity has then forgotten they created God in the first place. They have then destroyed the idol that is God. The problem now is that humanity has been functioning with God as the foundation of society. Christianity has been leading law, morality, and human behavior for hundreds of years. Nietzsche must have an answer for this hole left in society. Nietzsche does have an answer and that answer is “the overman” or the “Uber mensch”. “‘Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live’ - on that great noon, let this be our last will.”<sup>55</sup> God is gone, the overman has taken his place. The new dawn has started, and the last act of man was to kill God.

The overman is the person that will rule over society in place of God. The overman will announce the death of God and therefore replace Him. The overman will be a better ruler than God and he will control where the law goes. According to Nietzsche, human life is not valuable so the overman must do what he wants with it. The overman is Nietzsche’s solution to the problem with the lack of God. Nietzsche assumes humanity will be grateful and ready to accept the overman. Following him is their response for him announcing the death of God. The overman is Nietzsche’s greatest invention for the benefit of humanity.

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<sup>55</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 191

Nietzsche first introduces the overman in "*Thus spoke Zarathustra*." Zarathustra is an illusion to a real religion. Zarathustra is based loosely on an ancient Persian religious figure, Zoroaster.<sup>56</sup> Zoroaster is arguably the oldest monotheistic religion. Zoroastrianism still has followers today in India and Iran. This phrase is also a way for Nietzsche to mock the way God speaks in the Old Testament, "thus speaks the Lord". This connection adds to the fact that Zarathustra is a prophet bringing about the death of God. Zarathustra starts off by taking time in the forest to comprehend life and his priorities. Zarathustra then leaves the forest and talks to a saint he meets. He is confused when the saint talks about praising God. "Could it be possible? The old saint in the forest has not heard anything of this, that God is dead!"<sup>57</sup> Zarathustra announces the death of God that Nietzsche has already proved.

After announcing the death of God, Zarathustra teaches the overman. "Man is something that shall be overcome."<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche believes that man must overcome himself to become different from animals. The overman challenges the crowd listening to him to overcome what God has brought. With the overman there is no more meaning to life. People do not need to look beyond the world for their hope. Sin is also no longer in existence as it died with God. Zarathustra begins his illustration of the tightrope walker. This is a person who insists on walking the metaphorically bounty between beast and the overman. "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman- a rope over an abyss."<sup>59</sup> Man is either the worst of himself, bowed down to God, or free under the overman. Nietzsche praises those who want to give themselves over to the overman. Those who will prepare the earth for the coming of the overman and support him.

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<sup>56</sup> Zoroastrianism." History.com. Last modified February 8, 2019.  
<https://www.history.com/topics/religion/zoroastrianism>.

<sup>57</sup> *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, pg. 124

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>59</sup> *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, pg. 126

Zarathustra wants people to abandon the tightrope walker and prepare themselves for the overman.

Problems start to arise when Zarathustra realizes that no one is listening to him. The people do not understand what he is saying. “‘There they stand’, he said to his heart; ‘there they laugh.’”<sup>60</sup> Life is confusing and puzzling for humanity without someone to guide them. The people do not comprehend what they must do since God has died. They must accept the overman and what he will do for them. The people wanted Zarathustra to be their overman. Zarathustra was not the overman, only a messenger. According to Nietzsche, western civilization is sick. There is no cure for civilization, so they look for the overman in any person they can.

The tightrope walker is nearing the end. The tightrope walker falls and is horribly injured. The walker falls right beside Zarathustra and asks him if he can prevent the walker from going to hell. Zarathustra says that he cannot as hell does not exist. “There is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body; fear nothing further.”<sup>61</sup> The man found hope in that there was nothing after death. The days of humanity fearing hell is over. The tightrope walker was almost grateful to Zarathustra for giving him this information. Zarathustra sits down by the tightrope walker and further analyses the lack of meaning life has. The tightrope walker is an illustration of what following the overman can do for humanity. Humanity is free to do whatever they wish as there is no retribution after death, no accountability.

“God died: now we want the overman to live.”<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche believes humanity will be thankful for the overman. The overman is the new law giver and is extremely useful. Nietzsche acknowledges that humanity has lived under the rule of God for too long and needs the overman.

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<sup>60</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 128

<sup>61</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 132

<sup>62</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 399

“There it was too that I picked up the word ‘overman’ by the way, that man is something that must be overcome”<sup>63</sup> God was overcome by man, man is overcome by the overman. The overman will overcome the need for God. He overcomes the need for law and morality. The overman must overcome what ails humanity, starting with God.

Man has the need to create and redeem themselves. The overman will teach humanity how to will their own redemption. “To redeem what is past in man and to re-create all ‘its was’ until the will says, ‘thus I willed it!’”<sup>64</sup> Thus, overcoming the need for a redeeming God. The overman also overcomes the need to command people to do anything. Man cannot be controlled anymore by God, only by the overman’s will. The overman tells humanity how to live. The overman is better than humanity and knows what is best. While humanity wishes for the existence of the overman, he still rules over humanity by force. The overman is better than humanity for realizing the death of God. This makes him superior and appropriate to rule over them. The overman is not bound by Christian morality or enchained by the justice of a redeeming God.

The overman is a lawbreaker. He breaks the tablets of law given to the people. The overman is the anti-Moses. In Exodus, Moses delivers the law on two stone tablets to the Israelites. The law contains the ten commandments, one of the earliest law codes known to man. The ten commandments are superseded by the code of Hammurabi and the code of Ur-Nammu. Each of these law codes were founded on a religious deity.<sup>65</sup> Since Nietzsche has many problems with Christianity and Judaism, this is an unsurprising comparison for him. The stone tablets are symbolism all over the world for law and morality. Nietzsche intends to use the overman to

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<sup>63</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 310

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Mark, Joshua J. "Code of Ur-Nammu." World history encyclopedia. Last modified October 26, 2021. [https://www.worldhistory.org/Code\\_of\\_Ur-Nammu/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Code_of_Ur-Nammu/).

smash these laws. "... now here he sits and waits, surrounded by broken old tablets and new tablets half covered with writing."<sup>66</sup> This is an illusion to the giving of the Ten Commandments, another connection to the death of God. The overman will create a new morality and law or new tablets. The overman, after destroying God, will destroy all law associated with Him.

The overman is the opposite of God. While God is an idol to be smashed, the overman is the ruler humanity needs. According to Nietzsche God is self-sacrifice, cannot be both loving and just at the same time, and never existed in the first place. The overman is selfish, just, and announces the death of God. The only thing that is left is that the overman must convince humanity he is the best ruler. The overman must find a way to control humanity as they are used to the rule of a non-existent deity. The overman's answer is the same way that he killed God. This is what Nietzsche calls the "will to power." The will to power is pure power that will make humanity fall in line with the overman.

#### The will to power

The will to power is the way the overman will defeat God and assume control over humanity. "That is your whole will, you who are wisest: a will to power."<sup>67</sup> The will to power belongs to those who are wisest in humanity. Those who are wise enough to realize God is dead and take their own power to smash that idol. The will to power is pure power, no mercy, no freedom, no love. It is far from how God would rule over people. Nietzsche considers that a good thing. Mercy, freedom, and love are parts of humanity that Nietzsche considers worthless, so therefore their leader should not have them. The will to power means that anything willed, should have the power to happen. "A will to the thinkability of all beings."<sup>68</sup> The will to power

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<sup>66</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 311

<sup>67</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 225

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

has no limits. There is no room for error, only absolute strength. The will to power is a new concept to the world as they are used to a God who would sacrifice Himself. The overman never would and only lives to rule over a broken humanity.

The will to power is used to smash idols and forget God. “Hail to thee, my will! And only where there are tombs are there resurrections.”<sup>69</sup> This is Nietzsche saying God has died and would only rise by his will. Everything should bow to the will to power, including God. “You still want to create the world before which you can kneel that is your ultimate hope and intoxication.” In other words, the will to power will create a world where no one must bow to anything except to themselves and their own world. The will to power eliminates the need for worship and self-sacrifice, only what is willed. Idols are killed by the will to power. Idols were created by humanity so they can be destroyed by humanity. The will to power is then used to forget God and usher in the overman.

The will to power is also used to create the new morality. “Your will and your valuations you have placed on the river of becoming; and what they believe to be good and evil, that betrays to me an ancient will to power.”<sup>70</sup> The will to power will define good and evil for those who believe in it. The subjects of good and evil will no longer exist in the same way they did before. God would govern good and evil; He would set the rules. Now, the overman uses the will to power to eliminate all notions of good and evil. Good and evil are what the overman says they are, and he says they are nothing. Good and evil have no merit in society.

It is important to remember that the will to power is an argument against free will. “He who cannot obey himself is commanded.” The overman uses the will to power to gain absolute

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

obedience.”<sup>71</sup> The overman carries the burden of those who obey him. “Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master.”<sup>72</sup> If someone will not use the will to power, they will be overcome. Those that are weak will serve the strong. The majority will rule over the weak. The will to power is everywhere, but only the overman will use it to rule overall.

This will to power is free will from nothing. Free will grounded in nothing will only be used to control people. The general populous is not willing to smash idols and use the will to power. The overman will then overcome that weakness and control humanity. “That the weaker should serve the stronger, to that it is persuaded by its own will, which would be master over what is weaker still” The will to power gives the strong authority over the weak. It does not matter how the strong get that power or what cruelty they use it. The will to power is ultimate authority used over the weak.

The will to power is found in everything. It is what drives the world, not some deity. “Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but- thus I teach you- will power.”<sup>73</sup> Power is the driving force of the world not love or mercy. Life is not what gives things meaning, but power. “And what you have called world, that shall be created only by you: your reason, your image, your will, your love shall thus be realized” humanity can create anything but its own power. Everything spans from the will to power and the overmans will.

In Nietzsche’s mind the overman and the will to power come from a dead God. The death of God gives room for the Overman and his will. The overman is the ruler humanity needs instead of God. The overman will rule with absolute strength, power, and justice. While God

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<sup>71</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, pg. 226

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Thus spoke Zarathustra, 227

ruled with mercy and love. In Nietzsche's mind, mercy and justice cannot exist in the same person let alone a God. The will to power is the ultimate weapon against religion and those who believe in it. The overman will rule over the people once God is killed and all idols are smashed.

### Introduction of Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas is an extremely important figure to theology, politics, and Christian faith. Aquinas' most notable work is the *Summa Theologica*. In this work he outlines almost all parts of the Christian faith and its effects on man, politics, and God. Aquinas' gives explanations for how God exists, sin, redemption, and natural law. Natural law is Aquinas' explanation for morality, human behavior, and the innate evil of man. Aquinas and Nietzsche's philosophy are polar opposites, making them useful to combat each other.

Aquinas also came up with just war theory, which provided some of the first Christian guidelines for the execution of wars. Aquinas combined Aristotelian thought with Christian theology. Aquinas' main attribute is that of natural law. Natural law gives humans a basis for right and wrong and a foundation for morality in God. This what makes Aquinas uniquely qualified to take on Nietzsche. He can combat the arguments on God being dead, idol ship, and even the will to power.

### Counter arguments for the overman and the will to power

The overman is ushered in after God has died and humanity has forgotten Him. The overman and his will remain unchallenged by humanity. What does challenge the overman is Godly leaders. Thomas Aquinas gives humanity instructions on how their leaders should act and what the law should be. Law and morality are not what the overman wills but what God has decreed. Thomas Aquinas believes in leaders that serve God above all. Leaders that serve the common good and law that is based on God. Aquinas would argue that the overman is the



opposite of an ideal leader. He would also argue that the will to power is no way to rule. People cannot be commanded to anything except by God. People need to believe their law is grounded in a foundation of something good. Law cannot come from nothing like the overman wishes. Rule and government must start with God not someone announcing the death of Him. "But the end of Divine government is God Himself, nor is His law something other than Himself. Hence the eternal law is not directed to any other end"<sup>74</sup> God cannot be killed and overcome by the overman as God is separate from everything. Government and rulers are not successful because of the overman but because God is king.

The overman challenges the crowd listening to him to overcome what God has brought. With the overman there is no more meaning to life. The overman posits the idea that life is meaningless. Life is only what humanity chooses to make of it, not some abstract purpose ordained by God. Nietzsche considers the lack of meaning and purpose a good thing. Kierkegaard says that life should have meaning or it is not worth living. "If there is no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the bottom of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that twisting in dark passions... how empty and devoid of comfort would life be!"<sup>75</sup> Life would simply not be worth living without God. Life would only be a dark void humanity desperately trying to navigate towards. While Nietzsche wants humanity to accept that life is meaningless, humanity is not built this way. Humanity is constantly searching for meaning and purpose. If there is no God, then it would all be gone.

The concept of the tightrope walker relates to all of humanity, teetering on the rope between life and death. Nietzsche believes humanity is always at the brink of death and should find relief that there is nothing after death. Death is not something to be dreaded. The tightrope

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<sup>74</sup> Aquinas, Thomas. "Summa Theologiae." edited by R W. Dyson, 76-157. N.p.: Cambridge, 2002, pg. 85

<sup>75</sup> Fear and Trembling, pg. 49

walker was grateful to Zarathustra for giving him this information. Zarathustra sits down by the tightrope walker and further analyses the lack of meaning life has. Nietzsche believes humanity will be grateful when they learn life has no meaning. “He follows his heart’s desire but having found what he sought he wanders round in front of everyone’s door with his song and his speech.”<sup>76</sup> Humanity is able to find joy and praise after finding their desire in God. Kierkegaard argues humanity is happy when they have found their purpose. Humanity needs meaning in life. Nietzsche has it backwards, as he does with most things.

Nietzsche believes humanity will be thankful for the overman. The overman is the new law giver and is extremely useful. Humanity should be happy they know they have someone to rule over them that will not sacrifice themselves. This overman is the best ruler humanity could hope for. What Aquinas argues is that humanity is not capable of ruling over themselves. God is the best ruler humanity could hope for, not the overman. Imperfect humanity cannot rule over themselves. “Man can make laws only in respect of those matters which he is able to judge. But man cannot judge inward acts.”<sup>77</sup> Humanity cannot judge the heart, only God can. While Nietzsche may argue the overman is above everyone, he is still just a man. A man can only punish what a man knows. “Non-rational creatures are not ordained to an end higher than that which is proportionate to their natural powers...”<sup>78</sup> Man cannot make laws that govern themselves as they cannot reach above themselves. Man cannot see the big picture that will benefit everyone. Man cannot do that only God can do. While Nietzsche wishes the overman is a perfect law giver, he simply cannot overcome his own humanity.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Aquinas, pg. 90

<sup>78</sup> Aquinas, pg. 91

Another point Aquinas makes is that man cannot know what good law is. The overman is not capable of being a lawmaker. “But not all men know how things are perfectly in order.”<sup>79</sup> Man cannot see the bigger picture. Men cannot know how to be a law giver, only how to enforce it. The overman has no God so he cannot know that law is let alone create a whole new system of mortality. “So then, we must say that no one can know the eternal law as it is in itself, except God alone and the blessed who see God in His essence.”<sup>80</sup> No one can know law except God and those who have died. The overman thinks himself a better God, but he could never know what God knows. The overman is in no place to judge humanity, let alone rule over it.

The overman tells humanity how to live. The overman is better than humanity and so knows what is best. While humanity wishes for the existence of the overman, he still rules over humanity by force. The overman is the driving force of behavior and morality not God. The overman controls society's behavior. Aquinas argues the overman is not capable of doing such a thing. Humanity's behavior is controlled by God. “But man needs to be directed to his final, supernatural end in a higher way; and so, a divinely given law is provided in addition, through which man participates the eternal law in a higher way” Man needs direction from someone who can see more than man can. Man does long for a ruler, Nietzsche is right about that. However, the ruler is not the Overman, but God.

Man needs direction and guidance in life. But what man does not need is to be forced into that guidance. Man is given divine law to participate in that follows God. This way of living is not by force but by adoration and gratitude. “Human reason in itself is not the rule of things; but the principles which nature has implanted in it are general rules and measures of all things...”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Aquinas, pg. 104

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Aquinas, pg. 88

Human reason is flawed and is only a reflection of God's law. The overman is a human just as we are and cannot create new law. Reason cannot come from the overman but from God alone. Human beings can only follow and acknowledge the existence of reason, not create it.

Nietzsche has many problems with Christianity and Judaism. His comparison of the golden calf and the stone tablets is no surprise. Nietzsche loves to mock God as much as possible. Nietzsche is even doing this when he says, "*Thus spoke Zarathustra*." In the Old Testament when God would speak to prophets He would say "Thus speaks the Lord." Nietzsche believes he can mock God whenever he wishes as God is dead and so is His law. Aquinas would argue that even if Nietzsche does not believe in it himself, humanity still has connection to God's morality, no matter how much he mocks it. "Although each man knows the eternal law according to his own capacity..."<sup>82</sup> Man cannot know law except what was given to him and is within his own intelligence. Nietzsche may insist he can create a law separate from God's, but he can never escape God no matter how far he runs from Him.

The will to power is pure power, no mercy, no freedom, and no love. It is far from how God would rule over people. Nietzsche considers that a good thing. Nietzsche considered the absence of love and mercy the best kind of ruler. The overman will rule with the will to power which is absolute power and strength. Aquinas would say that law and rulers must guide themselves towards good and love. Law must aim for the common good of all peoples. Law cannot be pure strength and power. "Law must therefore attend especially to the ordering of things toward blessedness."<sup>83</sup> The meaning of law is not power and the ability to rule over people but the power to guide people toward blessings. Law does not manipulate for its own benefit but try to benefit others. Law should include mercy and freedom not just power. The will

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<sup>82</sup> Aquinas, pg. 104

<sup>83</sup> Aquinas, pg. 79

to power is a flawed way to rule at best, at worst it is an instrument of tyranny and a slippery slope toward rebellion and anarchy.

The will to power will create a world where no one must bow to anything except to themselves and their own world. The will to power eliminates the need for worship and self-sacrifice, only what is willed. The will to power creates a 'free' world where people can follow the overman and not God. "If just, they receive the power to bind in the court of conscience from the eternal law from which they are derived..."<sup>84</sup> Humanity is bound to law by the God who gave it. Humanity is bound by their own morals and conscience to obey the law given by God. People cannot just ignore their conscience and do whatever they will. People have a deep desire to worship and that cannot be ignored, no matter how much Nietzsche wants to.

"But it seems that one cannot be subject to a power without also being subject to the laws made by that power."<sup>85</sup> People cannot be subject to the laws without obeying the law giver. The overman cannot rule over people without first acknowledging the ultimate ruler. God gives people authority and power not their own will. The will to power does not eliminate the need to worship, it would only enhance it. "But in order that what it commands may have the character of law, the will itself must be in accord with some rule of reason. And it is in this way that we are to understand that the will of the prince has the force of law..."<sup>86</sup> The will to power cannot come from nothing, it must have its foundation in God and reason. People cannot be commanded to do anything without there being power beyond the force. The will to power cannot act by itself as an extension of the overman's will but must have its foundation in God.

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<sup>84</sup> Aquinas, pg. 143

<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, pg. 145

<sup>86</sup> Aquinas, pg. 78

The will to power will define good and evil and those who believe in it. The subjects of good and evil will no longer exist in the same way they did before. The will to power eliminates the Christian definition of good and evil. Good would be whatever comes from God and glorifies Him and evil being whatever does not do that (or sin). "... as if to say that the light of natural reason, by which we discern what is good and what evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than the impression of the Divine light in us."<sup>87</sup> Good is the presence of God in us not something that can be defined by man. Good and evil are not eliminated by the will to power but are created by God. Nietzsche cannot get rid of good and evil no matter how hard he tries. Good cannot be eliminated as it is the remnants of God in us. "But the law written into the hearts of men is the natural law. Therefore, the natural law cannot be blotted out."<sup>88</sup> The will to power cannot wipe out the law within humanity. The will to power is said to redefine good and evil but Aquinas argues that is impossible. No matter how much the overman tries, the law cannot be erased from the hearts of men.

Those that are weak will serve the strong. The will to power is everywhere, but only the overman will use it to rule overall. Nietzsche believes the weak are what created law in the first place and the need for the overman. He believes the weak should bow down to the strong and accept their place in society. Aquinas says that is far from the purpose of the law. The strong should serve the weak, that is what makes a good ruler. Humility is key in a working government. "And so, every law is directed to the common good."<sup>89</sup> Law must have a goal in achieving the common good not increasing the power it holds. The law benefits all who are under it, not just the overman. The overman also does not have complete reign with the will to

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<sup>87</sup> Aquinas, pg. 86

<sup>88</sup> Aquinas, pg. 125

<sup>89</sup> Aquinas, pg. 80

power. “No man is so completely wise as to be able to take account of every single case...”<sup>90</sup>

Man cannot see every side of the law or everything that happens to actuarially judge matters. The overman cannot spread his will to everyone. The overman will not be able to judge everyone on earth with his own power. The will to power is not powerful enough to do the job only God could do.

Nietzsche wants the best sort of people to become the overman and spread the will to power over humanity. However, his version of best is not what humanity would want. He believes that those who have no mercy, love, or freedom are those best suited to rule. This overman will force humanity to follow him after announcing the death of God. The problem is that these types of people tend to be the worst of humanity. The types of overman that have already ruled are people like Hitler, Stalin, and Ganguis Khan. These are people who do not show mercy and rule without absolute strength. They create a new world order where everyone must follow under them or be killed. The lesson Nietzsche should have learned from the god of history is that overmans rarely succeed. Tyrants hardly ever stay tyrants. Humanity longs to worship and be loved, longing to be ruled by the King of kings.

### **Law and morality according to Nietzsche**

Nietzsche’s teachings on law and morality are some of his most controversial. Many people can wrap their minds around the idea that God never existed, but that law and morality need to be done away with is a bit too far. Nietzsche declares God is dead, humanity must forget Him, and the overman is the new leader. Nietzsche’s new idea is that law and morality must die along with God. God is dead and the overman is controlling humanity. The overman has no morality, only the will to power. Morality is no more, only power and whatever the overman

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<sup>90</sup> Aquinas, pg. 149

enforces. The new morality created by the overman is only power and strength. Morality is whatever he wants it to be and can change at his will.

The problem with this way of thinking is that if it was not God, morality must come from somewhere. Nietzsche believes humanity made up morality just like they made up God. The origin of such concepts of good and evil are no more than social constructs. Humanity made up law because the oppressed class needed to overthrow the higher class. Law and morality originated through the Greeks and a slave revolt. Nietzsche sees this as an issue as humanity does not need law, only the will to power. Law and morality are the oppressors of freedom and pleasure.

#### Where did good and evil come from

God is dead and He leaves a whole in society only the overman can fill. The overman will use the will to power to take over humanity. The problem now is that the overman must deal with the law and morality the Christians left behind. Nietzsche sees large problems with law and morality as it interferes with absolute power. The overman cannot use the will to power if there is law and morality in his way. The overman looks to the origin of law and morality. God is dead and He never existed in the first place so law cannot come from Him. Law comes from humanity; they made it up.

Law and morality originate into two constructs, good and evil. Nietzsche starts with the origin of good. He finds the notion of good absurd. "The utility of the egoistic action is supposed to be the source of the approvals accorded it, and this source is supposed to have been forgotten-but how is this forgetting possible?"<sup>91</sup> Nietzsche cannot understand the concept of good. The source of good is of those who created it and that good must be forgotten. But Nietzsche

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<sup>91</sup> Genealogy, pg. 27



understands good things are much harder to forget than bad things. Good is something humanity cannot forget and that is valuable. Not some higher moral construct coming from an absolute good God. A God that is dead cannot be good.

Next, Nietzsche moves on to the concept of evil or bad. Evil does not exist only bad. Bad are things that can be forgotten and have no value. Everything that does not bring pleasure is bad. Everything is made up of either good or bad. “Good is essentially identical with the concept ‘useful,’ ‘practical,’ so that judgements ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mankind has summed up and sanctioned precisely its unforgotten and unforgettable experiences...”<sup>92</sup> Nietzsche reduces good and evil to forgettable and unforgettable. Good is not something that can be controlled by a god but only what is valuable. Nietzsche says this explanation is closer than God but still wrong. Good and bad is a starting point but their origin is much deeper.

What is good came from the higher and aristocratic class. They determined what would be good and what would be bad. “‘good’ in the sense if ‘with aristocratic soul,’ ‘noble,’ ‘with a soul of high order.’”<sup>93</sup> The origin of good is directly associated with aristocratic society. Those that are high in society will oppose their will on the lower class by convincing them of what is good. The origin of bad is associated with the lower class. This is what society teaches is right and Nietzsche constructs the origin of law from these two words.

Nietzsche begins to tell humanity where law comes from. This the concept he calls the “slave revolt to morality.” “The slave revolt to morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values.”<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche says that the start of morality came when slaves were resenting their position in life, so they created values. Morality says slavery is wrong and

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 28

<sup>94</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 36

therefore slaves created it. Only the oppressed would create a morality can oppresses you. Slaves create a morality outside themselves that thrives in a hostile external world. This slave revolt occurred during Ancient Greece and Nietzsche admires Greek nobility. The nobility is honest with themselves while slaves lie about hope and love. The slaves then turn those who were good into men of evil. By turning nobility into a picture of evil they can overthrow the priestly class. This is where law began, we a revolt hundreds of years ago. Nietzsche then gives his opinions on morality and its uselessness.

### Problems with morality

Nietzsche considers morality to have three parts to it, all of which are wrong. There is the concept of 'guilt' or a 'conscience', self-sacrifice, and suffering. Each one of these things are soaked in blood and punishment according to Nietzsche. "... the sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of 'guilt,' 'conscience,' 'duty,' 'sacredness of duty' had its origin." Nietzsche considers guilt to be the concept of the 'creditor and the debtor.' He believes nothing can pay out debts and guilt is something that is only harmful. No one should feel guilt or suffer for others. Self-sacrifice is an even worse concept of morality. "... that ghastly paradox of a 'God on the cross,' that mystery of an unimaginable ultimate cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the salvation of man?"<sup>95</sup> Why would a good, just, and perfect God put His only Son up for the worst possible torture? Why would a perfect God give Himself up for a sinful humanity who would only reject Him? Nietzsche cannot understand the concept of sacrificial love. Nietzsche does not understand why anyone would sacrifice themselves for humanity, no matter how moral. Each of these things adds to a concept of a failed morality.

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<sup>95</sup> Genealogy of Morals, pg. 35

Nietzsche knows the origin of morality is the slave revolt, but law is something else entirely. Law exists when people need revenge on those that agitate them. “Partly by taking the object of resentment out of the hands of revenge, partly by substituting for revenge the struggles against enemies of peace and order.”<sup>96</sup> Those who resist their position will attack against the peace and order of the ruling class. The lower class cannot take revenge by resentment, so they use law to create peace and order. Law can then be used to create offenses against the community and the concepts of just and unjust. “‘just’ and ‘unjust’ exist, according, only after the institution of the law.”<sup>97</sup> Justice is a concept only created after the law, not before as Christianity states. Justice is a social construct that can be manipulated by the overman.

The next piece in the origin of law is the purpose of law. People would say that the purpose of law is to create peace and order or to ensure a common morality, Nietzsche disagrees. Nietzsche says that the purpose of law is to usher in the will to power. “But purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it...”<sup>98</sup> The will to power will overcome the weak. Law has no purpose and purpose has no connection to its origin. Only the will to power has a purpose as it will become a master over something less powerful, law. “The ‘purpose of law’, however is absolutely the last thing to emerge in the history of origin of law.”<sup>99</sup> The law only has purpose where people allow it to. Nietzsche does not think the purpose of law is important, only that it can usher in the will to power.

If law has no purpose, then why does it exist so far after the slave revolt in Ancient Greece? The answer to that is what Nietzsche calls “the sick.” The sick are those who claim to represent justice, love, and wisdom. “They monopolize virtue, these weak, hopelessly sick

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<sup>96</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 75

<sup>97</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 76

<sup>98</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 77

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

people, there is no doubt of it: we alone are good and just.”<sup>100</sup> The sick are the ones in need of the values of good and just. The sick are the descendants of the original slave rebels, they are the true enemy. The sick is the reason why law exists and why it continues to exist. The sick keep morality and law going, the very same people who still believe in God. “We must count the ascetic priest as the predestined savior, Shepard, and advocate of the sick herd...”<sup>101</sup> Nietzsche is alluding to Jesus as the protector of the sick which is the greatest problem surrounding morality and law. The sick keep the notion of God alive, a resurrection of morality.

Nietzsche also talks about the morality of religion. This is the worst kind of morality as it involves absolute love and mercy. “; in the same way Christianity as morality must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of this event.”<sup>102</sup> Christian ethics time is up. Christian morality will die according to Nietzsche. Man was suffering and needed an explanation for this suffering. The explanation became Christian morality, a God who would sacrifice Himself for man’s suffering. “God as the only being who can redeem man from what has become untradeable for man himself- the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of love...”<sup>103</sup> Humanities debt to God should make them slaves not children. In Nietzsche’s mind no man would sacrifice himself for someone who owes him. Nietzsche cannot comprehend a morality that in its core foundation is love and sacrifice.

Nietzsche’s solution for getting rid of morality is the will to power. Morality and law cannot stand against the will to power, they will ultimately fail. Christianity is destroyed by itself as all things that have a law of self-overcoming well eventually fail. “The will to power: attempt

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<sup>100</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 123

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 161

<sup>103</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 92

at a revaluation of all values.”<sup>104</sup> The will to power will create an entirely new morality which is not a morality at all but just strength. The will to power will fill the hole morality left just as the overman will fill the whole God left.

Nietzsche then posits the idea that morality is useless. Morality and law are not needed for society to function. This is the outcome for all of Nietzsche’s philosophy. The death of God, the overman, the will to power, they all lead to the end of law and morality. Morality's foundation is not God so therefore it does not need to exist. “What, then, is the meaning of ascetic ideals? In the case of an artist, as we see, nothing whatever!”<sup>105</sup> Ascetic ideals are just what morality creates, law, good, and justice. Morality and law lead to nothing and have no purpose. After all of Nietzsche’s arguing the conclusion is that morality does not exist. The Christian faith is the biggest lie humanity ever told along with its morality. If God is dead, so must be His law.

### **Natural law and the foundation for morality**

Nietzsche has declared that morality is no more. Morality and law only started so the lower class could rebel and is not needed anymore. The overman and the will to power is the only law needed, not some higher good ordained by God. Thomas Aquinas would disagree wholeheartedly. Aquinas coins the idea of natural law and eternal law. These types of law directly oppose all that Nietzsche talks about. Someone cannot just create a whole new system of values like the overman wishes to do. God’s law cannot be destroyed so easily by forgetting as Nietzsche says. A law as strong as God’s will not be forgotten.

God's not dead but very much alive and His law will not be destroyed. Law will not be destroyed and created much less by humanity. Good and bad are not social constructs but real

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<sup>104</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 160

<sup>105</sup> Genealogy of morals, pg. 102

and guide the law. Law came from God and not from a slave revolt in Ancient Greece. Aquinas main critique of Nietzsche is that morality is not useless but the very foundation of humanity. The concept of natural law poses the idea that all law comes from God and has the capacity to do good. Nietzsche cannot create a new morality, especially the kind that opposes God, no matter how much he wants to.

Nietzsche says Law and morality originate into two constructs, good and evil. Nietzsche starts with the origin of good. He finds the notion of good absurd. Aquinas would say that good is far too powerful a concept for Nietzsche to say it does not exist anymore. “Which is the common good; and whatever is grounded in reason in this latter sense has the character of law”<sup>106</sup> The law must strive towards the common good of all peoples not just power for the Overman. The law’s very foundation is what is good and full of reason. Law’s direction is towards the common good not to oppress the higher class as Nietzsche says.

Nietzsche says what is good came from the higher and aristocratic class. They determined what would be good and what would be bad. Aquinas says that no man can determine what is good and what is bad. Humanity does not have the power to create law or goodness. All goodness comes from God not man. Man understands good and evil because it comes from God. “Although they have no written law, they nonetheless have natural law, by which each man understands what is good and what is evil and is aware of it for himself”<sup>107</sup> Knowing what is good comes from knowing God’s law or natural law. Natural law is knowing well and avoiding evil. Natural law is encoded in every man from God. Humanity does not control what is good and evil; they can only hope to understand it.

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<sup>106</sup> Aquinas, pg. 80

<sup>107</sup> Aquinas, pg. 85

Nietzsche begins to tell humanity where law comes from. This the concept he calls the “slave revolt to morality.” He believes that law come from a slave revolt in ancient Greece. Aquinas disagrees and says law comes from God. This is the concept of eternal law. “... eternal law is the supreme reason to which we must always conform.”<sup>108</sup> Eternal law gives us reason to obey the law. Eternal law is the reason that comes from God alone, untainted by man. Morality could only come from God as man cannot create law. “Human reason cannot participate in the dictate of the Divine reason fully, but only in its own way and imperfectly”<sup>109</sup> Humanity can only hope to participate in eternal law, they could never create it. Morality did not come from slaves revolting but from God giving it to humanity to direct them further towards Him.

Nietzsche knows the origin of morality is the slave revolt, but law is something else entirely. Law exists when people need revenge on those that irritate them. Law goes beyond morality to create rules for the concepts of good and evil. Aquinas says that law can only come from God as does morality. Man cannot make what he does not understand. “And so human law could not sufficiently contour and direct inward acts; rather, it was necessary for this purpose that Divine law should supervene.”<sup>110</sup> Divine law overrides where humanity fails. Man cannot create a law that would only be because they had suffered in life. Law is so much bigger than that, it is connected to the law of God. Human law is the only law created by man and it is connected to God not revenge. If laws are from revenge, they would not be directed towards the common good. “Now laws are said to be just from their end: that is, when they are directed to the common good...”<sup>111</sup> Law has an end purpose, towards the common good. Law does not come

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<sup>108</sup> Aquinas, 102

<sup>109</sup> Aquinas, 88

<sup>110</sup> Aquinas, 90

<sup>111</sup> Aquinas, 142

from a principle of revenge but from God directing humanity. Revenge does exist but belonging to God alone.

Nietzsche posits that law has no purpose and purpose has no connection to its origin. Only the will to power has a purpose as it will become a master over something less powerful, law. The will to power is what will rule over humanity not law and morality. The will to power will use absolute strength to govern the people. Aquinas says that law and morality must have components of mercy and love. Law cannot be absolute strength. In fact, there is strength in being merciful. Aquinas argues that no man can provide a full picture of the law. No man's will is good enough to govern all of humanity. The overman could never be the law himself. Aquinas says law cannot be power alone, it must belong to reason. "As it is in this way that we are to understand that the will of the prince has the force of law: otherwise, the will of the prince would have more the character of iniquity than of law"<sup>112</sup> The king cannot govern by his will alone. Law cannot be will alone but must have reason. One person alone cannot govern by their own will as Nietzsche wishes. Law cannot be will alone, the will to power would ultimately fail.

Another thinker who comments on natural law is C.S. Lewis. In his book on the foundations of Christianity, *Mere Christianity*, the first two chapters cover natural law. Lewis has the advantage of coming after Nietzsche. Tocqueville, Aquinas, and Kierkegaard all begin the foundation for what Lewis will say but they cannot directly respond to Nietzsche. Lewis mentions Nietzsche and the Superman by name. Lewis argues that the law of human nature or natural law, is the foundation for what we know. He argues that for humanity to know that the world is full of injustice we must have an understanding of justice. People are forced to believe in right or wrong. "If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it

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<sup>112</sup> Aquinas, 78



has no meaning...”<sup>113</sup> If the world was meaningless no one would be arguing on its meaning. So, if Nietzsche is correct and the world has no meaning, he would never have had to argue that fact.

Nietzsche says those who need law are “the sick.” The sick are those who claim to represent justice, love, and wisdom. The sick are the decedents of the slave revolt and are those in need of a savior. Nietzsche says that those who are intelligent enough to realize God is dead and let the overman rule over them will not need law. Aquinas argues that everyone needs law, not just those deemed sick. Aquinas would also argue that those who represent love, justice, and wisdom are not sick but those who realized they needed a savior and acted upon that. Aquinas argues that all men need the law. “So, then: in speculative matters truth is the same in all men, it has to principles and as to conclusions; although the is not known to all as regards the conclusions.”<sup>114</sup> There is an absolute truth, people only apply it different due to sin. The truth can be known, through God’s law. All men know the truth about God and law, but they refuse to accept it. Even Nietzsche himself is not immune from God’s law; he only refuses to accept it came from God.

Christian morality will die according to Nietzsche. Man was suffering and needed an explanation for this suffering. Man wanted a savior, so it created one. Nietzsche is wrong in that Christian morality will die. Christian morality outlived Nietzsche and it will continue. Nietzsche thinks he can destroy and wipe out Christian morality. Aquinas says God’s law cannot be wiped from man’s heart. “But the law written into the hearts of men is the natural law. Therefore, natural law cannot be blotted out.”<sup>115</sup> Christian morality will not die no matter how much

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<sup>113</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. N.p.: Harper Onen.d., pg. 39

<sup>114</sup> Aquinas, 121

<sup>115</sup> Aquinas, 125

Nietzsche wishes it would. Christian morality has been ruling the hearts of men since men came to be and no overman will change that.

The will to power will create an entirely new morality which is not a morality at all but just strength. The will to power will fill the whole morality left just as the overman will fill the whole God left. The will to power is supposed to create a whole new system of values. Aquinas says man cannot create morality. Man can create human law but only in relation to natural and eternal law. Man cannot create a whole new morality as it wishes. “It is therefore not the task of anyone whatsoever to make law”<sup>116</sup> Law can only be made by God not the will to power. Even will itself is subject to God’s law. “Every operation of both reason and will in us is derived from that which is according to nature.”<sup>117</sup> Man cannot will new laws into place because he does not like God. Just because the overman declares God is dead does not mean God is actually dead. God cannot be killed; no more can man create law. Death cannot have power over God, as He is above it.

Nietzsche says morality and law lead to nothing and have no purpose. Morality has a purpose and will lead to a closer relationship with God. morality cannot bend to Nietzsche’s will. It cannot be destroyed, nor can it be changed. Nietzsche wishes to reduce morality down to nothing but will and strength, governed by one man. Nietzsche declares morality has no purpose, but Nietzsche does not have that kind of power. “The natural law begins with the origin of rational creatures; nor does it vary according to time but remains immutable.”<sup>118</sup> Natural law cannot be changed, no matter how much Nietzsche wishes to change it. Natural law was there before Nietzsche so he cannot declare it has no purpose.

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<sup>116</sup> Aquinas, 81

<sup>117</sup> Aquinas, 86

<sup>118</sup> Aquinas, 123

After all of Nietzsche's arguing his conclusion is that morality does not exist. His big conclusion after introducing the overman is that morality and law mean nothing. There is not common good, no mercy, no absolute goodness, only the power of the overman. The world now looks at a godless society, with no law, no common good, only power and the rule of the overman. Man is grateful for what he lost and can rejoice in the fact that there is nothing after death and nothing to watch over them. Aquinas, Kierkegaard, Lewis, and Tocqueville would stare in horror at this society. This society where no one can tell you what you can and cannot do. Murder is fine, slavery is fine, and anything the person wishes is fine. Aquinas knows Nietzsche is wrong. Morality does exist and cannot be destroyed by Nietzsche. Law has been bonded to religion since law came into existence and Nietzsche is not going to change that. The connection between law and religion cannot be served by any man.

The concept of natural law is arguably what Aquinas is most known for. He also gives the concepts of eternal law and human law. Eternal law is law that comes from God alone. This is the truth from the perspective of God fully known to Him. This is the law that Nietzsche can understand the least. Natural law is what can be known by reason alone. Every human can understand natural law. This is the principle of doing good and avoiding evil. Natural law comes from God. This is the idea that every human has morality. "It is therefore clear that the natural law is nothing but the rational creature's participation in the eternal law."<sup>119</sup> Natural law is another way humanity has a relationship with God. Humanity connects with God through natural law. The law that is naturally known to humanity given by God.

Natural law goes against almost everything Nietzsche says. Natural law is embedded in humanity and cannot be destroyed by humanity. Man can know good and evil through natural

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<sup>119</sup> Aquinas, 86

law unlike what Nietzsche says. Nietzsche says morality does not exist and natural law says it has always existed. Eternal law existed before man and will exist when man is no longer on this earth. The overman cannot use his will to destroy morality as he cannot reach the heart of every man. Natural law will exist beyond the will to power as its power comes from God. A world without morality will only produce anarchy, death, and chaos. A world governed by God's law will produce love, mercy, and order. Which world do you want to live in?

### **Conclusion**

While Nietzsche does have some good points, he is far off from his ideas about morality. Nietzsche is right that the world has gone away from practicing true Christianity. The world Nietzsche wrote his books in is vastly different from the world today and is even more secularized than his was. Atheism is far more popular than when Nietzsche was writing about it. He is also right that many things can become idols that are the traditional golden statue. Idols can be things like history, sex, and even food. Anything can be made into a 'god' if people value it enough. The problem is that Nietzsche takes this too far.

Nietzsche says that since people created their own gods, they must have created God. God is not a created being; He is the creator. "If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts outside the universe"<sup>120</sup> Lewis argues that the universe and law cannot be separated from God. Nietzsche cannot envision a loving and self-sacrificing creator. He cannot comprehend a Savior who would sacrifice Himself for those who owe Him a debt. Nietzsche then takes this farther and says that since current morality is founded in Christianity it does not exist either. Nietzsche is right that if God goes, His law goes with Him. Law and morality are useless and gone. Morality has more parts to it than Nietzsche

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<sup>120</sup> Mere Christianity, pg. 24

says. God cannot be scourged from law. Law must exist to prevent a chaotic and dystopian society.

Something Nietzsche is missing is that law always has come from religion. Aquinas notes this in his natural law theory but it is evident historically as well. All the earliest laws came from religion. The three earliest known sets of law known to man are based in some sort of religion. The founders of these sets of law all credit a deity with it. The earliest known law code of man is the code of Ur-Nammu, written around 1772 B.C.<sup>121</sup> This code precedes both the Ten Commandments and the code of Hammurabi. The commonality between all three codes is that the person who founded them credited God. Nietzsche is wrong in that Christianity has the only law that came from religion. Law and atheism together are a modern concept. Those who are crediting with the first sets of law would not fathom law apart from God. Now, law is supported to be separated from religion.

United States law also came from religion. While Nietzsche was primarily concerned with Germany, most modern law is founded upon God. The constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Magna Carta are all founded in Christianity. Religion cannot be taken out of them. Each of these documents were founded on the idea that God created all men and created them equal. The founders of each of these documents meant for their law to be founded upon God and His law. Nietzsche wishes to do away with religion altogether, but it cannot be surged from the earth. What Nietzsche wants would produce a lawless world with no universal morality. Christianity cannot be forgotten so quickly as it has been embedded in society for over two thousand years.

Law and religion being separate is a modern idea. This is not to say that separation of church and state does not have its place, but it does not need to go so far as Nietzsche wishes.

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<sup>121</sup> Mark, Joshua. "Code of Ur-Nammu." World history encyclopedia. Last modified October 26, 2021. [https://www.worldhistory.org/Code\\_of\\_Ur-Nammu/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Code_of_Ur-Nammu/).

Religion being completely foreign to law is Nietzschean. American was founded on religion as its most law. The phrase “separation of church and state” was meant to give encouragement to a church congregation that their religion would always be protected. The idea that the church should have no place in law or government is exactly what Nietzsche wants.

Nietzsche’s main philosophy is that humanity should destroy morality. Morality is useless and only makes society worse. As Aquinas and Tocqueville would agree this is a very dangerous way of thinking. The society Nietzsche paints of pure freedom and pleasure seems like one many would enjoy. The problem is pure freedom and pleasure does not yield the results Nietzsche promises. This freedom means those who wish to take a life or run a country like a dictatorship have nothing to stop them. A world with no rules allows those who like to break them to create their own. Anything is permissible in this type of society.

A disappearance of morality would only give way to chaos, dictatorships, and forced uniformity. A society of uniqueness and individuals is merged into a tyranny of a majority. Society needs morality and law to function. Law that is not founded upon a higher power will only be broken and changed by whoever wills it. Law could indeed be useless if there is nothing to tie it to. Law must be tied to a higher power or there is no reason for law at all. Without someone beyond humanity to define law it can change from person to person. Murder could be fine for one person and not for another. A Godless society may sound fine to the average atheist but few look at the consequences of a full Nietzschean society. Without a universal standard, such as natural law the world would have no love, mercy, or uniqueness, which are all things Nietzsche despises. Nietzsche does not get everything wrong, but what he does get wrong would leave the world in shambles. Natural law is far more a benefit to society than the Überman. Nietzsche may be glamorized, but no one truly wants his ideas to come to pass.

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