

Nietzsche



Friedrich Nietzsche
(1844-1900)

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- Post-modern philosopher
- Background in classical Greek Philosophy
- Similar to Aristotle
 - Teleology
 - Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics

- Christianity adopted Aristotle as a “patron saint” of Philosophy
- Thomas Aquinas refers to him simply as “the Philosopher”

Virtue Ethics

- Christian virtues different from pagan ones
 - Humility vs. pride
 - Poverty vs. wealth
 - Religious faith vs. intellectual activity
 - Unconditional love, forgiving one's enemies
 - Tendency to asceticism, celibacy vs. moderation
 - Courage against fighting temptation, the Devil, vs. in war

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- God is dead
 - Parable of the madman
- Need for new values
 - Classical influence: Aristotle
 - The Will to Power
- The World's Greatest *Immoralist*
- Turned value, virtue on its head
- Conventional morality as “anti-nature”

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- Genealogy of Morals
 - Two Systems of Morality
 - Masters vs. Slaves
 - Masters: the rulers, nobility
 - Slaves: the ruled: peasants, lit. slaves

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- Master Morality
 - Strength, vitality
 - Ambition
 - Self-control
 - Intelligence
 - Optimism, joy (Joyful Wisdom)
 - Honesty with oneself and others
 - Callousness

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- Slave Morality
 - Weakness, meekness, sickliness
 - Complacency, acceptance
 - Lack of discipline
 - Stupidity, gullibility, faith
 - Pessimism
 - Self-delusion, denial of reality, religion
 - Compassion, pity

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- Slaves resent the masters, create a conspiracy we call morality to control them.
- Masters hold slaves in contempt, but realize their necessity.
- Master role model: The Viking
- Slave role model: Jesus (“incompetence personified,” hanging on a cross)

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- Exemplar of Master Morality: The Overman (Übermensch, Superman)
- Examples of masters
 - Great military and political leaders
 - Great scientists
 - Great artists

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- The Will to Power: The principle of life itself which seeks to grow, prosper and dominate.

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- The Will to Power: The principle of life itself which seeks to grow, dominate and prosper.

Nietzsche: Criticisms

- *Ad hominem* against Christianity
 - Psychoanalyzes rather than argues against it
 - Many pioneers of science were Christians who wanted to think God's thoughts after him
- Religious America grew to the dominant superpower in the 20th century, while secular Europe declined
- Ignores our collaborative and cooperative nature which make civilization and progress possible

Nietzsche: Criticisms

- Reactionary - maybe mysticism and collectivism are bad but Nietzsche goes too far in the other direction - back to Hobbes' state of nature
- Not universalizable: can't be practiced except by an elite few
- Psychopathic - sees sympathy as a vice