

A Review of Nietzsche's *Antichrist*:

The Retelling of Christian History

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19th Century Philosophy

Winter Semester, 2020

The Nihilism that Nietzsche attempted to explain is not too similar to that of others before and after him. In his book, *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche describes Christianity as a type of Nihilism in itself: that Christians look up onto others for their own meaning to life and without their salvation then they are meaningless sinners, and with salvation, they can be meaningful members in a heavenly kingdom. To overcome Nihilism, to Nietzsche, then would be to overcome Christianity: to overcome the foundation it has set itself in, in our democracy, in our literature, and in our moral standing as both societies and individuals. What Nietzsche points out is that with the Word of God, priests and empires have been able to turn around the very definitions of what is “good” and what is “bad,” or visa vie, what is “true” and what is “false.” For example, “it is good to have physical relations with one another?” – “No, it is bad to have physical bonds before marriage.” Or, “it is true that we know nothing of the afterlife?” – “No, that is false, we know (and control) where everyone goes after their death.” And with these mindsets, Nietzsche dubs Christianity itself as a formation of a cult.

Priests, Jewish or Christian, hold all the power of their god in their own hands. So much so they can even rearrange and rewrite the bible to give themselves more power as to be the ones who can be a savior; saving those in their congregations by telling them they’ve done so. This is Nietzsche highlighting the fact that these (oftentimes) men are the largest hypocrites to their own religion. Moreover, he highlights the fact that salvation itself is a denial of life and all of what it offers; that Christianity is a state of mind as well as a cult that forces those who “want to be saved” into denying all that brings them joy in life. These are “sins” on our part and in order to join God in his “Kingdom of Heaven,” we must both repent and follow his rulings. Nietzsche, however, writes that the priests have done away with most of the original teachings and have

moved to a place where God's word, His "gospel" is merely their own rulings, their own "law" and path to heavenly life.

But it is in death that those who follow this are eventually allowed true happiness, it is only after they have repented and after they have fully succumbed to the cult's leader, this is when they are ready for what will only come in an afterlife. To which, there is never such proof of an afterlife but the fear instilled into the people that comes from the language of "sin" and of the "devil" (who will torture you for all eternity if you do not heed my wrath), that does give some push to the following of a certain religion. It is this notion of "salvation" from the devil himself, no longer from the vengeful God, but from an evil version of him, it is this that gives Christianity its denial of life. It is also the power that priests hold within themselves that gives Christianity its denial of life. These are the points in which Nietzsche was trying to prove with his book *The Antichrist*.

Within Buddhism, anyone can become a Buddha. Once one gives way with life's attachments, which can also be called something that we "sin" against, it is then that we can start to become a Buddha ourselves. Liberation is the salvation of Buddhism; there is nothing to be saved from, there is only something to be freed from. The truth is that life is chaotic and uncontrollable, and we cannot be saved from this. There is no actual God's Hand that will come down from the clouds that will save a house from being destroyed by a hurricane; chaos happens. Some houses will be destroyed and some will not—this does not mean that the owner of one prays harder or better than the owner of the other, this merely means that a hurricane has happened. What Christian priests may say in this instance though, would be closer to the former: that our sins have caused this massive storm and those who have not repented enough will take on the

most damage. Or something like that. A good, modern-day priest may say nothing of the sort. But a Buddhist, throughout the past thousands of years, would be the most objective in any instance. Buddhist liberation is a freeing from the sufferings of life; or, in plainer English, this means to be freed from being subjective and attached to things that bring us stress.

Within a cult, there are only three major variables that dub one as such: a grand, charismatic leader; thought reform or brainwash; and exploitation of its members, be it physically, mentally, financially, or anything of the like. Christian priests are more than often charismatic in their character, with the power and ability to hold their congregation's attention: these men (and women) are able to hold their member's minds and mold them as a parent would a child because of their charisma. Thought reform and the exploitation of church members is exemplified in how one must be *saved*, one must be *rebirthed* to a new and virginal state of being in order to become a member, and once a member one must be a *sinner* who is constantly admitting that their actions are wrong, foul, and must be repented.

This is the Nihilistic view of the Christian faith, that everything we do has a meaning, but it is the wrong meaning: that we must deny the pleasures and sufferings that life has to offer in order to have a better life once we are in our grave. Nietzsche wants us to overcome the Christian view, and more or less move in the direction of Eastern philosophy. Within Buddhism, we affirm life, we affirm life's pleasures and suffers as what they are: a part of life. Taking the example before, "it is good to have physical relations with one another?" The answer, it is neither good nor bad, it is a part of life that we have physical bonds to other people. Any and all parts of life are neither good nor are they bad, it is how we name them that classifies them as such. The trick is ... not to.