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IN SEVEN SENTENCES*

WORLD RELIGIONS

*IN SEVEN
SENTENCES*

A SMALL
INTRODUCTION
TO A VAST TOPIC



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ATHEISM

1

“God Is Dead”

All religion is defeated and refuted if it can be shown that there is no God and no sacred reality. Monotheism affirms that there is one transcendent and personal God who created the world and who deserves worship and obedience on his terms. Other religions demur but affirm a sacred reality that is irreducible to any material state, such as the Buddhist idea of Nirvana, the Hindu concept of Brahman, or the Daoist concept of the Dao. We will evaluate these claims shortly, but our attention is first drawn to the pronouncement of a famous eighteenth-century German atheist, a man who stripped the cosmos of God or any sacred reality or purpose. So opposed was he to Christianity that he penned a book called *The Anti-Christ* to make it clear. If he is right, all religions are wrong, and we must make our way alone in an uncaring and godless cosmos.

NIETZSCHE'S WORLD WITHOUT GOD

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a passionate writer whose literary brilliance and sweeping philosophical judgments have left a deep and wide mark on philosophy and beyond. Walter Kaufmann, who translated and edited *The Portable Nietzsche*, writes of Nietzsche's "brilliant epigrams and metaphors, his sparkling polemics and ceaseless stylistic experiments."¹ As a freshman in college, I was dazzled by both the style and the philosophy for a time, and carried around my *Portable Nietzsche* like an atheist Bible.²

Having received his doctorate without needing to write a dissertation, Nietzsche quickly gained status academically as a philologist and a philosopher.³ However, bad health caused him to leave the classroom, and he spent the rest of his life on a pension as an intellectual nomad, traveling through Europe, looking for healthy climates, and writing his iconoclastic books while chronically ill.

Nietzsche is most known for a bold three-word statement and for a sad twelve-year condition. The condition is insanity, which overtook him in 1884, thus ending his writing. After seeing a horse being beaten on the street, the great advocate of the hypermasculine overman threw his arms around the beast and fell into insanity. His statement, *God is dead*, was made in his right mind and with a flourish as part of a parable called "The Madman," from *The Gay Science*. It must be quoted in full, given the drama and craft of it.

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, Portable Library (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982), 1, Kindle.

²Consider the old line, "If your Bible is falling apart (from use), then your life probably isn't." Applied to Nietzsche, "If your *Portable Nietzsche* is falling apart," your life probably is too.

³This was no administrative oversight. It was Germany, after all. His supervisors deemed him so brilliant that a dissertation would be superfluous. In contrast, I wrote two dissertations for my doctorate in philosophy since the first was rejected.

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!" As many of those who do not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Why, did he get lost? said one. Did he lose his way like a child? said another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? or emigrated? Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his glances.

"Whither is God" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we

ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us—for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they too were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke and went out. “I come too early,” he said then; “my time has not come yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering—it has not yet reached the ears of man. Lightning and thunder require time, the light of the stars requires time, deeds require time even after they are done, before they can be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves.”

It has been related further that on that same day the madman entered divers churches and there sang his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said to have replied each time, “What are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?”⁴

This episode, taken from *The Gay Science*, gives no arguments against the existence of God, although we will address three of them below. Rather, it assumes the nonexistence of God and poetically and dramatically draws out the personal and social implications of atheism. *God is dead* means that (1) there is no God and never has been; (2) the belief in God’s nonexistence has dire and dramatic implications for culture, politics, history, and religion; and (3) these world-historical implications will inevitably be worked out over time, thus changing everything in human affairs where Christianity has held sway.

⁴Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 95-96.

This parable can be read as a prediction or as a warning or as both. It is a warning in two senses. First, to Nietzsche's sense.

His image of an earth unchained from the sun and spinning without purpose in space was a world stripped of deity and of every belief that God requires the existence of God to be true. Earth shorn of God makes a person an ersatz god, the god who murdered God. Nietzsche wonders what kind of "atonement" is required of such an act, indicating guilt and the need for redemption. But there is no such atonement. Atheistic executioners must face the severity of their act because a world without God does not remain the same, except that religion ceases to have an object. Rather, every value that required God as its root is uprooted, and what remains is a godless landscape lacking any map or compass or guide. Thus, Nietzsche called for the "revaluation of all values."⁵

Nietzsche demanded that God's murderers accept their plight with realism. Only a few brave men (and he meant males) would have the courage to forge their own values, deny any heaven of ideas or divine revelation, and assert their "will-to-power" over lesser folks. Nietzsche's character, Zarathustra, a kind of prophet without God, thunders forth:

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself "man," which means: the esteemer.⁶

When heaven is emptied of God, history will change radically. Any sense of providence, human rights, the priority of love, or

⁵Kauffman uses the word *revaluation*. See Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 568-69. This is the preface to Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, originally published in 1895.

⁶Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 171.

divine judgment vanishes. It would take time, but it would happen. The nerve for altruism would be severed. Only the select few could hear and heed these words of Nietzsche, the atheist prophet.

To esteem is to create: hear this, you creators! Esteeming itself is of all esteemed things the most estimable treasure. Through esteeming alone is there value: and without esteeming, the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear this, you creators!⁷

What, if anything, could give meaning in Nietzsche's world without God? Since "the nut of existence" is hollow in itself, all meaning stems from individuals, although few would have the courage to own it. Most would either pretend that atheism had no severe consequences or live by using religion as a crutch to compensate for their weakness. As an undergraduate, I attended a lecture by a historian who made an offhanded remark that although he did not believe in God, he still held most of the moral values of a religious person. He said this flippantly, and many laughed. I did not. Nietzsche would not have laughed either. That man had cheated philosophically.

The path to meaning, for Nietzsche, brings us to the doorstep of the overman. As he said in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss."⁸ Humans were not made in the image of God, as the Bible teaches, he argues, yet humans could be more than mere animals. "Overman" is Walter Kaufmann's translation of *Übermensch*, a crucial idea for Nietzsche. The overman strives to overcome whatever would overshadow his own individuality and originality as a unique and incomparable creator of value. As Kaufmann puts it, the overman is

⁷Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 171.

⁸Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 126.

a human being who has created for himself that unique position in the cosmos which the Bible considered his divine birthright. The meaning of life is thus found on earth, in this life, not as the inevitable outcome of evolution . . . but in the few human beings who raise themselves above the all-too-human mass.⁹

As Zarathustra intones six times, “Man is something that must be overcome.”¹⁰ By “man,” Nietzsche means human beings understood as having a fixed and given human nature and as accountable to God. To that he says good riddance, and longs for overman. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) noted that Nietzsche did not find meaning in the newly developed scientific idea of evolution, which guaranteed no human excellence, only change. Nietzsche

asked himself how he could live with the new idea [of evolution]. His battle took place entirely within his own soul. He needed the further development to the superman [or overman] in order to be able to bear mankind.¹¹

Thus, in order to find meaning, humans without God have to aspire to be more than humans but less than God—and to so endeavor while walking a tightrope strung over an abyss. “The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth!”¹² Nietzsche often uses repetition and exclamation marks to do philosophical work since he vouchsafes little about just what an overman is. Whatever he is, he is not the result of mere evolutionary change. Optimistic humanism was not an option for Nietzsche since it

⁹Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 115-16.

¹⁰Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 149.

¹¹Rudolf Steiner, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Fighter for Freedom* (Englewood, NJ: Steiner, 1960), 211.

¹²Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 125.

cannot appeal to any good human potential, since human nature has to be overcome. And, of course, there is no transcendent standard or ideal. The overman seems stranded in a meaningless universe from which no meaning can be sculpted.

A second source of potential meaning for Nietzsche is “the eternal recurrence,” or the idea that everything that has happened will happen again, *ad infinitum*. This is not the biblical idea of eternal life—an unending and blessed afterlife in a linear series. Rather, it is a cyclical view—life in this world as it is, over and over again. As he puts it, the “eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over, and you with it, a dust grain of dust.”¹³ He asks “how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?”¹⁴ Some debate whether Nietzsche took this to be objectively true of the cosmos or instead as a poetic mode of embracing life.¹⁵ Either way, the idea fails to confer any purpose for life or death. The repetition of zero is still zero, even if zero is multiplied by infinity.

NIETZSCHE’S CASE AGAINST RELIGION

Nietzsche trained the heavy artillery of his philosophical objections against the religions of Judaism and Christianity specifically since they influenced Germany and the Western world more than other religions. He had some appreciation of Buddhism but not its essential worldview, which includes metaphysical elements—such as reincarnation, karma, and

¹³Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 101.

¹⁴Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 102.

¹⁵The “scientific argument” is that if the universe is eternal in time but finite in scope, then everything will recycle endlessly. However, scientific and philosophical evidence refutes the notion of an eternal universe. See Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022).

Nirvana—that his materialistic atheism disallowed. He preferred the Buddhist view of suffering to that of Christianity:

Buddhism, I repeat, a hundred times colder, more truthful, more objective [than Christianity]. It is no longer confronted with the need to make suffering and the susceptibility to pain respectable by interpreting them in terms of sin—it simply says what it thinks: “I suffer.”¹⁶

Nietzsche did not subject Buddhism to the severe criticism he reserved for Judaism and especially Christianity. Let us address his case against biblical religion.

First, Nietzsche defied God more than he denied God’s existence. He was not able to bear the idea that God knew everything about him. “The god who saw everything, even man—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live.”¹⁷ Again:

That we find no God—either in history or in nature or behind nature—is not what differentiates us, but that we experience what has been revered as God, not as “godlike” but as miserable, as absurd, as harmful, not merely as an error but *as a crime against life*. We deny God as God. If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him.¹⁸

Nietzsche’s critique is that the Christian God is antilife and untrue to the earth, which is our only reality. “I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not.”¹⁹

¹⁶Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 590.

¹⁷Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 379.

¹⁸Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 627.

¹⁹Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 125.

For his critique to stand, Nietzsche must find value in the naked earth *sans deo* [without God]. But this, as I have argued, is unavailable to him since all value is asserted by individuals whose intrinsic value is null and void, since the earth has been unchained from the sun and is spinning aimlessly through empty space.

Further, his critique of Christianity as antilife is false.²⁰ According to Christianity, God created the world as “very good” and made humans in his image and likeness (Gen 1). But given the fall, some aspects of life—sinful thoughts and behaviors—need to be denied in order to affirm higher aspects of life, faith, and virtue. Jesus’ atoning suffering and death wrought the forgiveness of sin, but it did not deny the essential goodness of life for those who follow him. As he promised,

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (Jn 10:9-10)

The apostle Paul concurs, “God . . . richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Tim 6:17). Ecclesiastes repeatedly commends the enjoyment of life given by God, despite the ephemerality and disappointments of a world east of Eden and “under the sun” (Eccl 2:24-25; 5:18-20). Further, the Song of Songs celebrates the joys of erotic love between husband and wife.²¹

Nietzsche’s second attack on biblical religion is that it breeds *ressentiment*, a French word meaning “a feeling of bitter anger

²⁰For a more detailed argument, see Douglas Groothuis, “Nietzsche’s Evaluation of Christian Ethics” (1986), http://library.mibckerala.org/lms_frame/eBook/TI1/Evaluation%20of%20Christian%20Ethics.pdf.

²¹See S. Craig Glickman, *A Song for Lovers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976).

or resentment together with a sense of frustration at being powerless to express this hostility overtly.”²² For Nietzsche, Judaism was a slave religion and Christianity continued the grievance. *Ressentiment* is wielded by the losers in history against the winners, whom they condemn as immoral as a way to recompense their own lack of power. It is “slave morality,” not “master morality,” that thrives on the exercise of power. So, for Nietzsche, Jesus’ statement that “the meek will inherit the earth” (Mt 5:5) really means that the weak desire to depose the strong through the alien power of God (who does not exist). To cite Frank Zappa in a Nietzschean tone, “The meek shall inherit nothing.”²³ Or as a graffito I once saw put it, “The earth inherits the meek.”

However, this critique only holds if there is no God whose judgments are true and whose ways are trustworthy. Nietzsche has not shown that. If there is no such deity, then the losers of history might well rely on *ressentiment* to compensate for their impotence. But even so, Nietzsche’s judgment about Christian morality and psychology is off base since Christianity teaches us to love and pray for our enemies (Mt 5:43-48) and offers salvation to all who will humble themselves before God and have faith in Christ as Savior (Eph 2:8). Both the high and the low will stand before the infallible and inevitable judgment of God. Moreover, not a few biblical characters are strong and prestigious socially, such as David and Solomon. Saul, who became the apostle Paul, was a high achiever intellectually and religiously before his conversion, and he did not cease to demonstrate his intellect afterward (see especially Acts 17:16-34).²⁴

²²*Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. “ressentiment (n.);” (in American English), accessed February 24, 2023, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ressentiment.

²³Frank Zappa, “The Meek Will Inherit Nothing,” Zappa Family Trust, 1981.

²⁴See Douglas Groothuis, “Learning from an Apostle,” *Christian Research Journal* (July 1, 2019), www.equip.org/articles/learning-from-an-apostle-christianity-in-the-marketplace-of-ideas-acts-1716-34.

There is no sign of *ressentiment* in his actions or teachings. However, in light of knowing Christ, he counted this all as nothing, as is proper if the goodness of eternal life outweighs all earthly achievements (Phil 3:8).

Nietzsche launched a third attack against God:

A god who is all-knowing and all-powerful and who does not even make sure that his creatures understand his intention—could that be a god of goodness? Who allows countless doubts and dubieties to persist, for thousands of years, as though the salvation of mankind were unaffected by them, and who on the other hand holds out the prospect of frightful consequences if any mistake is made as to the nature of truth?²⁵

Thus, this God is like “a deaf and dumb man making all kinds of ambiguous signs when the most fearful danger is about to fall on his child or his dog.”²⁶ This objection is now called “the hiddenness of God.” If God is who monotheism claims, why then do not more people believe in him? So, it would seem, the claim that (1) God exists and (2) many do not believe in God are incompatible.

I address this elsewhere in some detail,²⁷ but the heart of the matter is the matter of the human heart and God’s manner of communicating. People may or may not respond wisely to the evidence God sets before them. They are intellectual agents who make cognitive choices based on their values. This is why Jesus said, “Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Mt 13:9). As Pascal wrote, “There is enough light for those who desire only to see,

²⁵Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 52.

²⁶Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 53.

²⁷Groothuis, “Doubt, Skepticism, and the Hiddenness of God,” in *Christian Apologetics*.

and enough darkness for those of a contrary disposition.”²⁸ We can conclude, thus:

1. There is ample evidence for God’s existence from natural theology.²⁹
2. God exists.
3. But many do not believe in God.
4. Proposition (3) is explained by our cognitive freedom. Some are disposed not to believe, even though there is strong evidence for God’s existence.
5. Therefore (3) gives no evidence that (2) is false.

Nietzsche’s disposition was obvious, and his anti-God arguments were specious.

NIETZSCHE’S GRIM LESSON

Nietzsche’s atheism was ill-founded, but his predictions about a world where the divine horizon is wiped out have proven grimly true. Religion, in all its forms, affirms a transcendent source of morality, while Nietzsche denied it. As C. S. Lewis wrote, in “Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, and Oriental” thought alike is “the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are.”³⁰ In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis called this reality “the Tao” in a religiously neutral sense. We will later explore whether the nontheistic “Oriental” understandings of objective moral value are up for the metaphysical task. Without this “doctrine of objective value,” nihilism and totalitarianism beckon since everything loses all intrinsic and objective value grounded in any transcendent standard.

²⁸Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 149 (item 430), 50.

²⁹See Groothuis, “The Case for Christian Theism,” in *Christian Apologetics*.

³⁰C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 19, Kindle.

Nietzsche accused Christianity as leading to nihilism because of its antilife stance. He thought it emptied the earth of meaning because of a nonexistent heaven. He was wrong. Nietzsche thought he could avoid nihilism through the aspiration to the overman. He was wrong again, since overman does not exist—except in the mind of Friedrich Nietzsche. He was right about the effects of atheism, however. Atheism is the high-octane fuel of totalitarianism since political power reigns free of the fear of God.

Nietzsche was no socialist since socialism's ideal is to level society and create equality. That would justify the "herd mentality" of lesser wills and lesser lights that he despised. However, the philosophical and political titan of socialism of the twentieth century was atheistic—Marxism. Marxism left approximately one hundred million killed by their own totalitarian, Marxist-atheist governments in China, the USSR, Cambodia, and elsewhere.³¹ Marxism substituted a secular and economic sense of purpose to history in which the poor rise up to overcome the rich and promote an egalitarian society. This has never happened anywhere, and Marx never gave a sufficient justification why anyone would expect this to happen through political means. But wherever Marxism has been tried, it has denied intrinsic human rights, treated people as the means to political ends even at the cost of their lives, and prevented freedom of speech and freedom of religion—since there was no God to give these rights. It likewise worked to overturn the traditional family in order to make the state the supreme social entity. This carnage and political repression are attributable to atheism on a grand scale. Nietzsche was right about that.

³¹See Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

While atheism is not a sufficient condition for massive injustice on a revolutionary scale, it is a necessary condition for it, and makes it more likely.³² Since Nietzsche defended atheism, he made totalitarianism more likely. As Russian dissident Alexandr Solzhenitsyn said:

It was Dostoevsky, once again, who drew from the French Revolution and its seeming hatred of the Church the lesson that “revolution must necessarily begin with atheism.” That is absolutely true. But the world had never before known a godlessness as organized, militarized, and tenaciously malevolent as that practiced by Marxism. Within the philosophical system of Marx and Lenin, and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions. Militant atheism is not merely incidental or marginal to Communist policy; it is not a side effect, but the central pivot to achieve its diabolical ends. Communism needs to control a population devoid of religious and national feeling, and this entails the destruction of faith and nationhood. Communists proclaim both of these objectives openly, and just as openly go about carrying them out.³³

What was true of the USSR was (and is) true of communist China, which enforces atheism and persecutes religious believers of all kinds. The totalitarian state can brook no religious rivals.

My point is not that Nietzsche advocated anything like Marxism. He did not. However, a world without God is ripe for

³²While religion has been advanced to oppress and murder others, it cannot match the murderous results of the twentieth century atheism in this respect.

³³Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, “Men Have Forgotten God: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s 1983 Templeton Address,” *National Review*, December 11, 2018, www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/aleksandr-solzhenitsyn-men-have-forgotten-god-speech.

ersatz gods, as Nietzsche said, and some of these will take as their kingdom the most ruthless political oppression. Nietzsche revered Napoleon for his aristocratic nature and exceptional will-to-power, calling him a “synthesis of the inhuman and the superhuman.”³⁴ He valorized men of great strength who were not restrained by love or by a religious conscience. For them, there was no God to fear or worship, but there was a world to win through power and even cruelty. It is no surprise that Adolf Hitler drew inspiration from Nietzsche—whether or not Nietzsche was antisemitic.³⁵

While some atheists have tried to go on as if little changes with the death of God—since we can supposedly support objective moral values apart from God—Nietzsche had no such illusions. Before giving a long list of excoriations against Christianity, Nietzsche affirms, “In Christianity neither morality nor religion has even a single point of contact with reality.”³⁶ Further:

When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one’s feet. This morality is by no means self-evident. . . . Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: nothing necessary remains in one’s hands. Christianity presupposes that man does not know, cannot know, what is good for him, what is evil: he believes in God, who alone knows it. Christian morality is a command; its origin is transcendent; it is beyond all

³⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Douglas Smith, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35-37, Kindle.

³⁵Stephen R. C. Hicks, *Nietzsche and the Nazis: A Personal View* (Roscoe, IL: Ockham’s Razor Press, 2010).

³⁶Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 581.

criticism, all right to criticism; it has truth only if God is the truth—it stands and falls with faith in God.³⁷

There is no way to rescue the traditional classical or Judeo-Christian virtues or civil society in the atheistic world of Nietzsche. The “revaluation of values” leaves nothing at it was.

ATHEISM, MORAL MEANING, AND RELIGION

Along with Nietzsche, atheists such as Max Stirner, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Michael Ruse, and others have claimed that God is the only possible source of objective morality and meaning. Without God, we must find another way. Other atheists try to retain objective morality in a godless and directionless world, although their case is weak.³⁸ Nietzsche shows us that without God traditional concepts of meaning and morality crumble. But neither his reasons for disbelieving in God nor his godless moral alternative is compelling. Here is the essential argument of this chapter.

1. Without God or some sacred realm, there can be no “objective moral value” (C. S. Lewis). Nietzsche agrees.
2. Nietzsche’s reasons for atheism fail.
3. Nietzsche’s godless alternative to objective moral value (the overman) fails to give meaning.
4. Nietzsche’s case against God fails.
5. Without objective moral value or Nietzsche’s (or some other) alternative, we face nihilism.
6. Nihilism easily leads to totalitarianism (and other evils).
7. Totalitarianism is evil and has led to mass slaughter in the twentieth century.

³⁷Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, 515-16.

³⁸Groothuis, “The Moral Argument for God,” in *Christian Apologetics*.

8. Therefore, to avoid evil, we need to posit God or some sacred realm to ground objective moral value and to curb totalitarianism (and other evils).

We will consider the worldviews of the major world religions through the prisms of each religion's representative sentence. At this point in the argument, we have learned that atheism (Nietzsche's or otherwise) cannot ground the morally meaningful life that we desire. It remains to be seen which of the major world religions can rise to this philosophical occasion. We begin with Judaism's statement, *I am who I am*.

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