

Existential Wars:

Kierkegaard versus Nietzsche

By Malachi

(http://www.christiancadre.org/member_contrib/mal_existential.html)

Introduction to Existentialism

It has often been charged, often by implication and sometimes explicitly that humanity has no real worth or value. The philosophy known as existentialism has tried to answer the question as to the value of humanity, mankind's destiny, and other such questions. But the answers that this philosophy discovered have often been disastrous for humanity. For instance, a straight-out denial of any objective value to mankind is often championed by this philosophy. However, the founder of existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard, had another view. As with existentialistic philosophy, mankind was his anthropological starting point. But instead of finding death and despair, as most existentialists have found, Kierkegaard found hope. The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, thought otherwise. Only by the questioning of doctrines and the questioning of society's ethical structures can we rid ourselves of this unnecessary baggage that "...drain[s] life's energies, however socially prevalent those views might be."¹ These two men take vastly different approaches and this led to their vastly different conclusions. Their respective existential dialectics will be discussed and then critiqued. This critique will use three criteria: correspondence to reality, internal coherence, and livability.

Background to Soren Kierkegaard's Dialectic

Kierkegaard not only believed that God existed and that Christianity was true but that the only real way to live is to choose God by a total faith commitment where a person progresses from a life of mere pleasure (aesthetic), to a life of rules and obedience (ethical), and finally to a life of total faith that one seeks passionately after God (religious). These three categories of progression have earmarks of Hegel's famous thesis, antithesis, and synthesis dialectic. It is important to understand Kierkegaard's thought from the backdrop of Hegelian philosophy also. Hegelian philosophy thought that God was unfolding himself through the historical process. As man progressed, so did God. Kierkegaard's philosophy is akin to Hegelian philosophy in that the individual progresses through the three stages listed above: aesthetic, ethical, and the religious. Hegelian philosophy² was also the predominant philosophy at the time of Kierkegaard. It basically tried to argue that the existence of God could be proven and that reason can lead that way. This point should be taken to heart for the strict rationalist.³ Kierkegaard was writing against other things as well. Romanticism was one of these things.⁴ Friedrich Schopenhauer formulated this idea from Kant's famous noumenal/ phenomenal split. From Kant, Schopenhauer also adopted the idea that religion is known from feeling, not of doing. This gave Schopenhauer the apparatus for knowing God: religious experience and feeling.⁵ Thus, the trinity, incarnation, and similar theological views were doubted because the unchanging fixed doctrines that Christianity held had to be subject to change and revision, like experience and feeling were. Added to this was Lessing's belief that eternal truths of faith can never be the foundation for temporal uncertain truths of history. Herder mixed Romanticism with Spinoza's view of God: the result was that it provided the basis for idealism's view that reality is the creation of absolute ego. Nietzsche too was influenced by Herder.

To a large extent, these views had even infiltrated the church in Kierkegaard's day. Because of the cold, somber view that reason could bring a person to God, the church in Kierkegaard's day had many empty seats. Kierkegaard wanted to fix this problem. Only by continually telling people that "the moment" has eternal significance⁶ could Kierkegaard express the importance of a total faith commitment to the Christian life. Being a Christian is extremely difficult though. Because of this, Kierkegaard advised that people not become Christians for they would then be aware of their sins. No longer could they live the aesthetic life and feel right before God. Kierkegaard certainly did inwardly wish that people would learn from his writings and examine themselves much like Socrates did. Indeed, Socrates' famous idea that "the unexamined life isn't worth living" is of supreme importance to Kierkegaard, for Kierkegaard pictures Socrates as a true existentialist. Indeed, Kierkegaard believed that Socrates was the ideal person; only Jesus knew his inwardness better. Because sin separates us from God, the only way to bridge that distance is for God to give mankind the condition for knowing the objective truth, and the truth itself. This speaks of some sort of revelation. Only then could mankind appropriate those truths subjectively. The way God chose to give us that condition is through God coming into human history, which we call the incarnation. But this is unbelievable and paradoxical; it is the absolute paradox. How and why would God enter human history to become a man? Furthermore, because mankind has a sin nature, it wouldn't matter if one was an eye-witness or not to the God-man, thus contemporaneity⁷ is possible with Jesus, but wouldn't matter. This is because the paradox (God-man) becomes absurd on the cross. Only by receiving the condition and the truth can the bridge that separates mankind from God because of sin be repaired. This happens by progressing through the stages and by the appropriation of the objective truth into subjective livability.

One needs to be careful in reading Kierkegaard. It isn't for the new Christian, but for the advanced one. Not only are his arguments and understanding of mankind at an amazingly sophisticated level, they can also be easily taken out of context. A major charge that some have leveled against Kierkegaard is the view that he is a mere fideist or a subjectivist. This is far from the case though, for Kierkegaard uses reason. For him, reason is the nuts and bolts of objectivity. Subjectivity is the appropriation of the objective facts reason shows. Thus, far from discarding objectivity, Kierkegaard presumes objectivity. In other words, without objectivity, subjectivity can't exist.

Background to Friedrich Nietzsche's Dialectic

The Netherlands and Germany have never really liked each other. It is no surprise that these two countries produced diametrically opposing existential view-points: Kierkegaard from the Netherlands and Nietzsche from Germany. Their two dialectics couldn't be more different. Nietzsche was a famous

German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of traditional morality and Christianity. He believed in life, creativity, health, and the realities of the world we live in, rather than those situated in a world beyond. Central to Nietzsche's philosophy is the idea of "life-affirmation," which involves an honest questioning of all doctrines which drain life's energies, however socially prevalent those views might be.⁸

Belief in God was one of these views that Nietzsche thought must be abandoned. But he didn't want to negate life's value as Schopenhauer did, but to affirm it by giving a new type of ethic to mankind.⁹ Once mankind realized that God didn't exist from which to anchor moral and ethical structures and values, another ethic would arise. Nietzsche was buying epistemic insurance to curtail what would inevitably happen once mankind threw off the shackles that religion had on him. Virtually calling himself a prophet, Nietzsche had a definite prediction that mankind would get back to a Dionysus type of thought in

which the heavens would no longer be man's basis for morality and inspiration; instead, the basis would rest in man, himself. Because Christianity is the chief example of this, it must be replaced. This is the reason Nietzsche was so critical of Christianity. Indeed, Nietzsche

claims that he is a destiny because he regards his anti-moral truths as having the annihilating power of intellectual dynamite; he expects them to topple the morality born of sickness which he perceives to have been reigning within Western culture for the last two thousand years. In this way, Nietzsche expresses his hope that Dionysus, the god of life's exuberance, would replace Jesus, the god of the heavenly otherworld, as the premier cultural standard for future millennia.¹⁰

For Nietzsche, "Dionysus is... the symbol of the stream of life itself" and "one with life."¹¹ What the Greeks did was to "...transmute the world and human life though the medium of art" and "they were then able to say 'yes' to the world as an aesthetic phenomenon."¹² But Nietzsche believed that "...beneath their (Greeks) devotion to art and beauty and form" is the "...dark, turgid and formless torrent of instinct and impulse and passion which tends to sweep away everything in its path."¹³ Throughout his writings Nietzsche "challenges the deeply-entrenched moral idea that exploitation, domination, injury to the weak, destruction and appropriation are universally objectionable behaviors."¹⁴ Things like goodness towards others, self-sacrifice, and loving kindness would be moral abominations to Nietzsche. Mankind is solely made to conquer the "other." This fits in with his definition of morality very nicely. For Nietzsche's view is based in the survival of the fittest and is inevitable because of the fear that people have toward others. People can't do good things for others or even show love for their neighbor unless it's based in fear. As Russell points out,

if the men who do not possess these aristocratic qualities (who are the vast majority) band themselves together, they may win in spite of their individual inferiority. In this fight of the collective canaille against the aristocrats, Christianity is the ideological front, as the French Revolution was the fighting front. We ought therefore to oppose every kind of union among the individually feeble, for fear lest their combined power should outweigh that of the individually strong...¹⁵

The reason why Nietzsche challenges these things is that the will to power necessitates it because of the corruption of humanity. This is why Christianity must be done away with; it looks to the heavens for its moral basis. Nietzsche wanted an ethic that didn't look for something beyond mankind. Once people realized that there was no God, a moderate ethic could be needed. If none was available, total nihilism would surely envelop everything. For Nietzsche, "[t]rue culture is a unity of the forces of life, the Dionysian element, with the love of form and beauty which is characteristic of the Apollonian attitude."¹⁶

People strive for power and this is what drives them. This, again, shows Nietzsche's Darwinian influence. Only the physically healthy and intellectually fit will survive, but only some will strive. In fact, "Nietzsche refers to this higher mode of being as "superhuman" (übermenschlich), and associates the doctrine of eternal recurrence—a doctrine for only the healthiest who can love life in its entirety..."¹⁷ This obviously has disastrous consequences for Christianity and western culture as well, if it does come to pass. As a result of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and want for humanity to transevaluate (replace with a new ethic) their ethical standards, the grand philosophy known as post-modernism was born.¹⁸

Correspondence to Reality:

Which view of existentialism is more plausible? To find this answer, our discussion will focus on three criteria: correspondence to reality, internal coherence, and livability. From these three criteria, it will be abundantly clear by the end of the discussion that Kierkegaard's existentialistic dialectic is the most plausible. Although both have shortcomings and unwarranted assumptions, Kierkegaard simply has the fewest errors and most warranted assumptions.

Given our background knowledge, which existential dialectic view is more plausible: Kierkegaard's or Nietzsche's? The answer is not an easy one. Indeed, many factors have to be taken into account. For example, Kierkegaard's existential dialectic is much increased if God exists. On the other hand, Nietzsche's existential dialectic is likewise increased if God does not exist. But how could these two alternatives possibly be measured? The answer is that if the existence of God has a $>.5$ or higher probability, then this could tip the scales for Kierkegaard. However, if it has a $>.5$ for God's non-existence, then Nietzsche's view could tip the scale. The extremely difficult part to calculate is which view reaches $>.5$ probability: that God exists, or that God does not exist? To answer this question, a number of arguments have been offered by theologians, philosophers, and writers spanning thousands of years. Many different arguments have been offered by both sides. Only a sample glance at some of the oldest and most controversial will be discussed. Five arguments have traditionally been offered by the theist: the ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral, and an historical argument based on miracles. For the atheist: the problem of evil (in two forms) the incoherence of God, and the argument of divine hiddenness.

Theistic arguments:

Contemporary philosophy of religion and the sub-branch known as philosophical theology have produced a number of theistic arguments. Theistic philosophy in general and Christian philosophy in particular are upheld by the majority of philosophers in the world. The following is an outline of some of the major theistic arguments. In fact, Kierkegaard seems to give a negative argument for God's existence based on our depravity and despair. However, this will not be discussed until later.

Ontological argument (two forms) 19

- The first form of the ontological argument was formulated by Anselm. The argument wants us to think of the greatest thing we could possibly think of. Since God, by definition, is the greatest thing (or being) we could think of, then that thing (God) must exist. This thing (or being) can't simply exist in a person's mind either because then it would be lesser than a being that exists in the mind and in reality. This argument is defended by few today. Most philosophers who accept the reasonableness of the ontological argument accept the second form instead.
- It states that the idea of God is, by definition, either possible, impossible, or necessary. If the idea of God is necessary, then God exists necessarily. If God's existence is possible, as the first alternative states, then that would mean God could possibly exist in every possible world, including our actual world since it's a possible world. Only if the idea of God is incoherent and thus impossible and lacks cognitive meaning, would it follow that God doesn't exist, according to Plantinga's new form of the ontological argument. Thus, if it's even possibly the case that God could exist, then God must necessarily exist.

Cosmological argument 20

An ancient form of this argument developed by Arabic and Muslim philosophy is an argument known as the Kalam Cosmological Argument. The argument has two basic premises and a conclusion: (P1) whatever begins to exist has a cause, (P2) the universe began to exist, and (C) therefore, the universe has a cause. Since this argument is

logically valid with the conclusion following from the premises, it must necessarily follow. The question is: are the premises true?

Teleological argument 21

Perhaps the teleological argument is the most hotly debated argument today. The argument takes many forms, but all design arguments reason from the fact that design in nature cries out for an explanation outside itself. William Paley imagined a watch in a field and reasons that no reasonable person would believe that nature constructed it. Vastly improved and more sophisticated arguments have been developed in recent years.

Moral argument 22

This argument basically states that since there are universal moral standards that most, or all, follow, then it follows that some moral agent must exist to which those morals come. More modern formulations of this argument have been constructed.

Historical argument 23

New Testament scholarship today is nothing like the scholarship that was around before and after World War I and II with Barth and Bultmann. Biblical scholars are far less skeptical of the supernatural in history. The primary reason for the skepticism of late 19th and early to mid 20th century New Testament scholarship was the view of a Newtonian universe, evolutionary theory, and the philosophical skepticism of David Hume. These three forces have far less influence on events in the Bible. Concerning the resurrection of Jesus, there is a far higher view of the probability of that event than ever before in recent history.

Atheistic arguments

A few arguments have been raised against the existence of God. Many of them are very sophisticated, but none seems at the end of the day to be of any real concern to the Christian theist. Perhaps this is the reason that there are fewer atheists in the field of philosophy today than fifty years ago.

Problem of evil (two forms) 24

- • The first form of the problem of evil is called the logical problem of evil. This argument states that the propositions that 1) God exists, and that 2) evil exists are logically contradictory notions. If God is all good, how could evil exist? This argument has been formulated today in very sophisticated ways. However, most theists and atheists agree that this argument has finally been put to rest.
- • The second form of the problem of evil is the probabilistic problem of evil. This argument states that while 1) and 2) may not be logically contradictory, they are nonetheless probably contradictory. This argument has serious problems, such as: what does the atheist mean by his definition of probable and where does he even get that notion. Moreover, an absolute moral standard is needed to judge acts as good or evil. Furthermore, the proponent of atheism can't prove that God doesn't have morally sufficient reasons for allowing evil to take place. The debate goes on however.

Incoherence of God 25

This argument states that God can't conceivably exist because the very notion of God is incoherent. For example, could God create a stone so big that God himself couldn't

destroy it? The answer to this and similar questions is that the very question being asked is incoherent. For it is a categorical error in logic to make this argument because it demands God (infinite) to do something that would violate his own nature. The view that God's nature is somehow incoherent is virtually dismissed in scholarship. History has shown no real proponents of this argument.

Divine hiddenness 26

This argument basically states that God's existence is hidden to the average person. From this observation by the atheist it is argued that because 1) God is perfectly good, and because 2) God is all powerful, that God would prove somehow that he exists. But this is not evident at all. For why should God have to prove himself in order to be loving? God doesn't have to do anything at all; in fact, he didn't need to create us. Moreover, many theists say that God has proven that He exists because of the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. Also, the arguments for God's existence and the historical event of the resurrection reduce the thrust of this argument. There is a heated debate over this argument.

Because Nietzsche "...is not interested in the metaphysical truth of either Christianity or any other religion, being convinced that no religion is really true, he judges all religions entirely by their social effects."²⁷ This is bad logic. For perhaps Christianity isn't a mere religion? There is no possible way for Nietzsche to know this without doing an extensive investigation into the historicity of Christianity. Nietzsche's critique of religion stems from his a priori definition. Take his a priori definition away, and his whole philosophy starts to crumble.

Internal coherence

Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's views have already been discussed in detail. It was argued that Kierkegaard's existential dialectic corresponds most to reality. But which of the two dialectics best faces the test of internal coherence? That is, which view of mankind is the most coherent given our background knowledge and moreover, which existential dialectic holds the fewest unwarranted assumptions. Because Nietzsche and Kierkegaard base their dialectics on certain assumptions on mankind's constitution and destiny, an introduction to their views seems appropriate.

Kierkegaard's view of the person will first be analyzed. It is true that Kierkegaard uses his dialectic to bring people back to authentic Christianity. Given the arguments for God's existence and argument from history for miracles (which was argued above), Kierkegaard's view of man would be more plausible. But what if the arguments for God's existence and Christianity were somehow shown to be implausible by the presence of under-cutting defeaters? Furthermore, what if arguments against God's existence and Christianity were offered by the presence of rebutting defeaters? In that case, Nietzsche's view of humanity would have greater initial plausibility. The reader will have to decide for himself which side gives the most persuasive arguments for God's existence and the truth of Christianity. For this reason, consideration of God's existence and the truth for Christianity will not be factored in determining which view of mankind is more plausible.

What then should we make of mankind's constitutional makeup? Are humans created in God's image or are they not? The answer is most difficult. Nietzsche is certainly correct that if mankind comes to realize or just disregard any objective ethical standards, society would fall. This is because he held the view, correct view in that, that the world is largely based on a Judeo-Christian philosophy. But the problem with Nietzsche's view is that this supposed realization seems almost inevitable. This does seem to be a coherent view of mankind's destiny given an understanding of history. But Christianity also teaches, according to many, that society will erode. But the point is, history has shown

unquestionably that ideas carry over into reality and can often times have disastrous consequences. Take evolutionary theory. This has enormous implications for mankind. For instance, some have made this into a philosophical worldview. Karl Marx used this view to delineate "[h]istorical materialism — Marx's theory of history — is centered on the idea that forms of society rise and fall as they further and then impede the development of human productive power. Marx sees the historical process as proceeding through a necessary series of modes of production, culminating in communism."²⁸ Marx's thought gave rise to communism all throughout the world. Others such as Hegel, Feuerbach, and Lenin have either adopted this view and extended it to its logical conclusion or have helped give rise to it. Political figures like Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and others are just a few who have been influenced by evolutionary theory. Indeed,

during the 1930's, aspects of Nietzsche's thought were espoused by the Nazis and Italian Fascists, partly due to the encouragement of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche through her solicitations with Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. It was possible for the Nazi interpreters to assemble, quite selectively, various passages from Nietzsche's writings whose juxtaposition appeared to justify war, aggression and domination for the sake of nationalistic and racial self-glorification.²⁹

The point is that ideas matter. As for Nietzsche, his view that humanity will have something of a second fall, once it realizes that Christianity is false and that the whole ethical system of western civilization was built on straw, is most coherent. But the question is whether mankind will indeed come to this realization? Is it inevitable or could there be another factor that hasn't been considered? Could history be driven by something that prevents this from happening, that saves humanity its last breath? Because post-modernity is ever inching into the mindset of society, this question might soon find an answer. As for Kierkegaard, a total faith commitment is needed to solve mankind's problem of dread and anxiety. Perhaps this is the real meaning of what existentialism is all about. It can't be emphasized too much that Kant's notion of an absolute, universal morality was a key factor in why Nietzsche developed his views.³⁰ Often views are taken to extremes. Nietzsche's reaction to Kant is perhaps an example of this.

Livability

Thus far two criteria have been discussed. They were the correspondence to reality and the internal coherence criteria. One more criterion must not be forgotten though. That criterion can simply be stated in this way: which view of existentialism is most livable? A serious attempt will be given to show that Kierkegaard's existential view fulfills mankind's innermost desires and needs the best and is therefore is more plausible existential dialectic.

Perhaps existentialism's most significant error, and no doubt Kierkegaard succumbs to the same criticisms by later thinkers, is the lack of need for community and fellowship. Surely Nietzsche isn't excused from this charge either. There is no good reason why he can hide under his atheistic worldview because history, as well as common sense, shows that humanity hates to be alone. Often times left to themselves, humans go crazy. This is surely the reason why prisons and the military have solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is not just a place to remove those certain people from society because of punishment. Rather, it's a way to break people; it's a way to make a person go insane. For without fellowship with others, without community with others, what makes life worth living? Moreover, what makes life tolerable in the face of apparent gratuitous suffering? Where does one go when there's no one to go to? Humanity not only needs fellowship or community to fulfill them but also needs others to satisfy them. People need to be satisfied emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, psychologically, physically, mentally, and also sexually. Only through community and fellowship with others can many of these be

fulfilled. Even Kierkegaard seemed to have realized that he needed Regina Olson. Nietzsche longed for fellowship too when he "...made an unsuccessful marriage proposal to a Dutch piano student in Geneva named Mathilde Trampedach."³¹ Indeed, many existentialists and atheists (who comprise most existentialists) have found life simply unbearable and unlivable without others.

If there is no God, no others around to seek comfort from the anxiety, dread, and despair that surrounds us, if all is an empty void with no end, what makes mankind so special? This is especially true if history is cyclical. Only through linear history does progress happen. Of course something needs to direct that history forward but the more important idea is hope. This is why it is of the utmost importance what or who is doing the driving. Only if God is behind the driver's seat can two very important criteria be fulfilled. The first is eternal life. If life does indeed end at the grave, why shouldn't our memories remain there? There is absolutely nothing that makes life worth living; there is nothing that makes life worth remembering either, if there is no eternal life. But if there is eternal life, there is hope. The grave isn't the last chapter to life. Kierkegaard's views, not Nietzsche's views, give hope. On the other hand, eternal life doesn't completely solve the problem. An eternal life of anxiety and hopelessness will not solve mankind's problem. Actually, it only prolongs the problem indefinitely. The solution to the problem, or as Kierkegaard says, the condition given by God, is needed less if an infinity of dead-ends occurs. Thus, God's existence must be the solution. Either by some sort of argument like Aquinas' famous five or a postulate as in Kant, God must be the reason for the hope that lies within each of us. In fact, no explanation is necessary, no rigorous philosophical argument is needed; God may be found in many ways. Only if God exists is there hope for the individual that dread, despair, and anxiety will find their end.

These two elements can be summed up in one word—hope. Of the two philosophies, only Kierkegaard's philosophy gives hope. Nietzsche's philosophy doesn't. It is certainly possible that hope is a deception and that there really isn't any hope. But this mere possibility is only an epistemic possibility in nature, not a live option for the existing individual. At least this is largely not how the majority of the world lives. For do not people get up in the morning? Do people not want to live, and to live in good health at that? Undoubtedly most people want all of these. The objective uncertainty about whether God exists and can as a result, give us hope of an afterlife and thus quench the soul's longings must be lived out subjectively, according to Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard remarked:

I contemplate the order of nature in finding God, and I see omnipotence and wisdom; but I also see much else that disturbs my mind and excites anxiety. The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty. But it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite.³²

However, Kierkegaard didn't think the arguments for God were necessarily unsound. They were unsatisfactory answers of what a person does in the "moment." Indeed, Kierkegaard seems to give an argument for God's existence.³³ Perhaps by trusting our inner needs and general intuition, and not just external perception, can a realistic and desiring philosophical worldview be reached. Nietzsche simply could not control his epistemic doubt; it eventually drove him insane.

Concluding Thoughts

The actor Tim Robbins once made an interesting remark in the movie, *Shawshank Redemption*, concerning redemption through a jail escape. His character remarked to his friend after contemplating a jail escape: "You get busy dying, I'll get busy living." The moment of decision arrived; only the choice was needed to take action. This is similar to

Kierkegaard's stages. How a person progresses to the ethical from the aesthetic or the religious from the ethical concerns what one does with the condition in the moment of decision. Kierkegaard speaks to us today in that we must make a decision; anxiety and dread can be overcome by faith. Epistemically, objective uncertainty is not enough to fail to take the step of faith. Subjective certainty is sufficient.

The reason that Kierkegaard's existential dialectic is preferable to Nietzsche's isn't just because it meets criteria better. For the analysis that was done could, in fact, be wrong. Some logical error possibly could have occurred. Mankind's logic is corrupted; it was also affected in the fall. It all comes down to appropriation and how we handle uncertainty, which leads to anxiety. Nietzsche, as well as others in the camp who don't put absolute dependence on God, have failed to make the choice; they have even feared the choice. Anxiety is always present in choice, but that's no excuse to not make the choice. The "moment" passes and eternity slips away in an instant. Mankind may fail in the end, but at least he made the choice. Because of how far we are separated from God through sin, the truth and the condition for knowing the truth must be given. These were Kierkegaard's mere thoughts.

Footnotes

1. Robert Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edwin N. Zalta, editor, August 26, 2003, available at [April 26, 2005].
2. Hegel argued that God is revealing himself in history. As the historical process progresses, God progresses. This takes place from subjective consciences to objective consciences and finally to absolute consciences, or Absolute Spirit.
3. Russell quotes Pascal without reference. "The heart has its reasons, of which reason is ignorant." William Alston and Alvin Plantinga are but some that hold that religious truth can be verified by religious experience. William Lane Craig gives a distinction that might be intellectually satisfying for the modern Kantian in dichotomy of knowing the truth of Christianity (through the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit) and showing the truth of Christianity (through evidence). See Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy*, (New York: Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster, 1972), 691.
4. Romanticism was basically a feel good, emotional view of the universe. It was the antithesis, so to speak, of a Newtonian universe. It was also a rejection of Enlightenment thought.
5. Schopenhauer is the father of liberalism. Schopenhauer had "...pessimism...but also the doctrine of the primacy of the will." He began the emphasis on the will, which was his starting point. It was held to be ethically evil. Schopenhauer and Darwin greatly influenced Nietzsche.
6. Contemporaneity is the view that mankind can become contemporary with Christ, even while living 2000 years after him. According to Kierkegaard it would be no more important or significant that we existing individuals were alive when Christ was on the earth. This is because both the disciples and people now living all had sin natures. We thus wouldn't recognize Jesus because the view that God could be a man was simply thought to be a contradiction in terms. The historical skepticism going around also acted as an answer to this.

7. For Kierkegaard, the moment is a point in time where one takes action, either in one of the stages or progression through the stages. This moment can last more than a linear moment of time that Newtonian physics holds to. It also has eternal significance.

8. Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

9. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1994), 396.

10. Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

11. Copleston, 397.

12. *Ibid.*, 397.

13. *Ibid.*, 398.

14. Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

15. Russell, 765.

16. Copleston, 398.

17. Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

18. Nietzsche is credited as being the father of postmodernism. Jacques Derrida champions postmodernism. Geisler points out that "[s]ince absolute meaning is impossible, indecision is inescapable. We always live somewhere between absolute certainty and absolute doubt, between skepticism and dogmatism. Hence, faith is always necessary." Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, Baker Book House Co., 1999), 194.

19. According to virtually all theists and non-theists, Alvin Plantinga is held for delivering the death blow to the logical problem of evil. The probleistic problem of evil is still hotly debated today.

20. William Lane Craig, James Moreland, Richard Swinburn, John Leslie, and others have championed this argument. In the opinion of many, the most significant formulation of the cosmological argument is the Kalam Cosmological Argument. William Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*, Library of Philosophy and Religion, (London: Macmillan, 1979); and William Lane Craig and Quinton Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). For a probabilistic form of the cosmological argument, see Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, rev. ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

21. Some of the modern defenders of this argument are: Michael Behe, William Dembski, and Jonathan Wells, Center for Science and Culture, [April 15, 2005]; they have championed the movement known as Intelligent Design. For other teleological arguments, see "The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle," (1990), available at .

22. The moral argument was originally formulated by Immanuel Kant. C.S. Lewis gave higher sophistication in *Mere Christianity*. Kierkegaard also wrestled with this argument. William Lane Craig, among others, has defended the argument in academic debates. In modern philosophical discussion, the atheist doesn't accept relativistic ethics very often.

Rather, an objectivist point of view, akin to Ayn Rand's philosophy, is often given. But this seems inadequate for moral principles are known to be given by personal agents. Moreover, why should something impersonal (if morality doesn't come from God, but is just a necessary fact) be thought to really matter? In other words, what makes impersonal ethics objective and even if they are objective (as with Plato's forms), why should they be followed? There is simply no "ought" value intrinsic in them; there is only an "is" value. But certainly, what "is" (reality) should be improved. If this wasn't the case, why is it that professional atheistic philosophers attempt to disprove God by the problem of evil? They know intrinsically that the world can be better with less evil, but where do they get this notion?

23. Thanks to William Lane Craig, N.T. Wright, Luke Timothy Johnson, and many others, the New Testament is regarded very highly. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is also held to be more rational than ever before. See C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions*, (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984); William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, (Wheaton, IL, Crossway Books, Good News Publishers, 1984); and William Lane Craig, *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?: A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).

24. William Rowe, Michael Martin, Quinton Smith and others are noted contemporary defenders of this position. Alvin Plantinga and William Lane Craig are but two of the Christian scholars who have defended Christianity amidst the storm. See Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. Vanarragon, eds., *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 3-29; Quinton Smith, "The Anthropic Coincidences, Evil and the Disconfirmation of Theism," (1996), ; Michael Martin, "Human Suffering and the Acceptance of God," (1997), ; and William Lane Craig, ed., *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2002).

25. Few have argued this position with any real force. Kierkegaard's notion of the paradox seems to allude to it and acts something like an undercutting defeater for belief in the Christian God. The question is this: does Kierkegaard equate paradox (God entering history and becoming man) as a logical contradiction? It might be said that Kierkegaard took one side of the coin in view of paradox and Nietzsche took the other side.

26. J.L. Schellenberg and Theodore M. Drange are two who argue that divine hiddenness disproves the existence of God. For the view that divine hiddenness implies that God does not exist, see Peterson and Vanarragon, 3-29; and Theodore Drange, "The Arguments from Evil and Nonbelief, . For a critique of Drange's article, see Shandon L. Guthrie, "Concerning Theodore Drange's Argument from Evil for the Non-existence of God," or William J. Kesatie, "A Bit of Undigested Beef -- Does the Existence of Non-Belief Prove God's Non-Existence?" .

27. Russell, 765.

28. Jonathan Wolff, "Marx," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edwin N. Zalta, editor, August 23, 2003, available at [April 26, 2005].

29. Wicks, "Nietzsche," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

30. Russell remarks that "[Nietzsche] could say that he knows what is good by an ethical intuition, but he will not say this, because it sounds too Kantian" (770). This is because Kant gave a reason (practical reason) why morals come from God and are universal for all men. Nietzsche would think this was repression of a particular class of people. This

certainly has earmarks of post-modernity. But one may ask this: why is repression wrong?

31. Wicks, "Nietzsche," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. I am glad that Nietzsche didn't get married. The reason for this is he had a very low view of women.

32. Kierkegaard quoted in Copleston, 346.

33. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, eds., *The Essential Kierkegaard*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 356.

References

Behe, Michael, William Dembski, and Jonathan Wells. Center for Science and Culture. Available at [April 15, 2005].

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*. New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1994.

Craig, William Lane. *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?: A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000.

Craig, William Lane. *The Kalam Cosmological Argument, Library of Philosophy and Religion*. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, Good News Publishers, 1984.

Craig, William Lane ed. *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2002.

Craig, William Lane and Quinton Smith. *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.

Drange, Theodore. "The Arguments from Evil and Nonbelief." [April 19, 2005].

Geisler, Norman. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, Baker Book House Co., 1999.

Guthrie, Shandon L. "Concerning Theodore Drange's Argument from Evil for the Non-existence of God." [April 18, 2005].

Hong, Howard V and Edna H. Hong, eds. *The Essential Kierkegaard*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Martin, Michael. "Human Suffering and the Acceptance of God." (1997). Available at [April 21, 2005].

McCullagh, C. Behan. *Justifying Historical Descriptions*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984.

Peterson, Michael L. and Raymond J. Vanarragon, eds. *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Russell, Bertrand. *The History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster, 1972.

Smith, Quinton. "The Anthropic Coincidences, Evil and the Disconfirmation of Theism." (1996). Available at [April 20, 2005].

Swinburne, Richard. *The Existence of God*, rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

"The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle." 1990. Available at [April 14, 2005].

Wicks, Robert. "Nietzsche." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edwin N. Zalta, editor. August 26, 2003. Available at [April 26, 2005].

Wolff, Jonathan. "Marx." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edwin N. Zalta, ed. August 23, 2003. Available at [April 26, 2005].

©2003 Malachi