

Implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's Master-Slave Morality in Inter-Personal Relationship

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Abstract

From time immemorial, mankind has always been confronted with the issue of the origin of morality. The issue of morality has grouped philosophers such as Protagoras, Callicles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Aquinas, Augustine, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, Henri Bergson and Soren Kierkegaard into different camps with divergent views. While some believe that God is the source of morality, others situate morality in man. Friedrich Nietzsche emerged with master-slave morality. He championed as master morality the morality of the strong-willed. The essence of master morality is nobility. Qualities cherished in master morality include, among others, courage, open-mindedness and an accurate sense of worth. Nietzsche referred to the traditional morality, which aims at the common good, as slave morality. It is the morality of the weak. Silly ideas, according to him, like humility and equality are promulgated in slave morality. He, therefore, declared a destructive war against slave morality and called for a revaluation of morals. Revaluation implies that all the stronger motives, which appear in disguised forms, under false name and false valuation, should be uncovered through critical analysis. With this in mind, the emergence of a superman who takes the place of God and serves as an embodiment of master morality becomes inevitable. This is possible by means of the will to power. Possible implications were drawn from master-slave morality in inter-personal relationship. Moral values become relative; irresponsible freedom becomes the order of the day; while anarchy and oppression are celebrated. The specific objectives of this work were to expose the different theories of morality, analyze Nietzsche's moral theory, evaluate the implications of Nietzsche's master-slave morality, determine its effects in inter-personal relationship.

1 Introduction

In inter-personal relationships, one observes some forms of crisis. This is most evident when people tend to disregard the traditional values of a given society, and operate from their own selfish worlds. As a social being, man is naturally inclined to live in a community. This makes it possible for him to

dedicate himself to the promotion of inter-personal relationship, whereby the society stands as his teacher. In other words, the society prescribes moral norms for her members. Every society has some form of moral values for her members.

This research is prefixed between objective morality and subjective morality. Precisely, what forms the background of the study is the constant conflict that occurs between traditional morality and conventional morality. The conflict is age longed and it impacts on inter-personal relationships. The sophists for once hold that man is the measures of all things. Whatever he considers good and acceptable should be seen as such irrespective of circumstances. Socrates located morality on the rational part of the soul of every man irrespective of the man's age. On his part, Aristotle said that virtue is man's ability to determine the golden mean. While the medieval philosophers like Augustine and Aquinas held that God determines what is good and commendable, modern philosophers like Machiavelli agreed that man determines what is morally good or bad for himself. Machiavelli particularly insisted on a dualistic morality that favours the prince at the expense of the masses. According to him, traditional values like sincerity and humility are not for the prince but for the masses. This prince-masses morality of Machiavelli is closely related to Nietzsche's master-slave morality.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm (1844 – 1900), an existential and provocative thinker of the nineteenth century, criticized and rejected Christian and system philosophies of morality as slave and life-denying morality. He believed that ancient Roman society was grounded in what he called master morality. This morality eventually disappeared when slave morality of Christianity spread through ancient Rome. He, therefore, rejected traditional morality, which aims at the common good of all in the society. Precisely, Nietzsche developed strong aversion for Christianity and even referred to the traditional Christian ethics as slave morality. Slave morality, for him, is the morality for the weak. It is a place of solace for the lazy ones. In slave morality, silly ideas like equality and generosity are promulgated. This form of morality urges "virtues" like humility and pity. By so doing, it encourages people to live inauthentic life and deny obvious facts of nature. It makes a virtue out of weakness and cowardice. Thus, it prevents the strong-willed from reaching their full potentialities.¹ Other qualities valued in slave morality include kindness, love and generosity.

Nietzsche championed as master morality, the morality of the strong-willed. For the strong-willed, anything considered noble, strong or powerful is good. The essence of master morality is nobility. Remarkably, Nietzsche holds that the noble man lives in trust and openness with himself. He is not like the man of resentment who is neither upright nor naïve, and neither honest nor straightforward even with himself.² Other qualities cherished in master morality include courage, open mindedness and an accurate sense of worth. People of this class live the most actualized form of human lives, and as such, are happy, energetic, and optimistic about human conditions.

From the foregoing, Nietzsche was not at peace with slave morality. He believed that the triumph of ideals like equality and democracy in modern times is a great tragedy for humanity. For him, equality and democracy are the worst, not the best values. They are the very opposite of what is natural to value. Nietzsche, therefore, declared a destructive war against slave morality and called for a re-valuation of morals. This would eventually correct the inconsistencies found in both forms of morality. Nevertheless, Nietzsche makes it clear that the two forms of morality are often combined within one society and even in the same human being, within a single soul.³

Nietzsche's destructive war against traditional Christian morality which upholds as good anything that is helpful, has great implications in interpersonal relationship. It is against this

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Will to Power*. Trans. by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. (New York: Random House, 1968), 174.

² Frederick Copleston. *History of Philosophy*, vol. vii. (London: Continuum Press, 2003), 400.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Will to Power*. Trans. by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. (New York: Random House, 1968), 356.

background that this study aims at exposing the implications of Nietzsche's master-slave morality in interpersonal relationship.

Statement of problem

Friedrich Nietzsche, having declared God dead, and having waged war against Christianity, proposed that a superman is the determiner of morality. He strongly upheld that the value or non-value of an action was derived from its consequences.⁴ Now, one might ask, what is the implication of the morality created by masters in inter-personal relationship? To what extent can Nietzsche's master morality enhance inter-personal relationship?

Purpose of study

This philosophical research aims at exposing the various theories of morality and analyzing Nietzsche's two forms of morality. It aims at evaluating Nietzsche's morality so as to determine its implications in inter-personal relationship.

Significance of study

This study would be of paramount importance to both individuals and society. Contrary to Nietzsche's submission that a moral standard that could apply to everyone is not tenable, this study would reveal that certain standards are possible by which members of a given society could be rightly guided. Individual members of the society would learn that certain values should be cherished as ideal values that make for a healthy society. The study would equally establish that masters are not real creators of morality, and that certain qualities cherished in master morality are not in the interest of any society. This study has some academic relevance. Both students and lecturers would be better informed as a result of this study. Finally, if the knowledge discovered in this philosophical research is appreciated and imbibed, it will make for a better-ordered society where inter-personal relationship is cordial, peaceful and healthy.

Scope of the study

This paper is limited to Nietzsche's concept of master-slave morality. In the light of Nietzsche's exposition of master-slave morality, certain implications would be drawn as it concerns inter-personal relationship.

Methodology of Research

The research methodology adopted is qualitative design. This study adopted expository, interpretative, critical and evaluative methods. This thematic approach ensures an in depth philosophical study. In this study, Nietzsche's submissions on the concept of master-slave morality are carefully exposed. In consultation with various reflections and commentaries, interpretations were made on his philosophical stands to bring out some implications. Materials were sourced from books, journals and articles.

Master-slave morality

In his book, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche developed and clarified his analysis of the opposition between master and slave moralities. Human beings are an evolved bundle of inbuilt drives that assert themselves. The most basic drive is the will to power. Human beings are divided into two basic types: those whose drives are strong and those whose drives are weak. In other words, there are

⁴ Thomas Aquinas. *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts*. Trans. by T. Gibly. (USA: Oxford University Press, 1960), 281.

those whose drives are focused and there are those whose drives are diffused. The strong and focused individuals exhibit master psychology while the weak and diffused individuals exhibit slave psychology.

Nietzsche traces the origin of traditional morality back to two juxtaposed types of human beings, which he provocatively and in his own meaning of words calls “slaves” and “masters”. To these two types of man correspond two equally juxtaposed moralities, which are supposed to shed light on the original meanings of the words “good”, “bad” and “evil”. In master morality or aristocratic morality, “good” and “bad” are equivalent to “noble” and “despicable” while in slave morality, the standard is that which is useful or beneficial to the society of the weak and powerless.

According to him, in a primitive society, masters naturally dominate slaves, and so what is good and valuable is determined by the powerful ruling elites. Value judgments come from the masters’ sense of superiority, from their self-confidence and pride in their strength and talents. The slaves who happened to be the weaker section of the society are powerless to take revenge on their oppressors by means of force. As such, they label the aggressive and arrogant ethics of the masters as evil and unjust, and preach such values like humility, meekness and pity.

The battle between the master and slave moral codes is of long genealogy. Historically, master morality was defeated as slave morality of Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Initially, master morality dominated until it gradually declined while slave morality ascended. At present, slave morality is winning and evidences abound. The cultural dominance of socialists, democrats, Judeo-Christian priests, egalitarians and others are symptoms of slave morality triumphing at present. Nietzsche strongly believes that the present dominance of slave morality is a threat to the advancement of man. Therefore, either the master morality or a new form of it must be rejuvenated.

Nietzsche condemned the triumph of slave morality in the West, saying that the democratic movement is the collective degeneration of man. He perceived slave morality as an imminent danger to the modern society. He, however, does not really endorse either slave or master morality. He really deems that it is high time for a reevaluation of all values. When this is the case, man opens his eyes to his natural inclinations. This is an appeal to the higher morality which informs the actions of the great man, who in turn creates his own morality. The new form of morality, Nietzsche believes, is life-affirming. Just as the “slaves” created a new morality from an old one, Nietzsche believes that it is time to create a new morality from the currently rampant slave morality. In essence, he calls philosophers to pave the way for a paradigm shift in morality. He believes that whatever form of philosophy that comes out on top will actually be one beyond good and evil, one independent of the good and evil of today.

Master morality

Nietzsche defined as master morality, the morality of the strong-willed. The strong-willed are the people who, according to Nietzsche, have liberated themselves from divine commands, and have rejected slave morality. Master morality is the morality of the man who takes the place of God after his death. Master morality begins in the noble man with a spontaneous idea of good.³ The adherents of master morality consider themselves as creators and determiners of values. The noble type of man experiences *itself* as determining values. It does not need approvals. It judges. Whatever is considered harmful to the man is harmful in itself. It is value-creating.⁴ In other words, master morality is the full recognition that oneself is the measure of all things. For the masters, the good is the noble, the strong and the powerful, while the bad is the weak, cowardly, timid and petty.

The distinctive character of master morality according to Nietzsche in primordial times, is that it judges things naturally. Precisely, the desirable attributes of a master include health, strength, physical attractiveness, overall toughness and vast number of talents and gifts such as intelligence, imagination, genuine creativity, endurance and stamina.

With reference to the corresponding joy and happiness of their possession, persons characterized as by these qualities called themselves “good”. In other words, far from having any moral

connotation, the term “good” signified merely a positive evaluation of the nature of man as an active, powerful and self-affirming individual. Similarly, the word “bad” which happened to be the initial antipode of the expression “good” did not denote more than the lack of these qualities. Bergmann observes that the term was “a lame afterthought” occasionally related to a pitiful, considerate and even regrettable benevolence.⁵

According to Nietzsche, the original moral philosophy, which is nobler, is referred to as master morality. Master morality embraces all that is today deemed evil by most people, such as egoism and a will to power. Noble men embrace master morality and these noble men consider bad those not like them, and those things which are harmful to them and only to them.

Masters are energetic, adventurous, and fearless and they delight in self-expression. Since life is essentially conflict and expropriation, masters are confident in the face of conflicts. As such, master morality affirms pride, ambition, independence, assertiveness and danger. Master morality embraces using others for one’s own ends.

The noble man is incapable of taking seriously all the things that fester and build the man of resentment such as accidents, misfortunes and enemies. Nietzsche maintains that he is respectful but when he ventures out among strangers, he becomes little more than uncaged beast. In a sense, it could be said that the life of the master is much simpler than that of the slave. This is true on the ground that nothing stays too long with him. If he is upset, he lets it slide and if he is happy, the happiness is a present one. The noble man lives in the present.

Nietzsche, who believes that all human drives are a form and fulfillment of a “will to power” (meaning, essentially, the feeling of success, overcoming struggle, asserting will over one’s current state, one’s environment, one’s society, etc.), posits the origin of master and slave moralities in the circumstances which confront an individual or group. Master morality is, as it were, the “natural” expression of the will-to-power. When an individual does not have the power of others crushing down upon him, he is free to challenge himself, and develops a morality of power seeking. This morality begins with the positing of “good.” Nietzsche’s best presentation of this viewpoint is in *The Antichrist*:

What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? Everything that stems from weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power is increasing - that a resistance is overcome. Not contentment, but more power; not peace at all but more war; not virtue but proficiency (Renaissance virtue, virtue, virtue that is moraline-free).⁶

Nietzsche is thus convinced that the weak and the misfits of any society should perish and they should be encouraged to do so. The most harmful of vices is active sympathy for the misfits and the weak, and Christianity is guilty of such vice.

It is worth noting that master morality is a category of moralities, not a single morality itself. What master moralities have in common is their focus on a positive goal. Beyond this, they do not necessarily agree, and Nietzsche details many priestly, ascetic, and tyrannical moralities that obviously do not fit any of his own preferences. It is crucial to note that Nietzsche does not approve of all master morality.

The superior man looks with profound suspicion on values such as compassion, pity and selflessness, as well as on the ideal of equality of persons. In expressing the will to power, they live the most actualized human lives. As a result, they are happy, energetic and optimistic about the human condition. They are adventurous and fearless, and they delight in self expression. Master morality affirms pride, ambition, independence, assertiveness and even danger. Masters are confident in the face of conflicts.

⁵ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. by M. Oswald. (USA: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962), 6.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Will to Power*. Trans. by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. (New York: Random House, 1968), 145.

Master morality was the morality of the powerful and the ruling class. Essentially, it emphasized strong individualism, hostility toward herd-mentality, living for this life and not the next. It equally emphasized health, fitness and self-improvement and a little regard for the lower born. As a morality of consequence, Nietzsche meant that everything the master class did, there were consequences. Master morality weighs actions on a scale of good or bad consequences. Masters were men of action. Practically, intentions counted very little in master morality. All that mattered were the results.

Qualities cherished in master morality include among others open-mindedness, courage, truthfulness, trust and an accurate sense of self-worth. When one imbibes the qualities of master morality, one is better equipped to exploit the universe, and so transforms into a superman. The ideal man is one who embodies the master morality. For him, good is anything that leads to self-fulfillment and affirms one's sense of personal power. The "over-man" according to Nietzsche is not subject to the morality of the lower type of meek and common people who speak of good and evil in terms of equality. Since the noble type of man is of the higher type, he is not subject to the morality of the herd. Morality favours mediocrity: standing beyond good and evil, and rising above the herd.

According to Nietzsche, the superman (master) is distinguished from the lower man (slave) by his fearlessness and his readiness to challenge misfortunes. He further stated that life is essentially appropriation, overpowering of the strong, and the weaker suppression. It entails imposition of one's own forms. Life is exploitation. Life is will to power.⁷ What Nietzsche implies is that master morality favours exploitation and domination. It upholds the full exercise of man's elemental energy. In summary, master morality is a "yea saying" attitude where good or bad is equivalent to noble and despicable respectively. It does not encourage weakness of character.

Nietzsche, however, did not believe that people should adopt master morality as the be-all-and-all code of behaviour. He rather believed that revaluation of morals would correct the inconsistencies in both master and slave morality.

Slave morality

In one of his famous publications, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche condemns the popular moral philosophy of his day. He denies that traits such as pity, humility and meekness are universal virtues. In fact, he goes on to call a philosophy that deems such traits to be universally good "slave morality".

Historically, slaves who are characteristically impotent, reactive, self-negating and weak tried to free themselves from the imprisonment of their own inferiority. Unlike the masters and occasioned by their lack of creativity, energy, vitality, mental and physical health, they hopelessly failed to overcome their lives of misery. Having failed to live up to their masters' standards, their misery became a "Trojan horse trick of the disadvantaged".⁸

They, therefore, inverted the existing dichotomy of moral values and construed their enemies as the "evil ones". The slaves thus consider as "evil" those who possess those attributes which formerly distinguished the "good". Since they did not possess those attributes, they called themselves "good" only as opposed to the new primary notion of evil.

In his philosophical parlance, slave morality is designated with Christian morality, Judeo-platonic morality, morality of the herd, decadent morality and morality of resentment. It is the unnatural system of ethics propagated by Christianity. Nietzsche defines slave morality as any morality created by the weak in revenge against the strong and noble such that the traits of the strong and noble are perceived to be evil. It does not allow the natural tendency of man's life to exert itself. According to Nietzsche, slave morality

⁷ S. E. Stumpf and J. Fieser. *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 6th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 10020), 92.

⁸ 8. Frederick Copleston. *History of Philosophy*, vol. vii. (London: Continuum Press, 2003), 404.

... is the Judeo-Christian morality pure and simple. So that it should say no to everything on earth that represents the ascending tendency of life, to that which has turned out well, to power, to beauty, to self affirmation.⁹

Qualities such as sympathy, kindness and humility are extolled as virtues in slave morality, while the strong and independent individuals are regarded as dangerous and therefore, as “evil”.

Slave morality refers to such traits like aggressiveness, true independence of thought, and egoism as evil traits because they are the traits of their oppressors, the masters of society. For Nietzsche, vanity is the hallmark of the meek and powerless.⁵ They cry for a good opinion of themselves, not being able to set their own value. The slave morality is subject to flattery. Slaves know they do not deserve praise, yet, they believe it when they are praised by masters since they have not the abilities to create value. Vanity is a consequence of inferiority.

Slave morality is taken to be the kind of morality that appeals to those who are down-trodden, who are uncertain of themselves and who are weak-willed. Those who practice this kind of morality are the lowest class of people in the society; the abused, the oppressed, the slaves, those who are uncertain of themselves, the weak and the powerless.⁶ This form of morality encourages weakness of character. It is on this note that it preaches virtues such as love, meekness, humility, kindness, sympathy, patience and friendliness. It affirms dependence, safety, passivity and humility. It is fearful of conflicts and expropriation. As a result, it condemns both. Slave morality is essentially the morality of utility because goodness for its adherents is anything that is beneficial to those who are weak and powerless. It values the mediocre group over the superior individual.

In allowing resentment and hatred to grow in him, in having to rely on patience, secrets, and scheming, the man of resentment ultimately becomes cleverer than the noble man. This constant brooding and obsession with one’s enemies begets the greatest invention of resentment evil. Unlike the master, the man of resentment allows things to build within him. Injuries against him gradually build as resentful hatred, and he constructs happiness through long thought processes. Because his focus is not in the present, he builds hope and cleverness in a way the noble man does not. All these thoughts and hatred then culminate in the invention of the concept of evil, and in the denotation of the noble man as evil.

By contrast to master morality, slave morality begins among the oppressed, whose ability to express their will to power is blocked, usually due to being oppressed by others. The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the resentment of natures that are denied the true reaction; that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says “no” to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’; and this “no” is its creative deed.

Slave morality is essentially reactive. The first experience of the slave is not the fullness of life but the terror at the oppressor: hence the oppressor becomes the focus and becomes known as “evil.” “Evil” is thought as a primary: it is powerful, attractive, “sexy” and forbidden. “Good” is that which is left to the slaves: meekness, weakness, herd-spirit, which serve to further the survival of slave qua slave. The slave, since he cannot achieve anything in life, creates a “heaven,” a “moral universe,” where the order of real life is termed upside down. Everything lowly that the slave cannot on earth rise above is glorified as an eternal, spiritual good. Everything that aids the slave in getting a few crumbs from the oppressors, charity, altruism, pity, is likewise canonized. The idea is essentially parallel to Ayn Rand’s analysis of the New Left; when the leftists found out that they were incapable of producing shoes, they made it a virtue to go barefoot.

Slave morality is the morality of the underclass. As such, it emphasizes collectivization, herd-mentality, and forgiveness. It is the morality of the weak and of the humble. According to Bergmann in *Reading Nietzsche*,

⁹ 9. Frederick Copleston. *History of Philosophy*, vol. vii. (London: Continuum Press, 2003), 404.

Nietzsche's slaves . . . are the collectivity of the untalented and ungifted – poor in stamina and health, poor in energy, vitality and spirit, poor in physical or sexual attractiveness – the wretched, the dregs, those who are weary because they are a constant burden to themselves.¹²

They tend to focus more on one's intentions since the lack power and influence. If they were wronged, for instance, they would feel it is better to forgive than to revenge. This is the case because they have no ability to get revenge on others, especially if wronged by the masters. Slave morality resorts to seeking justice and reward in the next life than in this one. Christianity in its large part is the brainchild of slave morality.

As master morality originates in the strong, slave morality originates in the weak. Since slave morality is a reaction to oppression, it villainizes its oppressors. Slave morality is the inverse morality. As such, it is characterized by pessimism and skepticism. Slave morality is created in opposition to what master morality values as good. It does not aim at exerting one's will by strength but by careful subversion. It does not seek to transcend the masters but to make them slaves as well.

Since the powerful, the masters are few in number compared to the masses; the slaves gain power by corrupting the strong into believing that the causes of slavery (will to power) are evil. By saying, for instance, that humility is voluntary, slave morality avoids admitting that their humility was in the beginning forced on them by the masters. Biblical principles of turning the other cheek, humility, charity and pity are the result of universalizing the plight of the slave unto all mankind, and thus enslaving the masters as well.

Slave morality is pessimistic and fearful. It is timid and it favours limited existence. It makes the best of a bad situation. It promotes the virtues that serve to ease existence for those who suffer. It celebrates and honours such qualities like pity, obliging hand, warm heart, patience and friendliness. They are the most useful qualities and almost the only means of enduring the pressure of existence. In slave morality, good means tending to ease suffering while evil means tending to inspire fear. Nietzsche is of the opinion that slave morality is expressed in standard moral systems such as Christianity and utilitarianism. By this, he implies that both Christianity and utilitarianism exemplify the same ideology: the ideology of the majority, the herd, the cowardly, the conventional and the less-than-fully-human. Adherents of slave morality use such ideologies like Christianity and utilitarianism to deny the will to power. Wherever slave morality has taken over, inferior people are given a kind of "moral" license to brainwash and persecute those who try to express the will to power.

Unlike master morality which is sentiment, slave morality is literally re-sentiment, revaluating that which the master values. This strays from the valuation of actions based on consequences to the valuation of actions based on intention.⁸ Slave morality originated out of resentments and revenge of the weak against the powers exercised on them by the strong. This struggle between master and slave moralities recurs historically. Historically, master morality was defeated as the slave morality of Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Nietzsche condemned the triumph of slave morality in the West, saying that the democratic movement is the collective degeneration of man.⁹ He noted that slave morality has unfortunately succeeded in its attempt to replace the originally dominant master morality. This is true because slave morality, with all its emphasis on altruism and mediocrity, dominates popular moral philosophy.

According to Nietzsche, slaves naturally perceive the superiority of their masters. This explains why they fear them and feel uncomfortable with them. When slave morality takes hold, the inferior ones are suddenly given "moral" license to brainwash and persecute those who try to express the will to power.

Nietzsche perceived slave morality as an imminent danger to the modern society. Slave morality is a "nay saying" attitude or herd morality which holds to the standard of that which is useful or beneficial to the weak or powerless. The virtues are sympathy, kindness and humility. In other words, it affirms dependence, safety, passivity and humility. It is fearful of conflict and expropriation, and so it condemns them. Strong and independent individuals are evil. Slaves desire to become

masters. However, since this desire is unattainable, they resort to avenging themselves on the masters by radically inverting the values of the masters. It is on this account that Nietzsche calls for a re-valuation of morals. This is the case when man opens his eyes to his natural inclination. It is an appeal to the higher morality which informs the actions of the great man who creates his own morality and values. This new form of morality, Nietzsche believes, is life affirming.

Nietzsche's critique of slave morality

Nietzsche had strong reservations for slave morality. He believes that slave morality “. . . reduces everyone to a common level, favours mediocrity and prevents the development of a higher type of man”.¹⁵ According to Carsten Korfmacher, Nietzsche marshaled out the following characteristics as fatal, corruptive and dangerous defects of traditional morality:

- i. Morality's specific content (such as antagonism against excellence, selflessness and equality) is not life-enhancing, and hence untenable;
- ii. Morally dualistic code of evaluation of behaviour in terms of positive and negative dichotomies is untenable;
- iii. Morality claims universality in the sense that it is supposed to apply to all human beings equally;
- iv. The obligations and duties imposed by traditional morality on its followers are supposed to be unconditional, which is equally untenable.¹⁰

Death of God and Revaluation of values

Nietzsche never meant to create a new table of moral virtues. He rather meant to declare a destructive war on the accepted moral values of Christianity, by declaring God dead. In fact, according to Ullrich Haase, the best-known phrase from Nietzsche's works is the affirmation that “God is dead”.² In “The Joyful Wisdom”, Nietzsche articulated the death of God:

Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market place calling out unceasingly: I seek God. As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why? Is he lost?, said one. Has he strayed away like a child? . . . I shall tell you. We have killed him – you and I. We are his murderers.¹

When Nietzsche talks about the murderers of God, he is referring to the 19th Century Europeans whose belief in the Christian God has drastically declined. By declaring God dead, Nietzsche implied that the Europeans of his time had no need for God anymore due to their economic achievements. For them,

God is irrelevant in an age of enlightenments, unnecessary in the new centuries of science, embarrassing in a time of psychological maturity, old in an era of modernity and politically implicated against the liberation of the masses.⁴

Having declared God dead, Nietzsche drew the consequences of His death: nihilism and liberation.

The first implication of the death of God is that everything changes and nothing remains the same. This transitional phase is what Nietzsche referred to as nihilism. By nihilism, Nietzsche implies that God no longer reigns in the hearts of men. In other words, the death of God has created a vacuum in the hearts of men. Individual nations have lost their claim to be chosen people of God. All have now vanished.⁵ Everything now heads towards nihilism. In his “Anti-Christ”, Nietzsche summarizes the consequence of the death of God: “We have destroyed our faith in God. There remains only void. We are failing. Our dignity is gone. Our values are lost. Who is to say what is up and what is down? It has become colder and night is closing in . . .”⁶ In a word, Nietzsche defines nihilism as a devaluation of the highest value.⁷ It is the logical result of decadence.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 111.

The second implication of the death of God is liberation. By liberation, Nietzsche implies that since God was the Author of morality and has finally died, man is automatically freed from God and should in fact, take the place of God. He is now free from the oppressive demands of God and Christianity. He can now create his own morality. According to Nietzsche,

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. To esteem is to create . . .⁸

Thus, Nietzsche assigned the duty of creating values to man, and precisely to masters.

Nietzsche further called for revaluation of values. Revaluation, for Nietzsche, meant that all the stronger motives which appear in disguised forms, under false names and false valuation should be uncovered by means of critical analysis. In other words, since traditional morality is a pervasion of the original natural morality, revaluation therefore consists in the rejection of traditional morality in the name of honesty and accuracy. In this way, true values will emerge. With this in mind, Nietzsche invented a superman who takes the place of God. In this superman, one would find the fulfillment of master morality whose principle is the will to power. For him, the will to power is the way to grow stronger, the will to increase, to appropriate, and to dominate.⁹

Implications of Master-Slave Morality in Inter-Personal Relationship

An exposition of Nietzsche’s forms of morality was made. It has also been noted that it is not possible for an individual to be completely in the slave group or completely in the master group. Nietzsche equally made it clear that the two forms of morality are combined in one society and even in one person.¹ It is not explicitly stated whether Nietzsche preferred any one form of morality to the other. Yet, from his analysis of the two forms, and particularly from his critique of slave morality, it could be deduced that he gave a pride of place to master morality. This being the case, the following implications could be drawn from his master-slave morality:

- **Irresponsible freedom versus responsible freedom:** In his critique of slave morality, Nietzsche noted that slave morality abhors qualities that are natural to man. Nietzsche explicitly rejected the view that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the nature of an agent and the nature of the actions he carries out. According to him, such a distinction is not necessary. A man should act in accordance with his nature as directed by his instincts.
- **Exploitation versus love:** In his philosophical analysis in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche exposed his idea of life and the basic qualities cherished in his two forms of morality. According to him, in a primitive society, masters naturally dominate slaves, and so what is good and valuable is determined by the powerful ruling elites. Value judgments, he believes, come from the masters’ sense of superiority, from their self-confidence and pride in their strengths and talents.
- **Anarchy versus orderliness:** In his critique of morality, Nietzsche rejected slave morality on the ground of absolutism. According to him, slave morality is both absolute and universal. It endeavours to impose its own values universally. It succeeded in doing this, at least in the West, in Christianity. He added that to conceive of absolute and universal system of morality which binds on everyone is to disregard the basic differences between individuals.
- **Insecurity versus security:** It is the opinion of Nietzsche that masters have spontaneous idea of good, and as such, determine values without asking for approvals. They create their own values out of the abundance of their life and strength.
- **Oppression versus liberation:** In his book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche exposed the outstanding qualities of masters. Unlike the slaves who are weak-willed and uncertain of themselves, the masters are open-minded and courageous. Precisely, Nietzsche observes that “.

. . the higher man (master) is distinguished from the lower man (slave) by his fearlessness and readiness to challenge . . .” What this implies is that master morality is confrontational. Masters struggle to satisfy their every urge irrespective of consequences. The same quality is evident in Thomas Hobbes’ state of nature where the “. . . the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have no place”.

Conclusion

With his concept of master- slave morality, Nietzsche tried to provide an understanding of the conflicts between societies. He believes that master-slave morality has created conflicts throughout history. His arguments against traditional morality were aimed at justifying the emergence of a superman who will take the place of God and practice in full measure the master morality. However, having weighed Nietzsche’s arguments on a scale and drawn some possible implications of his morality in interpersonal relationship, it is evident that Nietzsche’s morality leaves much to be desired. His reasoning appears convincing because different wars and major conflicts have been between slaves and masters, between stronger groups and weaker groups. However, this concept cannot be truly applied universally.

Nietzsche delved into formation and determination of morality and attributed such to masters. He never for once enrolled the slaves in the list of those who determine morality. Thus, slaves are not part of the formation of the morality that affects them. The researcher observes that any morality formulated by masters alone would naturally not be in the interest of the non-masters. As such, slaves should be involved in formulating the moral principles that would guide them.

In conclusion, the researcher notes that Nietzsche’s moral theory has implications in interpersonal relationship. Nietzsche fails to appreciate the need for universal moral norms. He believes that moral values are relative and that man should fully exercise his elemental energy. However, if allowed to exercise his full passions without control, man would be irresponsible in his freedom. This type of morality encourages oppression, anarchy and a feeling of insecurity in the society.

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