

This essay is about *The Parable of the Madman* by Friedrich Nietzsche, so I put the whole thing here so that you can understand what I am talking about when I reference it in the essay.

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 did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? -- Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him* -- you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? 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 continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest 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 we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us -- for the sake of this deed he will belong to 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 into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than most distant stars -- *and yet they have done it themselves.*

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

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12/9/22

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English 4

Nihilism in *The Road*

One of the recurring themes in *The Road* is that God is dead and that the world is godless. This belief is not one that is exclusive to *The Road* and is what is known as nihilism. Nihilism is the idea that life is meaningless and the rejection of all religious ideals, but is commonly associated with the idea that “God is dead.” This is due to a late 19th century German philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche who wrote extensively about the idea that “God is dead” as a critique of society. Nietzsche’s ideas of nihilism and can be found throughout *The Road*.

In *The Road*, the land is often described as godless because of what has happened to it. The idea of a God suggests that there is one to protect people, one to keep them safe from harm. As evident by the world of *The Road*, there is no one to save them. There is no one who could have stopped what happened and there is no one who can save it. This is where the idea of there being no God comes from. The old man, Ely, that the man talks to late in the book states that, “There is no god,” (page 102). When Nietzsche said, “God is dead,” he meant that the increase in knowledge about the universe and the way that it functions killed the idea that there was a God that controlled everything. Ely saying that, “There is no God” is referencing that same idea. Since it is very clear that there was no God that saved them from this world, it is irrefutable proof that God is not real and the universe is governed by physical laws. If God was real, he would have never let it get to the point where it is. Since the world has gotten so bad, it has proved to Ely that there is no God; that God is dead.

Another similarity between *The Parable of the Madman* and *The Road* is the loss of morality. In *The Parable of the Madman*, the madman could also be interpreted as saying that since people no longer believe in God, they no longer have a clear sense of morality. This is a connection that is never clearly stated in *The Road*, however both parts are very prevalent in the book. As stated earlier, the belief that there is no God is widespread and the lack of morality is another common theme in the book. It is never said that the lack of morality is caused by the loss in the belief of God, but the idea parallels Nietzsche's work. In both pieces, people have stopped believing in God due to their circumstances and have lost their sense of morality. Because of this, it is reasonable to assume that the loss of belief in God also caused the loss of morality in *The Road*. This is further evident by the fact that the father is still religious to some extent and has held on to his morals no matter what. As opposed to Ely who believes God is dead and has admitted to losing his morals. As shown by these two characters, the loss of belief in God is caused by their situation and that has led to the loss of morality.

In conclusion, ideas about nihilism and morality found in Nietzsche's work can also be found in *The Road*. This is evident by the loss of belief in God due to the circumstances of the characters in each work and this loss of faith has led to the loss of morality. *The Parable of the Madman* was written as a critique of society and the fact that similar ideology can be found in *The Road* suggests that *The Road* could also be interpreted as a critique of society.

Works Cited

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