

### Why did Nietzsche decide on the title 'Beyond Good and Evil?'

Nietzsche's 'Beyond Good and Evil' has for many years been an enigma to all but the most dedicated readers and philosophers. It's small wonder, then, that the title is equally cryptic. The scope of the statement is extremely wide, and it is often taken out of context to imply nihilism. I believe that the title represents the meeting point of all Nietzsche's ideas. His ethics, epistemology, metaphysics and aesthetics share the one common ideal of stepping past traditional values and creating something altogether new and dangerous. The title clearly reflects this.

To consider the title I believe we must also consider the subtitle: 'Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.' The book is very much Nietzsche outlining the ideal world in which the Will to Power is recognized as the supreme force of mankind, and all forms of dogmatism and Christian values have been suppressed. For this to happen, man must forget all traditional value-judgments – such as 'good' and 'evil,' and become something entirely different.

In terms of an epistemological viewpoint, Nietzsche rejects all forms of truth and thereby dogmatism. The assignment of values such as 'good' and 'evil' imply an objective truth – something which contrasts with Nietzsche's perspectivism. His 'free spirits' will rise above these simple values and therefore go 'beyond good and evil.'

It is also a nod to the "will to truth" which has plagued Europe and brought it into a weakened, diseased state. Nietzsche argues for the acceptance of 'untruths,' in order to cultivate man itself, not just accept values for an arbitrary judgement. This capability gives mankind the drive to reject the values and 'by that act alone, place [themselves] beyond good and evil.'

Leading on from this is Nietzsche's ethics. His belief in the Will to Power is supported by the casting out of objective values, living instead by the 'hierarchy of drives.' Obviously, 'good' and 'evil' are prescriptive value-judgements, something which encourages a strict, dogmatic morality – not at all suitable for man's progress into a world of 'free spirits.' This attitude has bred the 'herds' of Europe which Nietzsche so despises. No, values must be 're-valued' in order to advance man, and break free of the restrictive morals that have put Europe in the state which it is in. This rejection of traditional morals is sometimes misconstrued as nihilism – this is grossly incorrect. In fact, the opposite is true. Going beyond good and evil involves, for Nietzsche, making the most out of

man's potential, i.e. exerting the Will to Power to full effect. Only thus can we advance.

Throughout the book, the concept of going beyond good and evil is developed further and constantly referenced. It is clear that this forms the main spine of Nietzsche's ideas. We arrive at a conclusion: life itself is Beyond Good and Evil. This, I believe, is the basic message behind the book itself, and also the reason why Nietzsche chose this title specifically. Nietzsche's arguments then stem from this: if life is beyond good and evil, then how can we possibly assign any objective values? This lays the foundation for Nietzsche's epistemology/metaphysics, and is the single most important concept discussed. It is quite clear then why this should be the title of the book.

One aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy which does not feature prominently in the book itself is Nietzsche's theory of aesthetics. He clearly loves art, especially music, and refers to it as an effective exertion of the Will to Power. Art, then, is beyond good and evil. The artist is not trying to promote value-judgments or any sort of truths, but is merely using his Will to Power to produce something which is purely beyond good and evil. This plays an important factor, as the arts and culture in general is what usually shapes the progress of a society with most significance. The lack of cultural identity and national strength is something that Nietzsche laments, and certainly wants to see. This can be reality through effective use of the arts.

So if the will to power, through the arts, has not managed to shape society, then what has? Nietzsche's answer here is simple: theism. Many of the common values we hold have their roots in sacred texts or the preachings of religious believers. Christianity, among other religions, have promoted weakness and piety – something which enforces good and evil has ultimate values and thereby restricts the will to power. This, Nietzsche claims, has led to Europe becoming weak and self-sacrificing – a continent of slaves.

Ultimately, it is the religions and their values that we must overcome if we are to go beyond good and evil. Religion managed a re-evaluation of all values many years ago, establishing power and self-interest as evil; whilst pity and meekness were seen to be good. This is something which must be reversed and overcome. This will truly free man from the dogmatic concepts introduced hundreds of

years ago and place him beyond good and evil. This was Nietzsche's ultimate goal and, hence, the title of his book.