

**Fractals and Truth and Nietzsche**  
***some thoughts on philosophy and faith***

When I was a child, I spent a few weeks of each summer visiting my maternal grandparents. Like a gypsy, I would travel from their house to the houses of my great aunts and uncles tending gardens, riding John Deere tractors, catching fish along the the riverbanks, and feeding leftover cornbread each morning and evening to a catfish name Charlie, who lived in my uncle's pond. Some evenings, we would sit on front porches swatting mosquitoes, drinking sweet tea, and churning ice cream made from peaches we had picked in the morning. Amongst the adult chatter, I sat listening as the conversation ebbed and flowed and sneaking pieces of rock salt laden ice. No matter where the conversation began the ending was always the same: Faith must be enough to understand God and the world was doomed, going straight to hell in a handbasket and if it wanted to save itself, it would turn to Jesus immediately. I did not understand where I was to find this faith that was so important nor did I know what was wrong with the world. From my vantage point, churning peach ice cream and watching fireflies blink among the trees, well, it seemed just fine. When I was twelve, I was saved, baptized, gifted a copy of a King James Bible from the women's prayer group, and told to read James first for it would explain what my faith ought to mirror. I was quick to set to the task. And thus my wrestling with church began. I was caught between a father who taught me to question everything and a mother and grandparents who told me faith was enough. I remembered how I felt that night as the last stanza of the hymn played and a deacon whispered in my ear, how I had hastily beat a path to the altar, grasping ahold of something I could not explain nor did I understand just so I did not find myself one day

burning in hell. Questions of faith were muted until I was an adult with the hope that one when it appeared I would recognize it.

When I was thirty-three, traffic suddenly slammed to a halt on the freeway one summer morning and a truck rear-ended me at seventy miles an hour. In the beginning, no one expected me to survive the accident; two of my three children perished and it was anticipated I would be the third fatality. I was in the hospital for months. When I emerged, the only thing I had to sustain me was my faith. In the chaos and the solitude, faith was the center that held everything together, that held me together. I understood it was a gift and, that even though the entirety of my life I could not explain it or fully understand it, it was there and it was real and by it I knew that God was real. And even though I could not see it then, there were things I would experience and conversations I would have, at the time which would seem random and unconnected, unimportant even, that would lead me to this point of sitting here, typing these words for you to read and assign a grade for a class I never imagined I would be taking. This is the history and backdrop upon which I will answer two questions: How has Nietzsche's worldview impacted our modern society, and how can I have certainty in knowing what is and what is not true?

Specific conversations and encounters create a point on which my thoughts and ideas come to rest. Every chapter in Sproul's<sup>1</sup> book and every one of your lecture's surfaced a memory that spurred a thought and connected a plethora of ideas, but it was week eight that illuminated the common thread: Friedrich Nietzsche. After I read Sproul's words, I wrote my thoughts and questions in my notebook, and next to the explanations about how the will to power in reality

---

1. Sproul, R.C. *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts that Shaped Our World*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2000. This book was a part of the required reading for Tim Hegg's class Differing Worldviews: An Introduction to Philosophy.

was the will to overpower - it was one life lived at the expense of another life - in the margin, I jotted down, "like a commodity?" And one morning, as I began sorting through the chaos of my notes and thoughts to pull it all together into an essay, I texted my husband to clarify, "When you trade commodities, doesn't someone have to lose for someone else to gain?" He replied, "Yes. Zero Sum." And then he asked if I was thinking about buying pork bellies. We exchanged a few more texts and then I told him this, "Who knew that when you taught me about finance and stocks that fifteen years later during a philosophy lecture about Nietzsche it would spur a comparison?" And why was he teaching me, a writer of words who is allergic to numbers, about stocks and finance? Busy work and a fear of writing. I had no job and I feared the words I might pen would be dark and devoid of faith and I did not dare pursue that path.

My first introduction to Nietzsche was in a spiritual journaling group. A lady at our church put together quotes and Scripture and prompts and handed them out. We ladies drank tea, ate scones, fellowshiped. If my first allergy is to numbers, then my second is to people, but this small circle of four felt safe. It was a chance to write about God, but in a focused and observed manner with zero probability of darkness. One particular meeting, the theme was the uniqueness of Adonai and the uniqueness of His creation. Included in our materials was a quote from Nietzsche and it went like this,

In his heart, every man knows perfectly well that he is a unique being, only once on this earth; and that by no extraordinary chance will such a marvelously picturesque piece of diversity in unity as he is, ever be put together a second time. (Untimely Meditations, 1876)

I was floored. I did not know much about Nietzsche, but I knew he was an atheist. And this quote, it seemed to point directly to Adonai, the Creator of unique beings made in His

image. How was it that an atheist would write such a profound statement, utter such Scriptural truth? I remember having the realization for the first time that we are all Adonai's created and our lives are meant to point to Him - whatever our worldview and whatever our faith commitment - He is able to use us as He deems worthy.

Most of this course I have felt a little lost when reading the writings of the philosophers. I would come away from each reading with a headache and feeling as if they could have all benefitted from a hobby or three. But it was during this particular lecture on Nietzsche, you mentioned fractals. You said this, "sometimes chaos does not equal chaos." This was something I knew about. When my oldest son was in high school, he would come home each day with something new he had learned. Neither of us has an allergy to curiosity; we are both equal opportunity readers of books and watchers of documentaries. One Spring afternoon, he explained all about fractals. I was completely and utterly fascinated. I watched and read everything I could find. The fact that something could look like chaos, but have such an ordered and intricate design reminded me that even though life was filled with seemingly random events that resembled chaos, there must be a pattern from Adonai's perspective because He was a God of order. It was His first act - to bring order to chaos.

So now, here I sit, with a notebook full of notes and thoughts that are tied together by conversations from over a decade ago. How can this be explained? Some would say coincidence. Some déjà vu. I say Adonai.

Nietzsche would say that God is dead and that I was complicit in His death. He would say I am weak, never to be an Übermensch.

Sproul says on page 165, “In calling for a reevaluation of morals, Nietzsche is not asking for a new system of morality based on absolute norms; he rejects all such systems.” Here is where I see Nietzsche’s fingerprints all over the world. This idea that a master morality can create a superman who, when created, is in direct opposition of Adonai’s character is on display every moment of every day in this world.

Humans believe they are creators of their own values and of their own fate. Destiny is controlled by manifesting it; if we say and think it enough, if we will it, it will be. Humans act as their own judge and in ways that are for their own glory. We are a society of barbarians. Want something someone else has? Murder them and take it. Don’t like the laws imposed? Burn down the courthouse. The order of today is riot and loot, steal and murder. And in no way and for no reason, is God allowed to exist or be given credit for anything. Consider for example abortion. A woman decides she needs to commit murder in order to live her life as she sees fit, to have what she wants. The baby must lose its life in order for her to have what she desires. One life is “gained” at the expense of another. It sounds like a commodity does it not? It is not merely the world in which Nietzsche’s ideas have crept. Some have found their way into mainstream Christianity; ideas that allow for us to be our own god, our own savior. I read recently about a woman pastor who proudly proclaims she is an atheist and her congregation approves of this! But I believe one of the most shocking things is when I heard Andy Stanley boldly told his congregation to unhitch themselves from the Old Testament. It was a jaw dropping moment for sure! In the lecture you said, “Without the Bible, we are lost.” I agree. The Bible is the revelation

of who Adonai is and His plan for His created. It tells us how to recognize God in the world. It is a guide to what is right and wrong; what is good and what is evil.

It is a fine line between wanting to be God and wanting to be like Him in acting within the confines of His character and within His divine order. Chaos ensues when we try to be God; order reigns when we conform ourselves to Him submitting to His authority. Our greatest error is trying to confine Adonai within our own ideas of being. Because Adonai is infinite and we are finite, because our knowledge of Him is incomplete, we construct an idea of who He is and what He must be instead of resting in His revelations, being comfortable in the mysteries unsolvable. We wrestle with our lack of knowledge as if He and His authority are something to be conquered. Like Eve in the garden in desiring to be like Adonai, we must take care not to listen to satan twisting truth and crafting lies, we must not strive to become Him creating our own ethics, morals, and values creating a lie by which we live. It reminds me of Socrates explaining that the death of truth was equaled by the death of virtue and the rise of barbarianism.

We did not kill God; we have attempted to usurp His authority and murder His truth.

In 1873, Nietzsche wrote *On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense*, and on truth and lies he says this:

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions - they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer coins.

The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real.

I would say that truth is what exists despite the designations we assign it, the beliefs which we subject it to, or the requirements that we place upon it because Adonai is it's founder and creator; faith enables us to recognize its presence or its lack there of. The greatest liar is the one who denies Adonai's existence, and Nietzsche himself was a grand denier of truth. When we deny Adonai's truth we cheat ourselves of recognizing all the beauty and wonder that surrounds us and how we fit perfectly into Adonai's plan and purpose for His kingdom.

What we perceive is often skewed by our emotions and perceptions because our senses will betray us. But truth is no more reliant on our perceptions, than Adonai's existence is dependent upon our belief or unbelief. The ambiguity from an agnostic's perspective, denial from an atheist, or our own ideas concerning Adonai's being have no bearing on the truth of His existence or essence. Adonai is the One who says who He is and what He will be. He alone decides who and what will exist in this world and what part they will play in His grand design.

I loved how Sproul so aptly summarizes Berkley's definition of truth and perception, "Truth is that which corresponds to reality as it is perceived by God. God is the great perceiver by and in whose ideas reality exists." (page 106)

Our parts all form a whole. Believer and unbeliever alike make up the parts of that whole. Like that of a fractal, what appears as chaos is held together at the center by Adonai. Each and every created thing plays a role in His divinely ordered kingdom plan. Nothing is random; everything is ordered and precise. He is the artist that meticulously and perfectly positions each created thing in their proper place and time. Everything works together right down to the gnat

which might teach one patience or a blooming daffodil giving pause to the passerby a moment to reflect upon the beauty of Adonai's creation or perhaps the words of an atheist penned over a century ago that give credence to the truth we are each unique in our crafting. I would posit that even upon the atheist, one can observe the fingerprint of God. Truth comes only from Adonai, but He can use any of His created to reveal it to us.

Ideas are dangerous only when faith is absent. Which brings me back to the beginning. What is faith? What does it look like? Where do we find it if we think we have lost it? Faith is this gift bestowed upon us from Adonai and it is the thing by which we recognize Adonai and His truth in the world. It is the hope we hold onto when chaos reigns and life seems out of order. It is the anchor that grounds us in the safe harbor of His love and grace and mercy and truth. Early in the course, you said that we will not find good answers unless we ask good questions. Which makes me think about Berkley and the pond. Remember Charlie? Every morning and evening, my uncle and I would walk down to the pond carrying our leftover cornbread. We would bang one rock against another. Soon Charlie would faithfully appear and we would faithfully feed him. It never occurred to me the pond might disappear as we wandered out of sight and reappear as we approached it. It never occurred to me to ask what might happen to the pond in between the times we visited. In fact, the older I became the more worried I was over the very practical idea that something might happen to Charlie, not the pond. In the times I was back at home, the pond did not cease to exist because it did not rest upon my being to bring it in and out of existence. Adonai alone has the power to bring things in and out of existence. I just had faith that the next time I visited, the pond and, hopefully, Charlie would be there. And this is the best



example I can give for knowing what I know and being certain in my knowing: faith. Faith is the line in the fractal that connects me to the center where Adonai holds it all together and places each one of us in the perfect spot to create order and beauty from the chaos we perceive. And just as I found I could not separate the ideas in writing this essay, nor can we separate ourselves from Adonai and his plan.

My husband told me if I wanted an “A” that I should simply write, “I think, therefore I am.” I think through the weeks of this class I have realized something more important than Descartes five words. So I will end with this:

I have faith because God is, and without Him, I and my faith cease to be.