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Returning to Mystic River: Nietzsche on Tragedy and Values

Film and Philosophy

This paper explores two key components of Friedrich Nietzsche's theory as they are exemplified in the 2003 film Mystic River. First, I describe the revaluation of values (a concept of Nietzsche's) that takes place at the end of the film, through the speech given by Annabeth Markum (Laura Linney). In highlighting this connection, I argue that a revaluation of values can happen ex post facto, that is, in reflecting upon an action that has already been completed. Second, I show that Mystic River fits into Nietzsche's conception of tragedy by applying his distinction between the Apolline and the Dionysian drives to an interpretation of the main characters in the film. Next, I synthesize the two preceding analyses to show the way that Nietzsche's theory of values supports his theory of the tragic.