

### Returning to *Mystic River*: Nietzsche on Tragedy and Values



What is good? All that enhances power. . .  
What is bad? --All that proceeds from weakness.  
What is happiness? The feeling that power is *increasing*,--  
that resistance has been overcome.  
--Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*1

He who cannot command himself is commanded.  
--Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*2

*Return is the being of that which becomes.*  
--Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*3

#### ***Mystic River* and Nietzsche's Revaluation**

My project here began with the recognition of several striking parallels between the theories of Friedrich Nietzsche and the 2003 Clint Eastwood film *Mystic River*.<sup>4</sup> There are at least five major similarities between the two. In the first section, I describe the revaluation of values that takes place at the end of the film in a dialogue between Jimmy (Sean Penn) and 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

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#### *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). Second, I show that *Mystic River* also fits into Nietzsche's conception of tragedy by employing his concepts of the Apolline and the Dionysian. I conclude by using the preceding analysis to show the way that Nietzsche's theory of values supports his theory of the tragic.