

Article

The Possibility of a New Sanctification in Nietzsche's Philosophy: From the Collective to a Healthy Individual

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Abstract

Religion continues to play a role in many contemporary wars and conflicts, despite its professed commitment to peace and non-violence. A key feature of religion is the demand for sanctification of its members. This raises a paradox: why do religious communities that emphasize individual sanctification often produce or justify selfish forms of action, and why do sanctified individuals consent to them? In traditional frameworks, sanctification refers to the disciplining of human instincts and affects according to a moral code established by the religious community, in order to bring the individual closer to God. In 1881, Nietzsche identified the core of the problems stemming from collectivism, including religion, in what he calls “the properties of the organism”: the tendency of a whole to functionally organize its parts for its own preservation. While it is condemned as egoism at the individual level, it is often justified in religious communities as devotion to God or as an altruistic act for the benefit of the collective. From this perspective, our focus must shift from the individual as part of an organism to the self as an organism, exemplified by the *Übermensch*. This paper argues that, within traditional religious communities, sanctification functions as a mechanism of control and preservation. Inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy, it proposes “New Sanctification” as a form of individual self-formation. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the *Übermensch* serves as a model of New Sanctification. Such sanctification does not require the individual to lose the self in the collective. Rather, it is a process through which the individual returns to the self, confronts the world directly, and affirms one's life in the most active and life-affirming way possible. That is the new sanctification that a healthy individual continually realizes through self-overcoming.

Keywords: new sanctification; *Übermensch*; properties of the organism; egoism; herd animals; self-formation; healthy individual; Nietzsche



Academic Editors: Jiwon Shim,
Piotr Roszak and Saša Horvat

Received: 30 June 2026

Revised: 27 July 2026

Accepted: 29 July 2026

Published: 3 August 2026

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1. Introduction

In traditional religion, sanctification is understood as the process by which human beings draw closer to God. To approach the divine, individuals are expected to restrain their instincts, purify their emotions, cultivate moral character, and ultimately attain spiritual perfection. However, just as Nietzsche understood instincts, emotions, and morality as social constructs, he would likely regard the sanctification emphasized in religion not as an essential reality, but likewise as a social construct. He rejects the “traditional sanctification” found in religion as a means of transcendence, submission to external authority, and conformity to inherited ideals. In this respect, religion and Nietzsche stand in direct opposition.

At the center of this opposition lies what Nietzsche, in 1881, identified as “the Properties of the Organism.”¹ This refers to a property of living beings in which functionally

differentiated parts are integrated under the unity of life and remain closely interconnected. The whole cannot be reduced to its parts; once divided, it loses its unity. Although the Organism's Properties² appear to belong primarily to living individuals, they may also define collective entities. What is striking is that when an individual seeks to preserve and promote such organic unity, the tendency is often condemned as egoism. Yet when a state, ethnic collective, or religious community pursues the same end, it is rarely criticized in those terms. Historically, many harms committed by religious communities acting as unified collective bodies were not regarded by their contemporaries as expressions of collective egoism. Examples include the Crusades (1096–1270) between Christians and Muslims, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) between French Catholics and Protestants, the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims during and after the Partition of India and Pakistan (1947–), and the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict (1948–). In addition to wars between religious communities, there have been persecutions of apostates and witch hunts, forms of violence directed by communities against individuals outside their boundaries. Religious communities possess a self-preserving and therefore egoistic tendency that has continually produced violence against those regarded as outsiders. Moreover, members within such communities often reinterpret these collective actions as serving a higher purpose and justify their own actions as selfless acts performed for God or for the community (KGW V 2, 11[185]).

This study begins from the question of why such phenomena continue to occur despite the fact that religious communities demand sanctification from their members. Why do collectives choose egoistic forms of action? Why have individuals lost the capacity to think for themselves?³ To address these questions, this article examines Nietzsche's critique of religion. As is well known, Nietzsche criticizes religion as a whole, but his primary target is Christianity. This does not mean that Christianity can stand as a substitute for religion in general. Nevertheless, because the Western world remains deeply shaped by Christian modes of thought and because Western influence extends globally, Nietzsche's critique remains highly revealing of certain dimensions of religion.

The methodology of this study consists primarily of textual interpretation of Nietzsche's writings, supplemented by doctrinal approaches drawn from biblical studies and perspectives from the philosophy of religion. Even so, because the present discussion relies fundamentally on Nietzsche's critique of religion, it does not attempt a detailed examination of theological theories of sanctification or a systematic comparison with them. The aim of this article is instead to reconsider the criticisms that have been directed toward religious sanctification and to explore what a New Sanctification might entail. Some philosophers and theologians argue that religious sanctification is neither a process of losing oneself nor a form of religious homogenization.⁴ I contend, however, that this issue cannot be overlooked within religious doctrines that claim the existence of fixed truth and goodness. The depersonalized collectivism that emerges from such doctrines remains a significant reality, and for this reason Nietzsche's critique continues to be relevant.

Before proceeding, however, one preliminary question must be addressed: Does Nietzsche reject religion altogether? If he does, then the present discussion would lose much of its significance.⁵ Abel suggests that Nietzsche's critique of religion should be understood from three perspectives: First, Nietzsche is an important thinker in the development of the study of religion and ancient cultural history. Second, for Nietzsche, Greek religion appears capable of serving as a kind of "atheistic" alternative to traditional religion, especially Christianity. Third, despite his radical critique of religion and morality, Nietzsche still requires some form of God, where the term "God" must be understood in the broadest possible sense.⁶ This suggests that Nietzsche's critique does not seek simply to negate religion or abolish the possibility of God. Rather, it exposes the problems of existing religions while opening a space in which the meaning of the divine may be reconsidered.

In this broader sense, God does not refer to the deity of traditional religion but may instead designate an experience that becomes possible when one returns to one's own life through a New Sanctification.

Accordingly, this article critically examines Christian sanctification from Nietzsche's perspective, analyzes the underlying affective forces that motivate communities pursuing such sanctification, and explores the possibility of a New Sanctification. The author hopes that this new understanding of sanctification may provide a framework for critically examining how values are inherited and invite healthy⁷ individuals to reflect on the processes through which their identities and values are formed. This article proceeds in three stages. First, in order to understand religion as a collective phenomenon, it undertakes a genealogical investigation of the demand for "selflessness" within collectives and examines the Organism's Properties through Nietzsche's concept of the "herd animal" (*Heerdenthier*). Second, it argues that traditional religious sanctification functioned primarily as a mechanism that confined individuals to predetermined roles within the collective. Third, after criticizing traditional views of sanctification, this study proposes a new, Nietzsche-inspired understanding of sanctification. Achieving this New Sanctification requires becoming a healthy individual who embodies the qualities of the *Übermensch*. This process is closely connected to the possibility of self-formation as a whole person.

2. Nietzsche's Understanding of Religion as a Collective

2.1. Nietzsche's Critique of the "Unegoistic"

Whereas social contract theorists generally maintain that egoism (Egoismus), understood as the drive for self-preservation, which precedes social relations, Nietzsche argues that what comes first is pre-egoism (Voregoismus), namely the herd instinct (*Heerdentrieb*) (KGW V 2, 11[193], p. 416). In other words, human beings are not born as independent individuals who later enter into social relations. Rather, they are initially formed as "organs" of a larger collective organism. Human beings are therefore collective beings from the outset. Social contract theory seeks to explain the possibility of human existence in a hypothetical state of nature prior to political society. For Nietzsche, individuals are born as members of a herd, and the autonomous individual endowed with social-contract rights is merely the product of a retrospective thought experiment. Such an individual has never existed as an original reality but only as a theoretical possibility.

What, then, characterizes human life as a herd animal? Nietzsche argues that during the stage of pre-egoism, human beings regard the "Unegoistic" (*Unegoistischen*)—that is, altruistic behavior—as morally right. Yet this reflects the feeling of those who are born within a whole, remain subordinated to it, and often do not understand the grounds of their own subordination. Feelings of obedience to the whole, duty as a part, and an inability to establish oneself as a whole in one's own right all contribute to the idealization of altruism. Nietzsche therefore maintains that altruism is not purity directed toward others. Instead, it functions as a powerful fiction that serves human self-preservation. To demonstrate this point, he identifies three major contexts in which the demand for the unegoistic becomes indispensable. First, Nietzsche directs his critique toward Christian monotheism. Christianity demands a life wholly subordinated to God—a life lived for God rather than for oneself. Beneath this ideal lie obedience to God, a sense of duty, and even contempt for one's own independent existence. Yet because human beings must continue to live and seek meaning in their lives, they come to interpret their actions as serving God, the ultimate whole, rather than themselves. Second, as belief in God weakens, human beings seek new objects capable of replacing the divine. Consequently, the ideal of "living for God" is transformed into that of "living for others." The emphasis shifts from devotion to God to altruism, but the underlying structure remains largely unchanged. Third, the

broader social environment—including the state, society, and religion—employs altruistic ideals as a means of regulating individuals. Because highly independent individuals are difficult to govern, collectivities encourage moral systems that equate altruism with virtue and condemn individuality (KGW V 2, 11[199]).

From this perspective, Nietzsche argues that the unegoistic has no independent existence of its own. Human beings ultimately make use of others in order to preserve their own sense of significance, power, and social role. Beneath apparently altruistic actions lie the instincts of self-preservation and a feeling of power. Human beings cannot act entirely for the sake of others. Even actions celebrated as altruistic often function as conditions for sustaining one's own existence. Nietzsche illustrates this claim through three examples. The first example concerns the relationship between a ruler and the ruled. A ruler may appear to work for the welfare of the population, yet such efforts serve to preserve the ruler's own sense of power. Even when governing requires constant attention and personal sacrifice, the ruler remains committed to maintaining the position that defines his authority. The second example is the relationship between a mother and her child. Although maternal devotion appears self-sacrificial, it may also function as a means through which the mother preserves her own identity. Even when motherhood demands continuous sacrifice and care, the role itself becomes integral to the mother's sense of self. The third example concerns the relationship between a genius and average people. Some individuals devote themselves to the work of a genius. Yet such devotion is not necessarily directed toward the genius as an end in itself. Rather, individuals derive meaning from participating in a larger purpose and from understanding themselves as contributing parts within a greater undertaking (KGW V 2, 11[199]).

These considerations enable Nietzsche to criticize Spinoza's philosophy. In Nietzsche's view, Spinoza's ethics encourages individuals as members of a collective to act unegoistically. Yet such conduct is not genuinely altruistic. Rather, it ultimately serves the preservation of the individual and the maintenance of a feeling of power. Spinoza also maintains that human actions are determined by desire and the affects, and that knowledge can motivate action only insofar as it becomes a kind of affect itself. Nietzsche, by contrast, argues that knowledge becomes a genuine motive force only when it takes the form of passion (*Leidenschaft*).⁸

According to Spinoza, an individual whose actions are guided by the affects can nevertheless act virtuously. To live virtuously is to live according to reason and thereby preserve one's own existence. If an individual follows reason, he will seek his own advantage before concern for the herd; that is, he will pursue self-preservation. Accordingly, what is good is whatever contributes to adequate knowledge that supports self-preservation, whereas what is bad is whatever hinders such knowledge. At first glance, Spinoza's emphasis on self-preservation appears close to Nietzsche's own position. Why, then, does Nietzsche criticize Spinoza? For Spinoza, reason is the force that unifies and strengthens human beings, whereas the affects are often sources of division and conflict. Reason is therefore humanity's greatest power, since it makes genuine knowledge possible. In this sense, Spinoza maintains that human beings can achieve unity only through reason, and that they become strongest when they are fully united through it. From Nietzsche's perspective, however, this ideal of rational unity ultimately leads individuals back into a herd condition. For Spinoza, the strongest form of life is ultimately a condition of solidarity in which individuals are united with others through reason and live in harmony with others—in other words, a form of herd existence.⁹ This is precisely the process by which Spinoza, through reason, leads human beings from individuality back into the herd. In this sense, he argues that it is advantageous for human beings to act unegoistically on rational grounds.¹⁰ Nietzsche,

however, regards this entire view as resting on a prejudice and illusion concerning pure, universal reason. Such a form of reason, he argues, does not exist at all.

Moreover, according to Spinoza, passions that disturb rational life should be overcome because they make human beings unstable both internally and externally. Nietzsche, by contrast, regards struggle and passion—precisely those elements that Spinoza views negatively—as sources of strength for both individuals and societies. Rather than weakening life, conflict and passion often intensify and enhance it (KGW V 2, 11[193], pp. 415–16). A similar disagreement appears in their accounts of desire. Spinoza identifies desire with the very essence of the human being. Desire is the striving through which every being seeks to preserve its existence. Anyone who neglects self-preservation reveals weakness, whereas the effort to preserve oneself is itself an expression of virtue. At the same time, however, Spinoza denies the existence of free will. The mind is determined by an endless chain of causes and effects, and willing is nothing more than the affirmation or negation of what is presented to it. By reducing desire to self-preservation, denying free will, and treating willing merely as affirmation and negation, Spinoza leaves little room for individuality. In Nietzsche's view, such a framework ultimately encourages individuals to conform to the collective rather than to develop themselves as independent centers of power and self-creation. For this reason, Nietzsche interprets Spinoza's philosophy as a mechanism that draws individuals back into the herd.

2.2. *The Concept of the "Herd Animal" (Heerdenthier): The Idea of the Collective Organism*

Nietzsche summarizes the properties of the organism as follows:

1. Self-regulation: manifested in fear of all external and unfamiliar attacks, hatred toward enemies, and self-restraint.
2. Abundant substitutes: manifested in greed, the desire for conquest, and the will to power.
3. Assimilation per se: manifested in praise and blame, making others dependent on oneself, disguise, cunning, learning, adaptation, command, and the incorporation of judgments and experiences.
4. Secretion and excretion: manifested in vomiting, contempt for traits that are no longer useful, the distribution of surpluses, and acts of mercy.
5. Metabolic power: manifested in temporary admiration, praise, independence, classification, the near abandonment of other organic functions, and the transformation of oneself into an "organism."
6. Regeneration: manifested in sexual desire and the desire to teach.¹¹

Nietzsche argues that it is a mistake to assume that these Organism's Properties belong originally and exclusively to individual human beings. Because we are living beings, we naturally assume that we ourselves possess the defining traits of an organism. However, only upon becoming a strong and free human being—that is, a healthy individual—does one finally come to realize that one is capable of possessing the Organism's Properties oneself. Throughout history, human beings have consolidated organic functions at the level of the collective, transforming individuals into parts of a larger whole. Individuals are born not as self-sufficient entities but as components of a preexisting social organism. Through prolonged processes such as education, they are shaped into functional parts of the collective and taught to identify themselves with it.

What, then, is the psychological outlook of individuals who belong to a herd? According to Nietzsche, human beings form herds by distinguishing themselves from other individuals, other collectives, and ultimately from all the living and the dead who stand outside their community. And they first experience the feeling shared by the herd—the "herd feeling" (*Heerden-Gefühle*). From this perspective, an individual often fears and hates

the enemies of the collective more intensely than his own personal enemies. He identifies public enemies with private enemies and may even be willing to sacrifice his own interests or safety for the sake of the collective good. In order to excel as a member of the collective, he learns to absorb values and practices that have little direct connection to his private interests. He learns what counts as the welfare of the collective. As a result, whenever a particular trait or even an exceptional individual appears to be useless or harmful to the collective, he comes to despise and exclude it. He strives to become a devoted part, instrument, or function of the collective and employs organic capacities only insofar as they serve that role. As he writes, “He does not yet possess these other properties; he acquires them only as an organ of the community. As an organic part, he first receives his impulses from all (*Sämtliche*) the properties of the organic whole” (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 409).

If we exist primarily as parts within a herd, then we may ask what has become of the “free individual” that modern thought so often presupposes. Have we not always been free individuals? Collective institutions create representations of the free individual as part of the process of educating and organizing their members. Likewise, many philosophers begin from the assumption that individuals are originally unified beings. For Nietzsche, however, this is merely a representation rather than a description of reality. The individual conceived as an autonomous center of free power and action is largely a theoretical construct. Even within political institutions such as the state, Nietzsche argues, genuine power is concentrated in very few hands—often in those of a single leader—and even that leader does not enjoy complete freedom. Consequently, Nietzsche rejects the social-contract view that the state exists as an external force that suppresses originally free individuals. In his view, there were not fully free individuals in the state. Rather, the state and similar institutions are indispensable conditions that make human life as a herd animal possible.¹²

This raises a further question: does the herd itself possess the Organism’s Properties in any intrinsic sense? Traditional religious worldviews held that God governed the universe, whereas modern science often portrays the cosmos itself as a living organism. But an organism, he argues, is merely a rare and highly derivative form of life that appears temporarily on Earth. To project this phenomenon onto the universe as a whole and extend it as something universal, essential, and eternal is nothing more than an anthropomorphic illusion.

For this reason, Nietzsche argues against interpreting the world through the model of the organism. The laws and forms of order that we presently observe may not be absolute or eternal. Several implications follow from this position. First, the Organism’s Properties such as life, purpose, and will should not be projected onto the universe as a whole. Second, the universe may not be a living entity in any humanly recognizable sense. Third, even scientific laws such as those of physics and chemistry may not be eternal. Fourth, the universe is in continual flux, and the laws known to us may hold only under highly limited conditions. All scientific properties may themselves be subject to emergence and disappearance. Infinite attributes may have developed throughout the history of the cosmos, yet human beings are constrained by the limits of their temporal and spatial perspective. Whether at the microscopic or the cosmic level, we may be incapable of observing many of these developments. Some changes may be so subtle that they remain undetectable by human observation, regardless of the precision of our instruments (KGW V 2, 11[201]). Nietzsche therefore cautions against treating biological descriptions of organisms as eternal truths. In the end, human collectives merely took their cue from biological organisms and, for the sake of convenience, forced themselves into the image of an organism, calling it an altruistic community. It functions as a mechanism for preserving the collective. This is an anthropomorphic perspective, a useful fiction, rather than a true description of reality.

3. Nietzsche's Critique of Religious Sanctification

Sanctification refers to the process through which a religious believer internalizes the ethical demands of a religion and shapes their life accordingly. In Christianity, sanctification is understood as the process by which sinful human beings are cleansed of sin and gradually become more like God. Through this process, believers imitate the character of Christ by restraining their desires and becoming holy, live in the assurance of the salvation promised in the afterlife while embodying that promise in their present lives, and continually pursue this transformation throughout their lifetime. Christian communities further emphasize that the ultimate agent of sanctification is God rather than the individual, thereby grounding the normative demand for sanctification. Although believers are expected to participate actively through obedience and commitment, sanctification is ultimately accomplished by God (1 *Thessalonians* 5:23).¹³ Because transformation takes place through God's word and spiritual communion with Him, believers are called to rely entirely on God's word (*Ephesians* 6:18). As sanctification progresses, believers become increasingly sensitive to sin, grow in love for God and the Christian community, and gradually conform their character and conduct to the moral ideals upheld by that community. In this sense, sanctification fundamentally involves reshaping one's life as a part of the religious community according to the ends that the community itself pursues.

By contrast, in *Beyond Good and Evil* §61, Nietzsche argues that philosophers regard religion not as truth itself but as an instrument for organizing human communities. He evaluates religion as a powerful means of preserving social order, governing society, and enabling average people to endure the hardships of life. Nietzsche distinguishes among powerful rulers, those destined to become future leaders, and the majority of average people, explaining the different functions religion serves for each group.

Among them, we can first examine religion and sanctification of average people. For them, religion provides satisfaction with their social condition and way of life, offers inner peace, elevates obedience, produces a sense of shared happiness within the community, renders suffering meaningful, and transforms and justifies the poverty, humiliation, and spiritual wretchedness of everyday existence. According to Nietzsche, even average people possess a desire to live for themselves. Yet because they are unable to fulfill this desire, they experience self-contempt. Remaining in a lowly condition while unable to overcome this self-contempt, they seek a grand objective beyond themselves—namely, God. Only by becoming a part devoted to this supreme purpose can they endure their lives. Religion thus gives meaning to their existence, refines it, and ultimately sanctifies and legitimizes it. This is precisely where religion becomes especially useful for religious authorities: by teaching that piety grants access to a higher, imagined order, religion educates the downtrodden to accept the harsh realities of their social existence and encourages them to cling to that very order (KGW VI 2, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 61).

Within Christianity, prayer occupies a central place in the process of sanctification because it is understood as an encounter with God. However, rather than a genuine meeting with the divine, prayer is, in Nietzsche's view, merely a process of rationalization through which human beings employ imagination under the guise of communion with God in order to secure their own advantage. Moreover, through prayer and imagination, human beings arbitrarily construct moral distinctions such as good and evil. In other words, by forcing God to submit, human beings create good, and by forcing the devil to submit, he creates evil. As they imagine goals of their own making, they become intoxicated both by the desire to achieve personal benefit and by the images of their imagined fulfillment. They further come to believe that, beyond their own actions and the ordinary course of natural causality, prayer and imagination serve as instruments for realizing God's will—even when the consequences are harmful to others—and they regard such occurrences as mysterious or

miraculous (KGW V 2, 11[192]). From Nietzsche's perspective, the religious sanctification demanded of average people is neither a movement toward truth nor a transcendent event governed by God. Religion functions instead as a whole, while average people exist merely as parts within that whole, and sanctification serves to integrate them more completely into it. Consequently, what religion calls 'goodness' consists of obedience, asceticism, self-sacrifice, and the strengthening of one's function as a part of the larger whole.

Meanwhile, Nietzsche further argues in *Beyond Good and Evil* that, for powerful rulers—or those destined to become future leaders—religion functions as an instrument of governance and the preservation of social order. For rulers, religion provides a means of overcoming resistance among average people and thereby securing political domination. It binds rulers and subjects together while exposing to rulers the hidden and inward dimensions through which subjects might otherwise resist obedience. Furthermore, when rulers themselves aspire to a more elevated and contemplative form of sanctification, seeking to retain only the refined aspects of rule, religion relieves them of the burdensome and coercive dimensions of political authority, thereby allowing them to preserve an appearance of purity. Nietzsche cites the Brahmin priests as an example, observing that they understood this function well and therefore remained largely removed from direct involvement in secular politics (KGW VI 2, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 61). Nevertheless, these figures remain rulers only in relation to their subjects. Just as in the relationship between monarch and people discussed earlier, they too depend upon the larger collective in order to preserve their own existence, power, and social function. For Nietzsche, the sanctification of rulers as parts of the whole is likewise neither a movement toward truth nor a transcendent event brought about by God. For the ruler as well, religion exists as a whole; he merely plays "the role of a part" to better subordinate average people to their position within the whole.

4. New Sanctification: The Übermensch

4.1. The Process of Self-Formation of the Healthy Human

What does Nietzsche mean when he claims that human beings, though biologically organisms, are the last to recognize themselves as such? He argues that even the drives and emotions we ordinarily regard as residing within us are themselves collectively acquired. As he writes, "Our drives and emotions are formed only through learning; they are not original. They have no 'state of nature'" (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 409). Ordinarily, I assume that my drives and emotions originate from my own biological constitution. They are regarded as inherently mine, as natural, and ultimately as expressions of my existence as a being born within nature. Accordingly, they are understood as natural causal processes occurring between my body and the world. Nietzsche, however, reverses this assumption. According to him, my drives and emotions likewise originate within the collective. The individual, existing as a part of the whole, participates in the functions of the collective and merely internalizes and embodies the experiences and evaluations acquired through that participation.

It is precisely when collective bonds begin to disintegrate—for example, through the collapse of the collective itself—that what Nietzsche calls the experimental individual (*Versuchs-Individuum*) emerges. At this point, the individual must internally bear the instability produced by the dissolution of the community while simultaneously examining those functions that had previously made one suitable as a part of the collective. One endures this period by allowing the experiences and judgments previously acquired as a part of the whole to struggle against one another and to form new relations within oneself. In other words, one enters into conflict with the very standards, judgments, and experiences that had once justified one's existence as merely a part. Through this struggle, the individual reorganizes, assimilates, and selectively appropriates those functions that

are conducive to one's own life, including one's drives and emotions. Ultimately, by establishing a new internal order, assimilating new experiences, and discharging obsolete drives, the individual succeeds in constructing within oneself the Organism's Properties in one's own right (KGW V 2, 11[182], pp. 409–10).

According to Nietzsche, the individual is not originally a unified being. Consequently, one is initially incapable of properly regulating one's drives and emotions, and whenever these drives arise, they come into conflict with one another, producing experiences of inner contradiction. As Nietzsche remarks, the drives "have not yet learned to adapt themselves harmoniously to one another" (KGW V 2, 11[189], p. 413). The experimental individual therefore remains unstable and suffers because the drives have not yet been properly regulated. Nevertheless, from this point onward, the individual begins to live according to an internal standard of pleasure and displeasure. However, among the stages of becoming a healthy human being presented by Zarathustra, that is, the stages of the camel, the lion, and the child, one has only reached the state of a 'lion' who has still not been able to overcome the internal structure of domination (KGW VI 1, 1, 'Von den drei Verwandlungen'). Complete integration, in which the individual fully unifies one's drives and becomes genuinely self-regulating, is therefore achieved only at the final stage of development. Nietzsche accordingly observes that before the experimental individual succeeds in bringing about the decline of the existing collective, countless immature individuals perish in the process. They emerge during an age in which collective bonds are already disintegrating—an age of crisis characterized by immorality and corruption. Moreover, because every individual begins as a part of the collective, one initially exists only in an incomplete condition dominated by competing drives. All impulses and emotions attempt to be experimented with individually and become excessive, but the individual has not yet adapted to their individual use. Consequently, many immature individuals are also destroyed through either the excess of particular drives or the conflict among them (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 410).

Witnessing this widespread collapse, average people condemn the experimental individual as morally degenerate for disrupting the order of the collective. Their response, in turn, invites the intervention of moralists (*Ethiker*), whom Nietzsche characterizes as reactionaries (*Reaktionäre*). These thinkers claim to offer a way for human beings to avoid suffering caused by their own drives and emotions. Rather than confronting the uncertainty and disorder of collapse, they argue that remaining within the collective is the safer alternative. Morality thus becomes an attempt to control the disorder arising within the herd itself (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 410). Although the moralists appear to resolve the crisis, they in fact seek only to bind human beings once again to their role as parts of the collective. In their view, there exists an eternal moral law governing the whole community, and this law is regarded as good because it preserves the internal order of the collective. Conversely, no genuine law can belong to the individual as such. Any attempt by the individual to establish a law of one's own is therefore condemned as evil, immoral, and destructive.

The experimental individual, however, has already begun to acquire the very principles through which the collective itself survives as an organism in relation to its external environment. As these principles are gradually established, the functions the individual once performed within the collective acquire greater force, while functions that one had never previously exercised are discovered, cultivated, and disciplined. The individual no longer exists merely as one organ within the organism of the collective; instead, one gradually acquires all the functions necessary for existing as an organism in one's own right, "for these are the conditions of life itself!" (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 410). The condition for living fully is therefore to become a whole—to possess within oneself the complete Organism's Properties. This is precisely what Nietzsche designates as the *Übermensch*: the

individual capable of viewing and living life from the standpoint of the whole (KGW VI 1, 4, 'Vom hoeheren Menschen', 3).

Nietzsche aptly describes the emotional response of average people to this process as one of "anxiety" (*Mißbehagen*) (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 410). The herd has existed "for a long time in a deformed condition" and has become incapable of imagining any other mode of existence. As individuals gradually free themselves from the herd during this period of crisis, the remaining members experience profound anxiety. This anxiety may be understood in two ways. First, they compare the security they once enjoyed as members of the herd with the possibility of relinquishing that security in order to become a whole. Their anxiety arises because the collective purpose they believed they had preserved through continual self-sacrifice as mere parts begins to fracture. Witnessing others acquire wholeness, they increasingly question the value of their own partial existence within the herd. Second, their anxiety is intensified by the spectacle of experimental individuals perishing in great numbers while attempting to attain such wholeness. Although they too long for life as a whole, they fear that pursuit and dismiss those who perish in the attempt as foolish.

Ultimately, although all human beings are born as parts of a larger whole, only a small number of individuals—those whom Nietzsche calls the *Übermensch*—succeed in separating themselves from the herd. These exceptional individuals, while first performing the particular function assigned to them within the whole, come to understand "the innumerable conditions of the whole organism" from the standpoint of the whole itself and succeed in "assimilating" these conditions within themselves (KGW V 2, 11[193], p. 416). Only in this way are they able to detach themselves from the collective. The *Übermensch* thus undertakes a process of self-formation and self-organization as a whole organism. Having become a whole, the individual now seeks to leave behind what Nietzsche had long described as a "deformed" condition (KGW V 2, 11[182], p. 410), namely the negative environment that confines one to existence as merely a part. This negative environment no longer constitutes the individual's defining condition; rather, it becomes that which must be overcome in order to become a whole.

4.2. Egoism

Nietzsche now explains how a healthy individual should live. He argues that individuals should use every possible means to cultivate a love for their own lives and to increase the joy in living. However, the way an individual comes to love life will often conflict with the values and preferences of the existing collective. Nietzsche therefore suggests two ways of responding to this conflict. First, in relation to others, one should learn what he calls a "new great tolerance" (*neue große Toleranz*). This means accepting whatever ways others devise to sustain and affirm their own lives. Second, in relation to oneself, one should take an antagonistic stance toward the herd and remain "one" individual within that relationship. The existing herd is likely to criticize this way of loving life as "egoism." In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes that the herd has "distilled the instincts into evil" and therefore treats those who possess such instincts—that is, strong human beings—as "evil men" and "the condemnable type of the wicked" (KGW VI 3, *Der Antichrist* 5). As discussed earlier, the whole criticizes individuals who refuse to remain merely its parts and questions what they value most, namely life itself. Moralists go even further by questioning the very existence of such individuals. In this situation, Nietzsche tells the individual not to fear this antagonism but to enjoy the struggle, even when it becomes a struggle that risks death. This is because the struggle is for one's own "life" (KGW V 2, 11[183]).

Should egoism, then, be condemned as moralists claim? The commonly used concept of egoism is dominated by already entrenched negative emotions created by herd feeling.

Nietzsche tries to recover its original meaning. Once again, he does not introduce a new concept. Instead, he deliberately continues to use the word “egoism” in order to free it from the meaning imposed on it by the herd feeling and to return to what it originally means. To do this, he distinguishes the egoism of the individual from the egoism found within the herd. The individual’s egoism simply means putting oneself first. By contrast, there is another kind of egoism found among those who put the herd before themselves. This is egoism in the form of the herd feeling. As discussed earlier, Nietzsche argues that herd feeling comes first, and only afterward can a small number of people move toward egoism.

Let us first consider the feelings of those who belong to the egoistic herd. At the stage of pre-egoism, the herd feeling seeks equality among herds, and individuals, as members of the herd, regard the ideal of equality as something good. Nietzsche argues, however, that the Roman legal principle “to each his own” (*suum cuique*) originally meant that people are different and should therefore receive different shares. The ideal of equality runs against this principle. According to Nietzsche, average people who are immersed in the herd feeling become absorbed in the dominant opinions of the herd. They even educate their children in the same way. Such people have not yet become fully developed egos. They have not become independent. Instead, they believe that they are justified only when they function well as parts of the whole. In order to gain self-esteem, they willingly submit to their parents, teachers, society, and even to those they love. For them, obedience and duty become morality and noble virtues, closely connected with conscience (KGW V 2, 11[185]).

Those who belong to the whole believe that without herd formations such as religion or the state, society would fall into chaos. For this reason, they devote themselves altruistically to the herd. However, when the herd turns toward outsiders, it reveals its egoistic property. Nietzsche criticizes Christianity as an example of this tendency. By declaring “outside the Church there is no salvation” (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), the Christian community treats opposing herds and dissenting individuals in an exclusive, hostile, and violent way. Likewise, citizens, acting through the herd feeling embodied in the state, impose severe punishments such as imprisonment and execution on criminals, and wars and conflicts continue to occur. Within the herd, harming another person is regarded as evil. However, when the herd directs itself toward outsiders, even the intention to harm others is no longer condemned. Instead, it may be praised as an altruistic act performed for God or for the collective. Certain means may be prohibited, but the intention itself is rarely questioned (KGW V 2, 11[185]). Furthermore, powerless people often exercise their remaining strength by directing indiscriminate criticism at individuals outside the collective. Nietzsche argues that the logic of the “witch hunt” still continues in this form. The witch hunt was an event driven not by critical reflection but by thoughtless condemnation. Those who lacked the ability to think critically concealed their own weakness by directing their remaining strength toward others without reflecting on how that strength was being used. Nietzsche insists that this pattern still exists today (KGW V 2, 11[192]). Under these conditions, egoistic individuals had little choice but to adopt a hypocritical attitude in order to survive. In Nietzsche’s view, the individual’s egoism was crushed by the powerful will of the herd.

By contrast, when a healthy individual embraces egoism, a different kind of attitude emerges. Egoism enables the individual to view the whole and to act according to the will to power. According to Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* governs the parts within himself as a whole. The different drives within him constantly compete for dominance. Rather than suppressing this conflict, he allows them to struggle so that greater strength can emerge. To ensure that this process continues steadily and almost automatically, he does not rely on exceptional intervention or coercion. Instead, he follows the very order that he establishes within himself. This is the *Übermensch*’s self-regulation (*Selbstregulierung*) (Gerhardt 1992, p. 237). It enables both the whole and its parts to function smoothly together. This order

is based entirely on the egoistic tendencies of both the whole and the parts. In other words, each pursues its own advantage. For this reason, Nietzsche concludes that “there is absolutely nothing here that could be called ‘unegoistic’” (KGW V 2, 11[200]).

4.3. *New Sanctification That Challenges Herd Morality: Becoming the Übermensch*

Nietzsche is well known for declaring that “God is dead.” If so, is religious sanctification still possible in his philosophy? Nietzsche argues that the transcendent world established by Western philosophy and by Christianity since Plato is a fiction created by human beings (KGW VI 1, ‘Zarathustra’s Vorrede’ 3). The herd needed this fictional world in order to preserve itself. Nietzsche states that the result of “a fictional world distorting, rendering worthless, and negating reality” is produced (KGW VI 3, *Der Antichrist* 15). In other parts, Nietzsche does not deny that human beings experience certain mysterious phenomena that cannot be fully explained, such as ecstasy, self-transcendence, or a sense of unity with the cosmos.¹⁴ These experiences cannot easily be expressed in words, yet we undeniably experience them. Nietzsche does not say whether God is present or absent in such experiences. Nevertheless, his writings suggest that these experiences elevate us (K. P. Lee 2017, pp. 235–38.).

What, then, can be understood as the “New Sanctification” in Nietzsche’s philosophy? Religious sanctification aims at gradual transformation. Likewise, Nietzsche does not criticize the idea that human beings can be elevated through change or move to a better stage of existence. On the contrary, he calls for continual self-transcendence, and this is precisely what the Übermensch seeks. The process begins with a persistent question: Is fulfilling my role as a part of the herd really what I want? Someone may say that this is indeed one’s own desire. Yet it is also possible that one has mistaken the herd’s expectations for one’s own will and has come to believe that they are the same. This is because, as living beings, we all desire to be free rather than subjugated. Once we recognize that we have mistaken the herd’s goals for our own, we begin to want to live our own lives as individual living beings. The part within the herd has no need for independent thought. On the contrary, independent thinking is discouraged because it brings disorder to the herd. Individuals are therefore expected to suppress their own thoughts and to refrain from questioning the established order. For this reason, Nietzsche believes that the sanctification demanded of average people in Christianity has little to do with individual self-transcendence. Rather, it is simply a means of standardizing individuals in order to preserve the Christian community.

What is needed at this time is the capacity to think. Contemporary society is saturated with impersonal judgments shaped by the herd. For this reason, reflection directed toward oneself is especially needed. One’s own judgment may not always be correct. Even so, the difficult process of discovering one’s own strength can itself be understood as the New Sanctification. If healthy individuals pursue this New Sanctification through their own capacity for thought, they become able to question the goals established by the herd. They will be criticized for pursuing egoism and for engaging in a problematic process of self-formation. This is because they think in ways that best serve themselves. Even if such thinking does not conform to conventional moral judgment, it nevertheless challenges what the herd regards as unquestionable and invites further reflection.¹⁵

Nietzsche therefore argues that, in order to achieve this New Sanctification, individuals must transform themselves into self-generating wholes that possess the Organism’s Properties. As the Übermensch, one must no longer rely solely on the organic roles learned while functioning as a part of the larger whole. Instead, one must establish one’s own process of self-legislation in order to live as a whole living being. In other words, to become a whole means facing the world on one’s own in new circumstances every day. This cannot

be achieved through a single leap. Christianity teaches that sanctification follows rebirth (*Titus* 3:5). From an adult's perspective, birth seems complete the moment the umbilical cord is cut. For the infant, however, this is only the beginning. A newborn remains dependent on its mother and must gradually separate from her again and again—from her milk, her embrace, and her hands. Taking a leap from a collective where one feels protected is not a one-time event. We must repeatedly attempt to become a whole. That is the very New Sanctification, the virtue of the *Übermensch*.

5. Conclusions

Because we are born as living beings, we tend to assume that individuals naturally possess the Organism's Properties in the way they live their lives. Nietzsche, however, regards this as a mistake. From the moment we are born, we belong to a herd that has accumulated the Organism's Properties over a long period of time, and we are expected to perform the role of a part within that whole. From this perspective, religious sanctification serves to encourage individuals to fulfill their roles as parts of the whole and functions as one of the mechanisms that sustain the herd. Religion requires individuals, who are herd animals, to act altruistically. Average people will live without realizing that they themselves may possess the Organism's Properties, and will uncritically strive to achieve the sanctification required by the collective as a function of society.

By contrast, only the healthy individual—the *Übermensch*—can possess the Organism's Properties as a whole. Although these Organism's Properties appear to originate from biological life, Nietzsche understands this as a form of egoism appropriated and distorted by the collective. They are not limited to the herd's instinct for self-preservation but also include its desires, drives, emotions, and other forms of force. Because the Organism's Properties are grounded entirely in the self, anyone who strongly affirms them is likely to be criticized by average people. Nevertheless, Nietzsche states that the Organism's Properties are qualities we must possess as a whole, not as parts, in order to live our lives well as living beings. The healthy individual makes the Organism's Properties his own and employs them for self-regulation and self-formation.

This article has focused on critiquing the sanctification in traditional religion and on showing that the New Sanctification may be understood as the way of the *Übermensch*, an alternative model inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy. For this reason, it has not attempted to develop the concrete forms that such a New Sanctification might take. However, if the healthy individual who achieves this New Sanctification takes on the mode of the *Übermensch*, the foregoing discussion allows us to identify several characteristic attitudes. First, for the sake of one's own life, one cultivates a love of life and enhances the joy of living by drawing upon every possible means. In other words, one continually reflects upon oneself, repeatedly overcomes oneself, and thereby shapes oneself through an ongoing process of self-formation. Second, precisely because of this, one comes to practice a new form of great tolerance toward others by recognizing each person's own way of life and seeking to coexist with it. Third, when confronted with forces or communities that are hostile to one's life, one instead embraces the struggle—even to the point of risking one's life—as a healthy individual. If one were to ask what concrete forms such an attitude might take, they would perhaps include practices such as Foucault's care of the self, various forms of spiritual discipline or meditation, or awakened forms of sanctification found within existing religious traditions. However, exploring these concrete possibilities would considerably broaden the scope of the present article. I therefore leave this task to future research.

The purpose of this article has been to show that Nietzsche's critique of religion does not end with atheism. Rather, it serves as the foundation for a New Sanctification grounded

in human self-formation. Nietzsche declared that the transcendent world established by Western philosophy and by Christianity since Plato was a fiction created by human beings for the preservation of the herd. At the same time, he did not deny the mysterious experiences in human life that cannot easily be expressed in words or the sense of elevation that accompanies them. The *Übermensch* seeks a New Sanctification directed toward the self rather than the sanctification required to preserve a religious community. This pursuit is by no means easy, as Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew: “small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (*Matthew* 7:14). The *Übermensch*, who seeks to exist as a whole, does not hide within the herd but faces the world with nothing but oneself to rely on in pursuit of self-generating sanctification. Even when one’s choices are not always the best, one does not hesitate to return to oneself and to encounter the mysterious experiences through which life expands within the world. And these experiences lead to repeated leaps into the ever-unfolding new world. Facing this world in the way that most affirms one’s own life—that is, passing through the narrow gate in the true sense—is possible only by returning to one’s healthy self.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ KGW V/2, 11[182], pp. 407–10; Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations of Nietzsche are my own, based on the German text in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW) and the Nietzsche Source edition, and checked against two published Korean translations: Nietzsche: The Complete Works (Chaeksasang edition) and the newly translated Korean edition. For the reader’s convenience, the Korean editions are listed in the References in the same order as the corresponding KGW volumes. Because Nietzsche’s works are organized into numbered sections, references are given by work and section, which provide precise bibliographic identification. Page numbers are supplied only for exceptionally long sections.
- ² For convenience, this article refers to “the properties of the organism” as “the Organism’s Properties”.
- ³ Here, “think” refers not merely to rational reflection but also encompasses what Nietzsche understood as drives, affects, and other forces that we ordinarily regard as internal to ourselves (KGW V 2, 11[182], pp. 407–10).
- ⁴ There are, of course, various perspectives on sanctification, including those found in the Wesleyan, Orthodox, and Reformed traditions, as well as the views of theologians such as John Webster, Sarah Coakley, and Jean-Luc Marion, alongside those of many philosophers who have reflected on sanctification. In relation to the discussion above, however, the following two figures may serve as brief points of reference: Kierkegaard, for example, maintained that becoming a genuine Christian does not mean conforming to the crowd but rather becoming a single individual before God (Kierkegaard 2014, pp. 185–7). Likewise, Hauerwas argued that Sanctification does not destroy individuality but is better understood as liberation from distorted desires (Hauerwas 1991, p. 113). Their accounts demonstrate that some philosophers and theologians understand sanctification not as the loss of individuality or a form of religious homogenization, but as a process that preserves and further deepens personal transformation.
- ⁵ We seek a criterion by which to determine whether religious experiences are genuine, yet no clear answer has been reached. Nevertheless, such experiences continue to be accepted because they involve two important elements. First, experiences lead people to recognize their own finitude and to place their trust in God. Second, once they come to recognize and rely on the infinite God, they attain a sense of inner peace. This experience is closely connected with the sacred, and its acceptance can be explained by the non-rational character of religious experience (J. N. Lee 2009, pp. 95–102).
- ⁶ (Abel and Stegmaier 2014, p. 72): Abel argues that Nietzsche’s critique should not be reduced to a merely atheistic critique.
- ⁷ Nietzsche develops the concept of the great health (*große Gesundheit*) most explicitly in *The Gay Science*. Rather than referring simply to physical well-being, it denotes the capacity for continual self-overcoming, the courage to challenge established values in the service of life, and the strength to engage in ongoing experimentation. What is particularly significant for the present study is that the notion of New Sanctification proposed here closely parallels Nietzsche’s conception of health. Both are understood

not as fixed states to be attained once and for all, but as dynamic processes of continual becoming (KGW V 2, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 382).

- 8 KGW V 2, 11[193]; “Part IV, Proposition 22: No virtue can be conceived as prior to this endeavour to preserve one’s own being” (Spinoza [1677] 1990, pp. 228–9).
- 9 “Part IV, Proposition 35: Insofar as men live under the guidance of reason, they necessarily agree in nature” (Spinoza [1677] 1990, pp. 236–44).
- 10 “Whatever promotes the common life of human beings, or allows them to live in harmony with one another, is good. Conversely, whatever brings discord to the state is evil” (Spinoza [1677] 1990, p. 246).
- 11 Put simply, Nietzsche describes “the properties of the organism” as follows: an organism (1) seeks to regulate itself through fear of unfamiliar external threats, hatred toward enemies, and self-restraint; (2) strives to acquire abundant substitutes, such as greed, the desire for conquest, and the will to power; (3) appropriates for its own benefit praise and blame, renders others dependent upon itself, employs disguise and cunning, learns, adapts, commands, and assimilates judgments and experiences. Conversely, (4) because it rejects traits that no longer serve its interests, it seeks to secrete and excrete through such forms as distributing surpluses and showing mercy. (5) By discarding what is no longer necessary, it transforms itself into an organism through its metabolic capacity and progressively acquires the property of such an organism. Finally, (6) it seeks to reproduce itself through forms such as sexual desire and the desire to teach (KGW V 2, 11[182], pp. 407–8).
- 12 KGW V 2, 11[182]; According to Figl, a religious experience attains its full significance only insofar as it is grounded in freedom (Figl 2004, p. 94).
- 13 The following discussion examines the driving force behind sanctification (Jeon 2024, p. 246).
- 14 KGW III 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* 17; Abel maintains that Nietzsche’s religious experience is an existential experience of the individual—a kind of ecstasy that elevates the self (Abel and Stegmaier 2014, p. 76).
- 15 To meet life’s demand for the capacity to think, we must become Übermensch. “The one who never ceases to become Übermensch continually strives to reach the depths of the self and, in every moment, to become fully oneself” (H.-J. Lee 2025, pp. 198–9).

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