

Nietzsche in the kitchen

By [Steven Porter](#)

December 6, 2012

I got hired at a restaurant recently. I've worked food service in the past, but those were all front-of-house positions. This time, they've got me washing dishes.

Now, I knew ahead of time that dishwashing would be among my duties, and the task is relatively simple: get the dishes, clean the dishes, return the dishes to their rightful places. Regardless, the managers had a trainer show me the ropes and then watch as I duplicated the steps, proving I could get my first solo shift.

I was feeling pretty good about my ability to get, clean and return dishes until, about 30 minutes into the shift—after I'd managed to cut the pile of pots and pans in half, while keeping up with the incoming plates, bowls and utensils—she found me.

"You're doing an awful job," my coworker said without a smirk.

I responded with an awkward laugh and a sarcastic, "Oh, thanks."

"No, really—you're doing an awful job," she insisted.

The woman—whom I'd not met prior to that shift—proceeded to commandeer my work station and demonstrate the proper method for washing dishes. Apparently dirtying *two* sinks, as I had been taught, was horribly counterproductive. My peer demanded I spend the rest of my shift using her method, because my trainer taught me the wrong way.

I was furious. But I successfully silenced my snarky tongue and instead mentally reassured myself that she was horribly out of line: *Who does she think she is? She disrespected not only me but also my trainer—if she has a problem with how he taught me, then she should take it up with a manager, not me.*

I hate to admit it, but she ruined my shift. Even after remanding control of the dishwasher (some 45 minutes later), she echoed in my head. Only later did I recognize my frustration as a visceral reminder of a lesson I learned from a friend.

Aaron, a former classmate, [blogged recently](#) about the Christian tendency to pursue a Nietzschean will to power or place of dominance in society, rather than faithfully contributing to our communities, Christian and secular. His post convicted me when I read it, because I'd been decrying the Christian power-seekers around me—while pursuing for myself a place of influence. *You're doing an awful job—let me show you the right way.*

This is not to say that my intentions were unacceptable. Neither were my coworker's, whose dishwashing method was in fact more productive than the way I was taught.

But I have to remember that I'm but a single cell in the complex organism that is God's kingdom—a body that will live and work with or without me. And my tasks and methods won't be identical to everyone else's. So I should be slow to call something wrong when it could just be another way to clean dirty vessels.