AN INTERPRETATION OF NIETZSCHE'S IDEA OF UBERMENSCH

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For a child no one is more precious than his/her parents; hence, I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved amma and abba

Sumona Afroz

And

Md Khalekuzzaman

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is a result of my own efforts. The contributions of other sources and information have been acknowledged wherever they have been used. It has not been previously included in a dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree or other qualification.

Signature

Contents

Abstract

"All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth."

Friedrich Nietzsche (*Daybreak*, 16).

Friedrich Nietzsche is popularly seen as the enigmatic madman of German philosophy. A solitary free thinker who wrote audacious maxims like-"God is dead", "There is no fact only interpretations". We may often laugh at his sayings at first sight but when we carefully reflect on what he is trying to say through his outstanding maxims, essays or prose we are bound to find that it is not us who are laughing at him; but it is he who is actually laughing at us. Whatever it is, western philosophy after Nietzsche is no longer the same. Before Nietzsche, philosophy was a hard enough pill for the average mind to swallow, but after him it has becomes hard for the philosophers themselves. He questions and critiques our traditional understanding of truth, morality, knowledge, power, modernity, justice even the privileged position of questioning philosophy in such a radical way.

One of the most profound ideas that Nietzsche put into the landscape of western philosophy is his idea of the "Ubermensch" which is generally translated into English as 'Over Man'. But what is "Ubermensch"? What is he trying to say by this word "Ubermensch"? Is he trying to say anything or not? All these questions can be examined in a certain manner if we try to understand the relation between 'ubermensch' and 'mensch' (overman and man) which Nietzsche proposes in his famous book "*Thus Spake Zarathrustra*".

"The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth... Man is a rope, tied between beasts and overman—a rope over an abyss". (*Thus*

spake Zarathustra 18). Nietzsche questions the established worldview of mankind. If he had lived long enough (not died in 1900) he probably would have claimed, "God is dead and with the death of God, man is dead too!" But what would he have meant by that?

This paper will look at the relation between the idea of Death of God and the Rise of "Ubermensch" and attempt to interpret the significance of this relationship. What does death mean when Nietzsche uses it so vigorously in his maxims? The paper will attempt to find an answer to such philosophical questions by presenting a brief overview of Nietzsche's philosophy, in his own vocabulary.

In a strictly philosophical language, Nietzsche's philosophy can be categorized in four ways: Ontological, Epistemological, Societal and Psychological. These categories will expand the idea of the "Ubermensch" and the thesis will explore any possibility of links between these categories and Nietzsche's thought. The thesis will be comprised of the following chapters keeping this formal categorization in mind

Chapter 1: Introduction (literature review: establish a background of "Ubermensch" through the eyes of writers, critics etc.)

Chapter 2: Ubermensch: In the light of Nietzsche's doctrine of "Will to Power".

Chapter 3: Ubermensch: Society, state and individual.

Chapter 4: Nihilism & Ubermensch.

Chapter 5: An Ontological look at the idea of Ubermensch

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche's idea of "the overman" (Ubermensch) is one of the most significant concept in his thinking. Even though it is mentioned very briefly only in the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it might be sensible to conceive that Nietzsche had something in his mind about how a man should be more than just human. Nietzsche was basically a philosopher of existence and ideas. All the philosophical questions he raises in his renowned books are basically centred on the basic ontological problem known as "Human Being". He tries to investigate in his books how this idea of "Human Being" varies in different epochs, cultures and societies in western civilization. And in order to do so he did not take the help of any empirical scientific method rather he takes the help of history, literature and philosophy of different eras to have deep psychological and societal understanding of people of different eras. This process of investigation and his different philosophical stand points gave rise to a bunch of whole new ideas. For me the idea of "Ubermensch" is the culmination of all his ideas. Beside this Nietzsche was a highly idiosyncratic thinker. So all the concepts including this idea of "Overman" seems to reveal much about the way Nietzsche saw life himself.

For Nietzsche, the idea of "Ubermensch" was more like a vision than a theory. It surfaced in his consciousness during the memorable summer of 1881 in Sils-Maria (Swiss Alps), born out of an epiphanic experience. It was a timeless moment of ecstasy at the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious, of past and present, of pain and elation. He was going through a personal crisis as he had recently shattered his personal friendship with famous composer Richard Wagner and was deeply haunted by the death of his father, the two most significant

people in all his life . He never fully explained what he meant by "Ubermensch"; He was only intimating it.

"The *Übermensch* shall be the meaning of the earth! I entreat you my brethren, remain true to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of supra-terrestrial hopes! …Behold, I teach you the *Übermensch*: he is this lightning, he is this madness! …Behold, I am a prophet of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud: but this lightning is called *Übermensch*." (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 12).

Nietzsche's reluctance to spell out exactly what he meant has provoked numerous interpretations in the secondary literature. Hollingdale (in *Nietzsche*) saw in "Ubermensch" a man who had organized the chaos within; Kaufmann (*Nietzsche*) a symbol of a man that created his own values, and Carl Jung (*Zarathustra's Seminars*) a new 'God'. For Heidegger it represented humanity that surpassed itself, whilst for the Nazis it became an emblem of the master race. This reluctance to give a single meaning of anything is the essence of his whole philosophy as in his famous book "Daybreak" Nietzsche said"All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth. (*Daybreak*,16.)." So for Nietzsche there can neither be any single truth nor interpretation. So it will be totally contradictory to Nietzsche's philosophy if we try to establish a single interpretation or meaning to this idea of "Ubermensch". All we can do is to look at this idea from different philosophical stand points and methodologies given by him or on which he develops his ideas and try to interpret it from different angles on a momentary base. This might give rise to different ideas which will be equally true in the Nietzschean sense in their own individual cases.

By looking at the different aspects of this idea, the paper will try to reach or create some kind of

uniformity regarding various interpretations of "Ubermensch".

Chapter 2

Ubermensch: In the light of Nietzsche's doctrine of "Will to Power".

To understand Nietzsche's Idea of "Ubermensch" we have to understand Nietzsche's doctrine of "Will to Power". The doctrine of "Will to Power" is the most important doctrine of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche thought that the universe is the manifestation of an underlying force which he called the "Will to Power". "This world is will to power-and nothing besides" he proclaimed in his famous book "Thus Spake Zarathustra". Nietzsche characterized the "Will to power" the basic underlying essence of the universe as insatiable desire to manifest power. The development of this doctrine was highly influenced by two quite different yet similar intellectual traditions of Nietzsche's time. One is scientific evolutionary worldview of biologist Charles Darwin and another is neo-Kantian philosophy of Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. In the year 1859 Charles Darwin published his famous work "*On the Origin of Species*". In this book Charles Darwin elaborates his theory of evolution by means of natural selection. The basis of Darwin's theory is relatively simple. First of all Darwin posited that individuals within a species differ in some degree with all other individuals. Most of these differences are insignificant but some are significant enough to provide the individual organisms with advantages and disadvantages in their struggle for existence. Those individuals with traits which are advantageous to their survival are more likely to reproduce and hence pass on these traces to their offspring. While those who have traits which are disadvantageous typically won't live long enough to pass on their traits . This is Darwin's famous principle which he calls "Natural Selection". Darwin understood "The Natural Selection" is an unplanned and undersigned process. Because of this an organism's fate often lay in chance. Charles Darwin expresses this insight by saying this- "A grain in the balance will determine which individual shall live and

which shall die,-which variety of species shall increase in number, and which shall decrease, or finally become extinct". (On the Origin of Species,72). Darwin posited a natural selection as an un-designed process however he was unsure of whether there might be an overarching goal or purpose to the process of evolution .Whether there is some ultimate end to which all life form is moving toward? - He never makes a clear statement neither affirming nor denying such an idea. Yet there were many supporters of Darwin who were unshakeable in their faith that there is a purpose implicit in the process of evolution. Herbert Spencer is one such individual. He was a prominent advocate of evolution in the 19th century. Spencer coined the well known phrase "Survival of the fittest" and popularized the term evolution. Spencer advocates a system of cosmic progress which included a theory of the inevitable evolution of life towards higher forms. Spencer thought that implicit in evolution there is a goal and all life, moving towards a goal and upon its attainment human beings could become the perfect creatures which he calls the ideally moral man; in other words individuals who were perfectly adapted to both their physical and social environments.[1] Though Nietzsche agreed with the general ideas of evolution he totally disagreed with this line of Darwinian thinking about the nature of evolution. His first disagreement stemmed from Spencer's belief that evolution resulted in the inevitable progress of life. In his book "*The Antichrist*" Nietzsche revealed his dislike for such a view like this- "Mankind surely does *not* represent an evolution toward a better or stronger or higher level, as progress is now understood. This "progress" is merely a modern idea, which is to say, a false idea. The European of today, in his essential worth, falls far below the European of the Renaissance; the process of evolution does not necessarily mean elevation, enhancement, strengthening. (Antichrist, 23).The second idea of Spencer that Nietzsche disagreed with is the

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[1] This information is collected from Dirk R Johson's scholarly piece "Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism". See from page 33-35 to learn more on this aspect

idea that all organisms ultimately strive for self preservation. Spencer believed that the ultimate end of all conduct is the prolongation and increase of life –in other words, the preservation of the individual organism and the species to which it belongs. The idea that all of an organism's behavior and actions are aimed at survival or self preservation has its roots in thinkers before the theory of evolution became popular in the late nineteenth century. Arthur Schopenhauer a philosopher born in the late 18th century and one who greatly influenced Nietzsche thought all things are manifestations of an underlying essence which he calls 'Will'. 'Will' is the idea that all life forms are dominated by a "blind striving for existence without end or aim".[2] All living creatures including human beings he thought are dominated by this irrational desire to remain alive. He calls this desire, the will to live. Nietzsche was vehemently opposed to both Schopenhauerian and Darwinian line of thinking. He rejected the idea that "The will to live" or "Drive to Survive" is the fundamental drive within all organisms. He thought that the drive to remain alive is too cowardly a goal. Instead he believed that an organism's fundamental desire isn't to survive but organisms have an "insatiable desire to manifest power" (The Will to Power, 52).

In his book "*Twilight of the Idols*" Nietzsche calls himself an Anti-Darwin due to his rejection of the idea that organisms seek above all else their perpetuation and prolongation of their existence. In the book *"Beyond Good and Evil"* Nietzsche pin-points the problem that he has with this kind of views. "Physiologists should think twice before positioning the drive for self-preservation as the cardinal drive of an organic being. Above all, a living thing wants to discharge its strength - life itself is will to power -: self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent consequences of this." (Beyond Good and Evil,39). Nietzsche rejected Darwin's version of

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[2] This line is paraphrased from Nietzsche's book "The Gay Science"

evolution because he considered it reactive rather proactive as it presupposes that the essence of a life form is "the will to survive", which means an organism merely reacts and adapts to its environment rather than proactively seeking to dominate its environment therefore is empowering its species. In his own words, "If an organism is threatened, it will defend itself but only because of its death will end its power; if an organism is not threatened it will seek to develop, to advance, to grow, to gain power. It is not greed, it is growth; it is reality. (Beyond Good and Evil, 47) . According to Nietzsche's idea of 'Will to Power' the ultimate thing in all living beings is growth. Nietzsche expresses this idea like this-"It can be shown that every living things does everything it can, not to preserve itself, but to become more." (The Will to Power,31). In another passage of his famous book "*The Will to Power*" he says "To have and want to have more growth, in one word-that is life itself." (The Will to Power,34). To say that as "Will to Power" all things have an insatiable desire to manifest power is to say that they have an insatiable desire for unending growth. Nietzsche saw "Will to power" not only as the essence of life but as the essence of the universe itself as he saw universe as an eternal generating and regenerating entity.(3) If we take this particular Nietzschean line of thought then we can interpret his idea of "Ubermensch" as the idea of a man who aims at to become more than man, aim at to surpass his humanity in order to become something more superior than human beings and thus synchronizes himself to the essence of the Universe. In *"Thus Spoke Zarathrustra"* Nietzsche says "And life confided the secret tome: behold, it said, I am that must always overcome itself." (13) .In order to grow and expand and thus fulfill the fundamental desire of life itself, Nietzsche thought it is first necessary to desire something. An individual who sits around without any care of the world is an individual who will remain stagnant. Nietzsche told us "One must need to be strong-otherwise one will never become strong." (*Twilight of the Idols*, 23) . So he believes that

an individual must set above a lofty goal that he desires to attain it above anything else. As Nietzsche put it "That something is a hundred times more important than the question of whether we feel well or not: basic instinct of all strong natures…in sum, that we have a goal for which one does not hesitate..to risk every danger, to take upon oneself whatever is bad and worst: The great passion." (The Will to power 52). In conclusion we can interpret that by "Ubermensch" Nietzsche may be talking about an individual who voluntarily chooses his or her goal and strives for it with great passion regardless of his background, class, status, gender or other factors which we conventionally consider determinant factors of-a person's growth and improvement and by achieving his desired aim he can prove himself more than a human being and thus synchronize himself with the pure essence of life and universe.

Chapter III:

UBERMENSCH: SOCIETY, STATE AND INDIVIDUAL.

Nietzsche is thought as one of the earliest pioneers of the Process Philosophy. One of the interesting characteristics of Process Philosophy is that it follows an organic model of the Universe in which every event whether it is in the macro or micro level in the universe follows identical processes. So each and every idea proposed by Nietzsche in his famous works is deeply related to each other because it follows the model of a unified organic structure in which parts are identical with the whole. So to have an interpretation of "Ubermensch" we have to look at Nietzsche's ideas regarding society, state and individuals. The previous chapters discussed the idea of "Ubermensch" in relation to Nietzsche's doctrine of "Will to Power" which gives us a cosmological interpretation of the Idea of "Ubermensch". This chapter will deal with the process of a sociopolitical interpretation of "Ubermensch" by exploring this idea in relation to Nietzsche's ideas regarding society, state and individual.

In the book *The Will to Power*, specifically the section entitled "The Will to Power as Society and Individual," Nietzsche's ideas concerning how his doctrine of the "Will to power" is manifested in both society as a whole and in individuals living in it. Before I begin, however, it should prove helpful to explain what Nietzsche's doctrine of 'the will to power' actually is when it is looked from the societal point of view. A psychological presupposition of Nietzsche's is that humans are always attempting to inflict their wills upon others. Every action toward another individual stems from a deep-down desire to bring that person under one's power in one way or another. Whether a person is giving gifts, claiming to be in love with someone, giving someone praise, or physically harming someone, the psychological motive is the same: to exert one's will over others. This presupposition entails that all human beings are ultimately and exclusively

egoistic by nature.[3] So according to Nietzsche, society is just an outward manifestation of our collective "Will to power" where individuals are always competing with each other to get the larger share of whole collective will.

> ". . . --do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for
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> all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed,
>
> strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men?--*This*
>
> *world is the will to power--and nothing besides!* And
>
> you yourselves are also this will to power--and nothing
>
> besides!" (62).

Nietzsche's ideas regarding society go totally against the traditional picture of society which is a kind of a safety net. Traditionally, society is seen as a separate entity from nature. It is thought to be different from nature with its unique laws, rules and regulations which is in direct contrast with nature's law ;which is traditionally portrayed as nasty, brutish, short and cruel. Nietzsche rejected the idea that society is somehow different from nature. According to Nietzsche society is not at all different from nature and the apparent difference that we see between society and nature lies in our subtle human ability to disguise our "Will to Power". So where traditional sociologist see mutual help and communication as the basis of human society Nietzsche sees these things as weapons to expand one's individual power. Mutual help, altruism and communication according to Nietzsche are simply individual "Will to power" covertly in action. Nietzsche writes -

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[3] This information is collected from Nietzsche;s book "Will to Power"

> The whole of 'altruism' reveals itself as the prudence of
> the private man: societies are not 'altruistic' towards one
> another--The commandment to love one's neighbor has
> never yet been extended to include one's actual
> neighbor. (The Will to power, 62)

On this basis, Nietzsche rejects "Social Contract Theory" [4] which was highly popular in his life time. Social contract theory is a highly accepted explanation regarding the origin of societies. Many respected philosophers such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant agree with the theory. It states that groups of people form society by surrendering certain freedom to the authority of a common government in exchange for the protection of remaining freedoms. In the words of Thomas Hobbes-"Desire of ease, sensual delight, fear of death and wounds dispose men to obey a common power" (Leviathan 64). It is important to notice the motivations enumerated by Thomas Hobbes in the formation of society and they are – Pleasure, Comfort and Security. According to Thomas Hobbes and other social contract theorists, a society is formed only when a state is formed. State is important for the formation of a society because only through the formation of society, its members can have the proper regulation and distribution of pleasure, comfort and security among themselves. Nietzsche rejected the idea of the social contract theory for various reasons. First of all, it is in direct contrast to his doctrine of "Will to power". According to

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[4] A highly popular theory in the previous centuries regarding the origin of society and state. The important exponent of this theory are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jaques Rousseau.

Nietzsche's doctrine of "Will to power", there is no such thing as an 'end' in itself which exists in reality. Every living organism in the universe is in the process of 'becoming'. Every existing being in this universe aspires to become more than what it is. Pleasure, comfort and security for Nietzsche are just an after effect felt by human beings when an obstacle is conquered or removed in front of him. So according to Nietzsche society cannot be an end in itself as it is a dynamic phenomena and its constituent human beings are in the process of 'becoming'. So according to Nietzsche society was invented by clever beasts in order to satisfy their "Will to Power" which is to become something more than their present status allows. In another words clever beasts transformed into human beings only after inventing society. So society for clever beasts was just a means to qualitatively improve their power to turn themselves into a higher form of being. That's why for Nietzsche society is responsible for the creation of human beings and it is not an end in itself but it is a means for further development. Nietzsche agreed with Greek philosopher Aristotle when he says- "Those who do not live in a society are either beasts or gods"(Politics 13) .Which in a Nietzschean sense means that in order to be more or less than human being people should invent other forms and patterns of collective existence.

Though Nietzsche sees the universe as a state of change, he rejects the idea of linear progress which was a highly popular and accepted idea in his time. According to Nietzsche progress is a subjective idea and there can be no objective value regarding the idea of progress. According to his philosophy

any system which puts too much emphasis on consistency, uniformity and regularity should be an object of suspicion. Nature does not allow consistency or uniformity; so to talk about anything which is unnatural according to Nietzsche is a betrayal towards life. That is why the western idea of progress is erroneous to Nietzsche because it only focuses on one sided development of a process leaving other inherent contradictions, and point of views behind. Nietzsche not only criticizes western ideas of progress but also criticizes western ideas regarding the formation of the state. Traditionally in western culture the formation of state is seen as a kind of contract among its members for the better regulation of pleasure, comfort and security; and avoidance of injury and death. Nietzsche sees this kind of conception regarding the formation of state as totally wrong because according to him any idea or doctrine which puts more emphasis on sustainability, regularity and uniformity is unnatural and thus wrong. For Nietzsche society cannot be an end in itself so that the state and individuals.[5] Everything in the existing universe functions as the vehicles for the next better things to come into existence. So to Nietzsche the kind of state this social contract theory offers to us is unnatural because this view of state is about uniformity and regularity; thus lacks dynamicity in its model.

Though Nietzsche did not like this social contract criteria regarding state but he could not deny the reality that this dominant view of state was governing the western consciousness of his time. That is why Nietzsche viewed the

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[5] This line is paraphrased from Brian Leiter's article " Nietzsches moral and Political Philosophy".

formation of western states as the formation of decadent states. In his word "The state is where slow universal suicide is called life." (Will to power 91). According to Nietzsche the individuals living in these decadent states and society are decadent individuals. They have no individual will power, no wish, and no desire. All their individual wishes, desires and will powers are suppressed by state for the betterment of their collective existence. Nietzsche says- "It is the purpose of all culture simply to breed a tame and civilized animal, a domestic pet". (Human all to human 28). Nietzsche calls the individuals produced by the modern state the Last Man. He sees this last man as the antithesis of "Ubermensch". This last man has no great aspiration. He merely seeks to earn a living, to be comfortable and to be content. Nietzsche describes the last man like this-

 "We see nothing today which wants to be greater. We suspect that things are constantly still going down, down into something more comfortable, more mediocre, more apathetic. One no longer becomes poor or rich; both are too burdensome. Who still wants to rule? Who still wants to obey? Both are too burdensome. No shepherd and one herd! Everyone wants the same; everyone is equal." (Genealogy of Morals 7).

So in direct contrast with this idea of "The last man" we can say that ""Ubermensch" is the idea of a man who has great aspirations in life. Who wants to be someone greater and does not seek a comfortable life. He is someone who wants to rule, dominate and if necessary disobey. Above all he is someone who has his own individual desire, wish and will power. In a

single sentence "Ubermensch" is someone who has total control over his life

and individual "Will to Power" and is someone who wants to be different

from the crowd.

Chapter 4

Nihilism & Ubermensch

Nietzsche is a philosopher of the extreme. He is a philosopher who grapples with the tricky questions of human subjectivity & psychology. Questions regarding such aspects of the human psyche are often devalued in western philosophic tradition due to a lack of so called objective 'certainty'. Besides being an outstanding philosopher and writer, Nietzsche was one of the most profound psychologists of his time. His genius in psychological insights helps him to ask questions about important philosophical issues in terms of values, sense & psychological states of mind. In this regard we can see Nietzsche as the forerunner of modern psychoanalysis. But this is not the be-all and end-all of Nietzsche's philosophy. Supreme measure of Nietzsche's philosophy lies in the fact that he was the first philosopher in 20$^{\text{th}}$ century who whole heartedly rejected the foundationlist model of practicing philosophy. For two millennia, western thought struggled to find certainty in God, Plato's Ideas, Descartes' Cogito, Kant's categories, Hegel's dialectic or recently Science's Atom and its empirical methodologies. Nietzsche argues that structurally they all are same. All those ideas, doctrines and conceptions presupposedly search for a firm bedrock of truth or a centre. In short, our psychological need for certainty is responsible for the origin of all these ideas, doctrines and formulations. Nietzsche was the first philosopher to acknowledge this fact and the first one to argue from this point of view. He was the first important western philosopher who rejected Descartes' mind-body dichotomy from a totally different point of argumentation and method. That is why Nietzsche is often thought of as the father of postmodern philosophy. From this psychological insight, he asks question about values, ethics, sense, conception of truth and falsity, good and bad. The answer he puts forward not only changed western philosophy but also western thought, once and for all. He argues that

all human endeavors to find certainty, meaning, goal, authenticity, centre, etc. is destined to doom because no such thing as such exists in reality. According to him all these things are the creative aspects of a blind will. According to him there is no such thing as certainty, truth or goal; everything from conception to a framework of ideas are just means of tacit power struggles. This is better described in his own words, "There is no fact, only interpretation." (Nachlass). In the book *The Gay Science* published in 1900, Nietzsche first proclaimed the death of god by saying "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. (The Gay Science, 59)." By proclaiming the death of god, Nietzsche symbolically proclaimed the death of old-hierarchy, structures, binaries, thought patterns, old values and modes of living. In place of certainty and order he embraces uncertainty and chaos as methods of thinking, living and doing things. Thus, he ushers in radical nihilism in western thought. Formulation of nihilism is the most important aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy and for understanding the idea of "Ubermensch". As he says "Nihilism is the condition in which the over man will prosper." (Will to power 128).

The death of God had opened up exhilarating new possibilities for humankind. But it had also created a great despond. Humans could not exist without attributing meaning to their lives. For two millennia that meaning had been derived from an individual's relationship to God. As this relationship between men and God had been ripped apart; little wonder, that Europe felt itself trembling at the edge of a moral chasm. Worse, while God might be dead, his shadow will remain on the walls of caves for thousands of years. Modern moral thought, from Kantian notions of duty to utilitarian ideals of happiness, and contemporary political demands, from the liberal belief in democracy to socialist ideals of equality, were simply reworked forms of

Christian eschatology. It was necessary not simply to kill God, but to conquer his shadow as well. [6]

The roots of the moral malaise of the modern world lay, for Nietzsche, in the triumph of Christianity over the Greeks. In that victory the very idea of morality, and of good and bad, became overturned, or 'transvalued'. To understand how this had come about, it was necessary to understand the history of moral thinking. Nietzsche, like all post-Romantic thinkers, was driven by the idea that the past held the key to the present and to the future.

In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche laid out his history of morality. It is a highly original work in which philosophy, psychology and philology is interwoven in Nietzsche's quest to trace the origins of Western moral thought. In the modern world, Nietzsche observes, we think of 'good' as meaning an act that is altruistic or just, or in Nietzsche's language 'unegoistic', and 'bad' as describing that which is cruel or unjust. It is morally good to protect the weak, give alms to the poor, and treat all people with dignity and respect. It is morally bad to be self-regarding, to be cruel to those with less power, deliberately to harm or injure. These, however, were not the original meanings of good and bad. For the early Greeks, the ones of whom Homer wrote, 'good' and 'bad' referred to different types of humanity. The nobility was 'good', as were the dispositions of character necessary to be noble and aristocratic, dispositions such as courage, strength and pride. 'Bad' referred to the 'herd', and to the characteristics of the masses, such as vulgarity, untruthfulness and cowardice. This was the world of Achilles and Agamemnon, of Hector and Odysseus.

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[6] This line is paraphrased from the book "The Antichrist" page 31

The celebration of nobility Nietzsche calls the 'master morality'. It began, he thinks, to erode within Greek culture itself. In his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche draws a contrast between two aspects of the Greek psyche: the wild irrational passions personified in Dionysus and the disciplined and harmonious beauty represented by Apollo.[7] The triumph of Greek culture was to achieve a synthesis between the two, an argument that echoes Schiller's belief that in Ancient Greece sensuous desire and the capacity for reason existed in harmonious unity. Dionysus is the explosive, ungoverned force of creation, Apollo the power that channels that force into creative wonders. The Greeks were both cruel and creative, brutal and innovative, physically savage and aesthetically sensitive. Abandon the brutality, Nietzsche suggests, and one foregoes the creativity. As the eponymous prophet puts it in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'The highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but that is creative'(65).

One is reminded here of Orson Welles' famous line in Carol Reed's film *The Third Man*. Welles plays Harry Lime, a drug racketeer in postwar Vienna who has made a fortune out of death and misery by stealing penicillin from hospitals, diluting it and selling the adulterated drug on the black market. He is tracked down by his old friend Holly Martins for a confrontation on the Riesenrad, Vienna's giant ferris wheel. Martins is outraged at the immorality of Lime's actions. 'In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed', Lime responds with a smile, 'but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love – they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock." (5)

It is with Socrates, Nietzsche argues, that the rot set in. Socrates was driven neither by Dionysus nor Apollo, but by reason and dialectics. Socratic reason crushes Dionysian passion, enchains it,

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[7] In Greek myth Appollo was the God of harmony, intellect and music ;on the hand Dionysus was the god of wine & passion.

and so leads to the disintegration of Greek art and drama and, eventually, of Greek civilization itself. Reason, for Nietzsche, is superficial. What really drives human beings are passions and instincts. 'Everything good is instinct' he wrote in *Twilight of the Idols*. 'Every error, of whatever type', on the other hand, 'is a result of the degeneration of instinct and vitiation of the will' (97).

Socratic reason began the process by which heroic values were tamed. It is the monotheistic religions which truly replace the aristocratic morality of self-affirmation with the 'slave morality' of envy. In this process the meanings of good and bad become transformed. Nietzsche was of the opinion that it was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = beautiful = happy = beloved of God)'[8], establishing in its place 'the principle that "the wretched alone are the good"' while the powerful and the noble, are, on the contrary, the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity, the unblessed, accursed and damned. With the Jews begins the slave revolt in morality, a revolt which has a history of two thousand years behind it and which we no longer see because it has been victorious.

If the slave revolt began with the Jews, it was left to the Christians to bring it to fruition, by exalting the virtues of the weak, the humble, the poor, and the oppressed. With Christianity, the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' became transmuted into that between 'good' and 'evil', a distinction primarily not between different kinds of characters or different forms, but between divinely sanctioned and divinely forbidden behaviours. Christianity, Nietzsche observes, presupposes that man does not know, cannot know, what is good for him, what is evil; he

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[8] This equation is created from the analysis done by Nietzsche from the book "On the Geneology of morals" part 2 chapter 7 page 39

believes in God, who alone knows it. Any system whether it is religious, philosophical or scientific, which is not aware of its own contradictions, according to Nietzsche is hypocritical. For Nietzsche whether it is god's grace, certainty of reason or laws provided by science are all representatives of certain kind of mentality; a passive slave-like mentality. This is a space where everything is linear, one-sided, pre-determined and certain. There is nothing to fight for, nothing to desire. Blind, undisturbed conformity and obedience are the only things desired by slavish people and society. That is why Nietzsche found that western thought was dominated by fear for the last two millennia; in simple sentence dominated by reason, rationality, certainty and god. But for Nietzsche, life is a chance event and here everything regulative and certain is lifeless and destined to perish. That is why he formulated the theses of Nihilism. For Nietzsche, Nihilism is the supreme moment of crisis. It is a crisis without any equal. Nihilism is ushered in when society loses all its faith in its old values, power structures, ideologies, and ways of reasoning. For Nietzsche this crisis is necessary for the creation of unique individuals and it is an absolute law of nature's will to power. From the beginning of time this 'will' is manifested in different forms. According to Nietzsche, in primitive times when clever beasts were vulnerable against nature and lived more or less isolated lives, it was necessary for them to invent a way of collective existence. In the brute and cruel force of nature, clever beasts had the first experience of crisis. That is why they invented society and by the invention of society, the clever beast eventually transformed into human being. With the invention of society there emerged newer problems and desires which in effect are responsible for the creation of other regulatory processes like religion, politics, philosophy, ethics, government, education, science etc. In primitive times, the important thing for human beings was to survive against nature. They were made successful by the inventions of society and implication of regulatory measures mentioned

above. But, through the passing of each age, nature was no longer able to pose any threat to human society and survival. These were no longer important questions for human beings. But the nature of will is to expand its power and for this reason it needs newer threats, crises and enemies. That is why in history we see the emergence of unique individuals who threatened the establishment of a society with their new ideas, belief systems, war and charisma and created crises of unequal measures. In a society where individuals indulge in rigid conformities, these unique individuals represent nature's chance phenomena. They cannot be defined by logic, rationality or any system of thought. Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Napoleon, Alexander the great, Voltaire, Goethe can be the examples of such a kind of man. These unique men impose threat to establishment; to the social inertia; to boredom. Everything they do cannot be categorized into good and evil. Because they are fresh, new, authentic, pure manifestations of nature's will to power. For Nietzche, these kind of men are worthy of the title of "Ubermensch".

"Ubermench is both the cause and effect of their own violent will. A creator of crisis. A creation of crisis." (Will to power 67).

 So men who are necessary evil for the society, who derive their passion from their own violent will, rare in number, destructive and creative in their own unique way, followers of chaos, both a creature and creation of its own inner crisis is without any doubt Nietzsche's "Ubermensch".

Chapter 5

An Ontological look at the idea of Ubermensch

Nietzsche didn't create any elaborate formal system of thought. He was a skeptic regarding any systematic pursuit of knowledge. Before Nietzsche, philosophers such as Plato, Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer were busy in building grand systems of metaphysics on the assumption that there is a world beyond our sensual existence and it is more eternal and objective than this sensory world. Visible or sensory world is subject to changes that is why knowledge we obtain from our senses is not reliable from the point of view of traditional metaphysics. In traditional metaphysics, knowledge which we gather intellectually, which is abstract, universal, ideal and eternal is the only reliable knowledge there is.[9] This kind of thinking led the traditional western philosophers to formulate two-world theory in metaphysics which is still prevailing in academic philosophy. According to this theory, as human beings there are two worlds available for us. One is the world of senses, the world of existence, diversity, opinion and change; and another is the world of intellect, the world of essence, unity, truth and eternity. Traditionally in metaphysics, the world of intellect is given more priority than the world of senses. The word "metaphysics" means "beyond Physics" which according to Nietzsche is invented only to give special privilege to this world of intellect. For Nietzsche there is only one world available for us and that is the world of the senses. If there is a thing as the world of intellect, this comes after the world of the senses as a subtle invention to satisfy our psychological need for permanence. 'Existence precedes the essence' is the motto of Nietzsche's philosophy. So in Nietzsche's philosophy there is no privileged place for truth, eternity, essence or being. For him opinion, diversity, falsity and contradiction is as much necessary as truth, clarity and unity. That is why

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[9] This line is paraphrased from Nietzsches book "Human All too Human" page 67 ;aphorism 112.

Nietzsche does not have a ontology in its traditional metaphysical sense. But he has a ontology in his own unique way because he has lot to say about the problems hitherto dealt by traditional metaphysics.

In traditional Philosophy, ontology is that branch of metaphysics which studies existence in general. Examples of philosophical, ontological questions could be- what are fundamental parts of the world? , How they are related to each other? Are physical parts more real than immaterial concepts or vice versa?[10] So traditional ontology basically means two things and they are- it is a study which attempts to universalize reality in a single plain; it is a study which concerns itself with the reality of the status of beings. To understand the reality of the world, traditional ontology creates models, theories, grand conceptions, ideals etc. In short, it tries to capture the whole of reality in a single system of thought. Nietzsche argues that to capture the whole of reality in a single grand system of thought is a hopeless dream. Because as human beings, in addition to having two eyes we have perspectives. Attaching a value of truth to only one system of thought by suppressing other points of view according to Nietzsche is a hypocritical thing to do. Western world hitherto followed this practice of suppressing other points of view in the name of truth, god, good and unity. Traditional western ontology is not an exception in this wave. It always privileges self than other, good than bad, being than nothing, creator than creation. The only model that traditional ontology follows is the model of creating a concrete centre; an immovable mover; an uncreated creator. But for Nietzsche this way of practicing philosophy adds nothing but an affirmation of a particular model, an opinion, a methodology. The genius of Nietzsche lies in the fact that he was the first philosopher in western world who treated truth and reality not as given or eternal but as subjected towards our

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[10] This information is collected from Martin Heidegger's famous book "Being and Time"

perspectives, interpretations, psychological states of mind, the methodology we adopt and the way we deal with the world. That is why he famously said "There are no facts only interpretations". (Daybreak 16).

So, we can say that Nietzsche does not understand ontology in its traditional sense which is analytical, logical, dispassionate and colorless. Rather his ontology is colorful, perspective based, creative and interpretive. In fact Nietzsche is often called as the father of western interpretive ontology which is further responsible for the development of western hermeneutics, in the hand of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Hans George Gadamer who are highly influenced by Nietzsche.

To me, grasping for Nietzsche's ontology (theory of what exists) feels a bit like chasing after Jackson Pollock's[11] geometry. Nietzsche didn't create an elaborate, formal system for us to analyze. I'll offer two answers to the natural follow up question: why? The first reason being, Nietzsche has no clear ontology in the sense that Nietzsche didn't prioritize traditional metaphysics. Yes, Nietzsche did frequently touch on traditional metaphysics, including ontology. But we have to remember that Nietzsche addresses traditional metaphysics in his writing only to discuss about his primary concern and that is to expose the ethical in the metaphysical.

"The "true world": a useless idea, and consequently a refuted idea. Let us abolish it".(Twilight of the Idols 13).

The second reason is that Nietzsche has no clear ontology in the sense that he has no single method of epistemology that traditional metaphysics used to have. In fact Nietzsche's epistemology limits knowledge. Nietzsche wrote a lot about perspective, enough that we have

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[11] Jackson Pollock was an famous American painter and a major figure in abstract expressionist movement.

the term perspectivism, and enough that perspectivism is nearly synonymous with the phrase Nietzsche's epistemology. Perspectivism suggests strong limits to the possibility of and/or (depending on your interpretation) the value of an ultimate ontology. Here is Nietzsche's description:

"The only seeing we have is seeing from a perspective; the only knowledge we have is knowledge from a perspective; and the more emotions we allow to be expressed in words concerning something, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to train on the same thing, the more complete our "idea" of this thing, our "objectivity," will be. But to eliminate the will in general, to suspend all our emotions without exception – even if we were capable of that – what would that be? Wouldn't we call that castrating the intellect?" (Genealogy of Morals 12) .

So keeping this perspectivism in mind, questions regarding being's reality or its origin has little value in Nietzsche's ontology. For example if you ask questions about being and in this case questions regarding "Ubermensch" like- "What is Ubermensch?" or "Who is Ubermensch?" or "What Ubermensch likes to eat?" any one type of question necessary won't be given any privileged position in the Nietzschean ontology. It is up to the interpreter to choose his own priority, to choose his own methodology and create his own version of truth through a creative interpretation. According to Nietzsche, truth has many faces. And it is up to individuals to chose or create his own version of truth. For example in ancient and medieval times people tried to extract the meaning of life and existence by creating myths, fables, god and goddess. In modern times in place of myths and fables we have science and its methodologies. In place of god and goddesses we have our own cultural figures. Different times, situations, climates and geographies create different kinds of needs among people. Different needs are responsible for

creating different perspectives in individuals. It is not traceable that exactly what kind of perspective is responsible for the creation of a certain kind of truth, reality and knowledge. But we should question ourselves whether the question of origin or permanence is more important for everyone at the first place. What about the questions regarding "In which process that knowledge is created?', or "what its function?" So, Nietzsche's ontology is a creative endeavor in which the individuals are not the passive receiver of truth but an active creator of their own truth and their own reality and meaning of life.

According to Nietzsche every philosophical doctrine, idea or system is a reflection of a philosopher's own life, his desires, his lifestyle, his attitude towards life. In his words "Philosophy is essentially a philosopher's autobiography" (Human all to Human 25). For example the Idea of "Ubermensch" can be hailed as a representative of Nietzsche's own belief, desire and life style. Nietzsche was a solitary thinker, who valued strength, charisma, aristocratic values, people with determination and free spirit. So in his writings we find "Ubermensch" as a rare individual, charismatic, a free spirit and an individual with an active will. The German word "Ubermensch" consists of two words. One is "Uber" which means "beyond" and another is "mensch" meaning human being. So if we connect the English meaning of these two German words it will mean "Beyond man" or "Over man". Now if we put this idea of "Ubermensch" in Nietzche's own cultural context and try to see from his own point of view we can have an interpretation of "Ubermensch" which will reflect Nietzsche's own personal value, beliefs and ideals. For example Nietzsche does not like the institutionalize form of religion and education of his time. So his "Ubermensch" will be someone who rejects the institutionalized form of religion and education and select his own form of spirituality and method of learning. Then, for Nietzsche "Mensch" are those persons who indulge in all types of cultural and social conformity

such as religion, education, hedonism, family, community etc. And "Ubermensches" are those rare people who will reject all kind of conformity and live their own individualistic lives. This is just one-interpretation of "Ubermensch" with reference to what Nietzsche wrote in his books. But the important aspect of Nietzsche's ontology and philosophy on the whole lies in the fact that Nietzsche does not attach any objective truth value in this one particular kind of interpretation. Nietzsche's ontology allows diversity of opinions, values and interpretations. So when Hollingdale (in Nietzsche) saw Übermensch as man who had organised the chaos within; Kaufmann (Nietzsche) a symbol of a man that created his own values; Carl Jung (Zarathustra's Seminars) a new 'God'; Heidegger(Nietzsche 1&2) humanity that surpassed itself; according to Nietzschean perspective they all are right according to their own different points of view and definitions. So truth or meaning for Nietzsche is a thing to actively create not just a thing to passively receive. Nietzsche claims no special privilege or positions regarding his own interpretation of ideas. Rather he is a philosopher who motivates us to create our own version of truth, meaning and reality.

> "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels? You revere me; but what if your reverence tumbles one day? Beware that a statue does not strike you dead! You say you believe in Zarathustra? But of what importance is Zarathustra? You are my believers: but of what importance are all believers? You had not yet sought yourselves: then you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all faith amounts to so little. Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you." (Thus Spake Zarathrutra 13).

Chapter 6
Conclusion

Nietzsche's philosophy shows us the power and limit of human rationality. For two millennia's western philosophy kept itself busy in the hopeless pursuit of finding objective truth, meaning, form and universality. In Nietzsche's word -"Almost two millennia have passed not a single new god. (Human all too human 31)". Nietzsche's philosophy values creativity before rationality, existence before essence, playfulness before sobriety. Sitting in the threshold between two centuries (19th and 20th century) Nietzsche detected that for two millennia's western civilization was in a state of inertia. Nothing new happened in these two millennia. The only thing prevalent in western society was a subtle repetition of the same older idea, whether religion, historicism, science or art. According to Nietzsche Western civilization takes its degenerating form by its blind pursuit of perfection, unity and rationality. Nietzsche did not see any qualitative change in humanity in these two millennia. All he sees is just extension or regression of the same things in different disguises, nothing beyond it. Nietzsche blames the lack of playfulness in western culture as the reason behind this kind of inertia. Nietzsche's "Ubermensch" can be seen as a symbol of revolt; a counter movement against the sobriety of western culture. "Ubermensch" is the symbol of plurality in meaning, perspective and opinion which western civilization lacked in Nietzsche's time. Beside this it can also be seen as the prophesy of all coming men who will go beyond human rationality and qualitatively change themselves into a new being in a creative and playful manner. The most important aspect of Ubermench and Nietzsche's other philosophical ideas as a whole is the fact that they are open to new possibilities, synthesis, logic and extension. Nietzsche's philosophy values the subjective aspect of interpreting ideas. It gives the freedom to create one's own meaning and values regarding ideas.

This paper is written in the Nietzschean spirit to reflect his idea that there cannot be any single meaning or interpretation of life. So, there cannot be any single interpretation of the concept of the 'Ubermensch'. This paper is written to show how our attempt to create ideal meanings or values of everything is subject to doom and failure. Ubermensch is an entity, a symbol, an idea, a prophesy, a vision all at the same time. All one can say is the fact that there cannot be any single fact but variety of interpretations. This paper is also an attempt to support the Delezuian[12] doctrine of pure immanence which says that plurality implies singularity or vice versa. The meaning of "Ubermensch" is one and many at the same time. I begin with a vision to reach at a single, final interpretation of the idea of "Ubermensch" but end with many interpretations of the same idea. But this is the point that Nietzsche tried to establish in his philosophy. Singularity and plurality is complementary to each other. Reality has many layers and dimensions. One just cannot separate the single from many and this paper is the very example of this idea. It is a failure in a sense that it cannot stick to its real vision which was to create a single interpretation for "Ubermensch". But is a success in the sense that it proves that Nietzsche and Nietzsche's philosophy is right. It proves that interpretations are interlinked so there cannot be any one creation. It proves that any attempt which requires consistency is subject to doom as it is not natural. So by being a failure, this paper shows how Nietzsche was right in his vision and this for me is the ultimate success of this paper.

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[12] French Philosopher Gilles Deleuze .One of the original interpretor of Nietzschean thoughts.

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