

TRANSLATING NIETZSCHE'S *ÜBERMENSCH*

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to give a clear and concise characterization of Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*. Although this figure appears almost exclusively within the pages of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, what the *Übermensch* represents can be seen throughout Nietzsche's published writings. And yet, an accurate and textually faithful account of the *Übermensch* is nearly impossible to find amongst Nietzschean scholarship. Though we shall examine certain requirements such as self-examination, independence, and the Death of God, this thesis will focus on the attributes of creativity, courage, and the necessity of a contesting spirit in the cultivation of the *Übermensch*.

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INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) concept of the *Übermensch*, like much of his philosophy, seems to have eluded scholars and critics alike, and a concise characterization of this figure which remains consistent with textual evidence is difficult to discover. In a paper written in 1986, Bernd Magnus suggests: "anyone who has read very much Nietzsche commentary is surely struck by the failure of any semblance of agreement about what Nietzsche's philosophy is, whether he really had one, whether he intended to have one, and if so in what sense."¹ This statement still holds true today. It is interesting to note that the thinker himself prophetically proclaimed that his work would be misunderstood by many. He asks readers: "do you understand me, my brothers?" (GS 2), and speaks of being "born posthumously" (A "Preface"). A quick overview of the shockingly slim scholarship available on the *Übermensch* provides one with, as Magnus suggests, a plethora of contradictory opinions rather than a concise character sketch, or a clear picture of what Nietzsche thought human greatness consists of. We can see problems arise from the very beginning, as translators have even been at odds on how the term "*Übermensch*" should be rendered in English. While some choose "overman" as an appropriate translation,² others opt for "superman."³ Still others have decided to leave the term untranslated.⁴ For the purposes of our investigation, it seems only fitting to leave the term as it appears in Nietzsche's original texts, as "*Übermensch*." As noted, both renderings — "overman" and "superman" — seem to complicate interpretations with negative connotations, so let us avoid these. A brief examination of texts Nietzsche had published during his lifetime demonstrates the clarity of the *Übermensch* theory and the uniformity of his thought as a whole. As this thesis shall demonstrate, the philosopher repeatedly returns to attributes such as creativity and courage, while demanding an environment which embraces aspects of the contest, developing a definitive

¹Bernd Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888," Journal of the History of Philosophy 34: 1 (1986), p. 79.

²For example, Kaufmann argues that the term "superman" is misleading, and the term "overman" would be closer associated to Zarathustra's concept of "overcoming," Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 308-309.

³Bruce Detwiller makes the case that "superman" is a more fitting term than "overman" or *Übermensch*, as they carry much negative historic baggage, relating Nietzsche's philosophy to the German National-Socialist Party. Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 48-49.

⁴For example see Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888," or Daniel W. Conway's Nietzsche and the Political (London: Routledge, 1997).

methodology toward human greatness.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, the late nineteenth century German thinker speaks of the “philosophers of the future,” the “free spirits,” who have “opened their eyes and conscience to the question where and how the plant ‘man’ has so far grown most vigorously to a height” (BGE 44). Nietzsche can be considered among these “free spirits,” as his philosophy focuses on human greatness and how it is achieved. The concept of authenticity in Nietzsche’s work represents a “new way of life, *not* a new faith” (A 33). His project is one in which the individual is championed for uniqueness rather than conformity to a pre-established criterion. He repeatedly condemns systems of morality unable to provide a framework for developing great, authentic human beings. In turn, we can see him offering a clear and concise model for authenticity. Karl Jaspers proposes: “*Nietzsche attacks morality in every contemporary form* in which he finds it, not in order to remove men’s chains, but rather to force men, under a heavier burden, to attain to a higher rank. He becomes aware that the *value* of morality poses a significant problem.”⁵ This can be most clearly seen in his metaphor of the *Übermensch*. Although primarily developed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the *Übermensch* is representative of his entire thought and at the center of his theory of greatness. With this figure he states explicitly the conditions necessary for a “higher humanity.” His philosophy in general and the concept of the *Übermensch* in particular can be seen as providing groundwork for a unique way of existence which proclaims to offer the cultivation of the highest type of beings. From his earliest writings to his latest composed text prior to his mental collapse, Nietzsche was interested in this project of human greatness; his thought is described by one scholar “as a means: ‘a mere instrument’ to entice us to form our authenticity.”⁶ Simon May notes that “the positive ‘ethic’ that is advanced in place of morality is denoted by life-enhancement.”⁷ As we shall see, the notions of life-enhancement and the search for authenticity are crucial to the meaning of his metaphor of the *Übermensch*.

Recent scholarship examining Nietzsche’s thought in relation to political philosophy have paid the symbol of the *Übermensch* particular attention. Daniel Conway, though believing the teaching of the *Übermensch* to be flawed,⁸ does see Nietzsche as advocating a political

⁵Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Southbend, Indiana: Regnery/Gateway, 1965), p. 140.

⁶Jacob Golomb, “Nietzsche on Authenticity,” *Philosophy Today* 34:3 (Fall 1990), p. 247.

⁷Simon May, *Nietzsche’s Ethics and his War on ‘Morality’* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 107.

⁸Daniel W. Conway, “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 20:3 (October 1989).

perfectionism which the symbol of the *Übermensch* embodies.⁹ Bruce Detwiller also links the *Übermensch* concept to an overall political theory of human enhancement.¹⁰ However, many of these readings prove inconsistent with the project his philosophy seems to be working towards. Some contend Nietzsche held violence as “intrinsic to the social and political world, and that it could not be removed.” It has also been claimed that Nietzsche considered slavery necessary for creating the “potential for sovereign individuals.”¹¹ This sentiment is shared by Keith Ansell-Pearson, who claims Nietzsche’s philosophy calls for a “new enslavement . . . through force and violence.”¹² Others have even suggested “Nietzsche’s failure to establish necessary and sufficient conditions of human greatness.”¹³ As shall become clear, that is certainly not the case.

Nietzsche considered humanity to be an “*as yet undetermined animal*” (BGE 62), and Zarathustra speaks of the necessity to “overcome” one’s self on the way towards the *Übermensch*. He recognized that the possibility for great achievement exists in humankind. Providing us with an important historical context and possible psychological sketch, Rudolf Steiner suggests, in his 1895 work, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fighter for Freedom:

The aftermath of the German victory in the War of 1870 was the eruption of a nationalistic spirit which had been gathering since the previous successes of 1864 and 1866. Nietzsche felt that this was the time to issue a fiery call to the intellectuals of Germany to abandon what he considered a highly dangerous and unworthy chauvinistic spirit, and to return to their work in the service of true German culture.¹⁴

Nietzsche criticizes morality’s inability to provide the conditions necessary for an authentic, healthy existence. Contrary to Conway’s charge, if we examine his texts closely, a very interesting method is revealed. Though the *Übermensch* appears as a teaching of Zarathustra,

⁹Conway, Nietzsche and the Political, p. 20.

¹⁰Detwiller, pp. 44-45.

¹¹Mark Warren, Nietzsche and Political Thought (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 36; p. 178.

¹²Keith Ansell-Pearson, An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 41-42.

¹³Conway, “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” p. 212.

¹⁴Rudolf Steiner, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fighter for Freedom, trans. Margaret Ingram deRis (Englewood, California: Ruldolf Steiner Publications, 1960), p. 20. It may be interesting to note, at least in passing, that Steiner describes his own text as an attempt at clarifying the “caricature” of the “superman” offered by Lou Salome in her book on Nietzsche, p. 40.

what it symbolizes transcends this particular text and can be seen as present throughout the philosopher's work.

As there has been enough evidence to suggest uncertainty of authorship pertaining to the posthumously published *The Will to Power* and certain unpublished notes,¹⁵ we shall restrict our research to texts Nietzsche published during his lifetime. By briefly examining selected works written at various periods in his lifetime, it becomes quite clear how Nietzsche believed humanity's potential greatness could be cultivated. Turning away from moralities based on a universal code of behavior, he instead calls for individual exploration of the self, relative to one's environment, in the hope of producing unique and original beings. This can only be achieved through the creation of new values. The path towards authenticity (human greatness) can only be met through personal examination of one's own strengths and weakness, therefore a universally applicable version of the *Übermensch* (or strict methodology towards greatness) is impossible. As has been noted: "It is of the first importance that the *Übermensch*'s ideal should represent a *process* as inherently valuable, rather than a product."¹⁶ Still, we are provided with enough evidence to get a clear picture of how this process towards authenticity is to take place. Though we see him repeatedly refer to elements which must precede authenticity (such as the death of God and turning away from the mob), this thesis focuses on three attributes in particular: creativity, courage, and a contesting spirit, which can be seen throughout his philosophy as elements he considered necessary for the cultivation of a healthy existence.

Nietzsche suggests that "in man *creature* and *creator* are united" (BGE 225). Unfortunately, as he repeatedly reminds us, our ability to create our own values for our existence is often over-shadowed by dogmatic philosophy, religion, and the mob mentality which dominates society. Zarathustra states: "Only man placed values in things to preserve himself — he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself 'man,' which means: the esteemer" (Z I, "On the Thousand and One Goals"). The virtue of creativity Nietzsche held highest, as he considered it our defining feature as a species. Throughout his texts he reveres the artists and their role in the overall development of humanity towards health (see, for example, GS 78). One must live like the artist, the brave explorer of the unknown, cultivating a personal uniqueness. But, in order for one to break past values and create new ones, one must also be courageous (or "hard").

Courage is a necessity for Nietzsche's vision of the *Übermensch*, a prerequisite for creativity and cultivation of authenticity. His philosophy of overcoming demands the greatest strength. For a reevaluation of values one must call everything into question (leaping into the

¹⁵A case well documented by many scholars, but a fact often ignored. For an overview of the problems surrounding *The Will to Power* and Nietzsche's unpublished notes, see Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888."

¹⁶David Owen and Aaron Ridley, "Dramatis Personae: Nietzsche, Culture, and Human Types," *Why Nietzsche Still?*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 152.

experiment of life), living dangerously until eventually one has the power to become one's own legislator of values and create a code of ethics for oneself. His concept of greatness centers on self-sufficient and unique existence. He later writes: "Every attainment, every step forward in knowledge, *follows* from courage, from hardness against oneself" (EH "How One Becomes What One Is," 3). In a passage from The Gay Science entitled "*The Ultimate Noble-mindedness*," he reflects on the passion which exudes from the noble (a passion close to madness): "the discovery of values for which no scales have been invented yet; offering sacrifices on altars that are dedicated to an unknown god; a courage without any desire for honors; a self-sufficiency that overflows and gives to men and things" (GS, 55).

Finally, the role of the contest is essential to the concept of the *Übermensch*. He writes: "Some people need open enemies if they are to rise to the level of their own virtue, virility, and cheerfulness" (GS 169). His praise of war is often misinterpreted as something negative. As one critic points out, quite rightly: "The impulse to distinguish oneself, to prove oneself the best of all, lies at the heart of action's tremendous individualizing power."¹⁷ In an early unpublished fragment, he praises the Ancient Greeks for their "flame of ambition" (HC, p. 35). The model his philosophy presents suggests that greatness (and creativity) flourishes under strife and difficult conditions. Pressures often increase performance ability.

In this thesis, as we examine texts written and published throughout Nietzsche's productive life, it becomes quite clear that, contrary to some suggestions, he does provide us with a distinct portrait of the conditions necessary for the creation of the *Übermensch*, or producing a higher humanity. Again, we shall see that his concept of greatness represents nothing violent or aristocratic. He champions human individuality and difference, claiming that if we have the courage to strive for the discovery of our own weaknesses, and the ability to create values for ourselves, we produce the conditions for the achievement of greatness.

¹⁷Dana R. Villa, "Democratizing the *Agon*," Why Nietzsche Still?, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 232.

Chapter 1: Early Traces of the *Übermensch*

Nietzsche translator and scholar Walter Kaufmann suggests that the roots of the *Übermensch* can be found in the works of American author Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). Kaufmann writes: “Emerson’s coinage ‘The Over-soul’ (the title of one of the essays) surely influenced Nietzsche’s choice of the term *Übermensch*.”¹⁸ Anyone familiar with Nietzsche’s writings is aware that Emerson is one of the very few individuals of whom he speaks fondly.¹⁹ Again we are told by Kaufmann: “Emerson was one of Nietzsche’s great loves ever since he read him as a schoolboy . . . He not only *read* him but also copied dozens of passages into notebooks and wrote extensively on the margins and flyleaves of his copy of the *Essays*.”²⁰ Conway also notes a relation between Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* and Emerson’s “representative men.” He writes:

By virtue of their embodied practices, representative men “remind” some others of the soul’s natural (if ultimately futile) aspirations to transcendence. Representative men straddle the intersection of the human and the divine, of the temporal and the eternal, and they represent to some others the “forgotten” perfections attainable by all human beings.²¹

Although there seems to be substantial evidence to suggest that there existed *some* relationship between Emerson and Nietzsche, perhaps even an affinity amongst ideas, an examination of that relation and speculations on possible causes of inspiration (which would forever remain questionable) must be left for another place and time. If we are to find some coherent meaning in the concept of the *Übermensch*, it seems necessary to restrict ourselves to Nietzsche’s own published texts for answers, and it also seems only fitting that we commence chronologically, looking first to texts published prior to *Zarathustra*.

Two works of note which not only help in our project of clarification but also demonstrate that the concern of human greatness occupied Nietzsche from an early age are the essay “Schopenhauer as Educator” and the book *The Gay Science*. “Schopenhauer as Educator,” originally appearing in 1874 as one in a series of *Untimely Meditations*, was published near the

¹⁸Walter Kaufmann, Translator’s Introduction, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 11.

¹⁹For example, Nietzsche calls Emerson a “master of prose” (GS 92).

²⁰Kaufmann, Translator’s Introduction, *The Gay Science*, p. 7.

²¹Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, p. 25.

beginning of his philosophical career. The Gay Science comes almost a decade later — the first edition published in 1882 — mere months before the composition of the first two parts of Zarathustra. In both of these texts Nietzsche can be seen laying the groundwork for what becomes Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch* and outlining specific characteristics of life-enhancement.

Upon reading "Schopenhauer as Educator," one may find strange the role that German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) actually has to play in this essay bearing his name. Oddly, it is not his philosophy as such that is being discussed or celebrated but rather Schopenhauer himself — his personal greatness and what his life can teach us about the necessary conditions for our own possible authenticity. This early essay is an effort to showcase Schopenhauer as an *example*, as a "teacher and taskmaster" (SE 1), and to demonstrate "the conditions under which . . . philosophical genius can at least come into being in our times" (SE 8). The ability for a philosopher to set an example, to create a philosophy that can actually be lived and practiced, is of highest importance (SE 3). Nietzsche believed Schopenhauer to be one of these rare individuals who demonstrated human greatness. With courage and creativity, Schopenhauer put himself into a continued contest with society, morality and religion, creating his own authentic self with values of his own accord. As has been pointed out by Higgins and Solomon, this essay "presents Schopenhauer explicitly as the kind of educator that might inspire others to overcome their sense of ineffectualness in the face of history and to aspire to greatness on their own terms."²² Nietzsche's concern in this essay is the authentic self (which is a created self) and the conditions which make this greatness possible, which, as we shall see, is the very project that the *Übermensch* symbolizes.

"Schopenhauer as Educator" opens with a grand attempt to diagnose the symptoms in humanity causing the project of human greatness to falter. He writes:

When a traveler who had seen many lands and nations and several continents was asked what characteristics he discovered to be common to all of humanity, he replied: "They have a tendency toward laziness" . . . He is right: human beings are lazier than they are fearful, and what they fear most are those hardships that unconditional honesty and nakedness would foist upon them. (SE 1)

Whether Nietzsche recognized this or not, similar findings had been discovered and published by fellow German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in the previous century. In Kant's essay "What is Enlightenment?" — originally appearing in 1784 — he suggests the same characteristics as the hindrances keeping humanity from achieving "enlightenment." "Laziness and cowardice" are the reasons that Kant provides as to why so many cannot and do not achieve this desired state of existence. Further, he states that courage is a necessity of enlightenment, a virtue also emphasized in Nietzsche's philosophy. Kant goes so far as to suggest a motto for the

²²Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, What Nietzsche Really Said (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), p. 70.

enlightenment movement: “*Sapere aude!* ‘Have courage to use to your own reason!’”²³ Now, although it may be said that Kant’s definition of enlightenment — “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage”²⁴ — differs drastically from Nietzsche’s project of self-enhancement, it is interesting enough to note that both champion courage as a necessary condition of greatness.

Both Kant and Nietzsche seem to be suggesting that all humanity has the possibility for achieving the desired end, but it is the hardness of conditions necessary for that greatness that the majority of people seem to refuse. We are too lazy and fearful to accept Nietzsche’s project of cultivating and creating the authentic self (or Kant’s notion of enlightenment). It is clear that Nietzsche considered humanity to be capable of wondrous achievements even though he viewed this potential as being actualized by few. He later writes that: “all of us harbor concealed gardens and plantings; and, to use another metaphor, we are, all of us, growing volcanoes that approach the hour of their eruption” (GS 9). He recognized that within all of us is an individual uniqueness that, if cultivated properly (or given proper conditions), could produce greatness. We have an undiscovered potential to perform grand creative acts, so our existence and our ethics must recognize and reflect this. But it does not. The project of deconstructing moral systems (such as utilitarianism and Christian ethics, which appeal to a universal or common good), exposing their tendency towards nihilism was one which involved Nietzsche throughout his entire career. He saw the possibility of authenticity (human greatness) being wasted away in the perpetual manifestation of mob mentality and nihilistic tendencies.

Reminiscent of Kant’s demand for us to abandon “tutelage” in order to achieve enlightenment, in “Schopenhauer as Educator” Nietzsche speaks of the need to cultivate a self liberated from the “pseudo-human beings” (SE 1) created by society. Already here we have hints as to what he considered the authentic self to be. Steiner speaks of Nietzsche’s emphasis on “the sovereign *individuum*,” as one cultivates one’s own virtue, rather than appealing to any higher source.²⁵ The authentic self rises above or goes against the grain of society, refusing to accept authority unquestioningly, and creatively determines his or her own values. This notion that the authentic self is something other than the ‘self’ created by society plays a major role in the whole of Nietzsche’s philosophy and especially in terms of fleshing out the meaning of the *Übermensch*. Here our attention is being drawn to the importance of these higher individuals who, like Schopenhauer, make an attempt to create their own value and give meaning to their own existence, discovering the conditions of their own health, apart from the herd. Here is a philosophy of existence, an ethic of self-creation, that praises the acts of the creator rather than attempting to set up a common or universal table of values or predetermined code of behavior for

²³Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?,” trans. Lewis White Beck, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment? (Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1959), p. 85.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Steiner, p. 68.

humanity as a whole.

That we can freely create value for our own existence and work towards self-perfection is unquestionable for Nietzsche. The task of creating values is proclaimed as central for his “free spirit” (BGE 211). We can see this act of giving objects and actions value (a new “order of rank”) and the establishment of new ethical perspectives demonstrated by artists, philosophers, and other choice human beings throughout history. The act of giving value is a uniquely human activity (Z I, “On the Thousand and One Goals”). We *are* the authors of our own activities therefore Nietzsche stresses responsibility (see, for example, BGE 212). We are the beings who are bestowing these objects and acts with certain meaning and significance. He writes: “We are accountable to ourselves for our own existence; consequently, we also want to be the real helmsmen of our existence and keep it from resembling mindless coincidence. We have to approach existence with a certain boldness and willingness to take risks” (SE 1). We cannot unquestionably accept values prescribed by society, religion and morality, or adopt a universal code of conduct if our intent is to achieve authenticity. One familiar with Kantian morality can see how Nietzsche’s project of self-enhancement differs drastically. Nietzsche writes: “there are a hundred ways in which you can listen to your conscience. But that you take this or that judgement for the voice of conscience — in other words, that you feel something to be right — may be due to the fact that you have accepted blindly that what you had been *told* ever since your childhood was right” (GS 335). He demonstrates throughout his writings that the consequences of adopting particular moralities — especially the dominance of Christian ethics — has had lingering negative effects on society and impeded the achievement of authenticity. Religion and popular ethical theories have been promoted and preached by the many without their having questioned the possibility of these concepts’ contributing contribution to the production of great human beings.

According to Nietzsche, it is the artists, the seekers and explorers, the philosophers of the future who expose human uniqueness and uncover new paths and new ways. These educators, he tells us, “can be nothing other than your liberators. And that is the secret to all cultivation” (SE 1). It is through these figures that we are able to recognize the possibility of our own freedom and are inspired to cultivate our own uniqueness. With the help of these teachers we are shown potential routes to greatness or ways which we may improve our own existence. As Jacob Golomb writes:

We have the liberty to shape our identity and ideals by freely choosing our educators and exemplars . . . This freedom makes us responsible for our character just as artists are responsible for their creations, and the path to this creation of an authentic self leads through one’s educators. In other words, by subjecting our intuitive admiration for exemplary figures to intensive self-analysis we come to realize what we value genuinely and who we really are. Only then is the route to re-creation, namely to authenticity, in principle opened to us.²⁶

²⁶Golomb, p. 246.

Nietzsche writes: “only artists . . . have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself, experiences himself, desires himself; only they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters” (GS 78). It cannot be stressed enough that the role Nietzsche wants to celebrate is the human being as *the* creator and bestower of value. We must turn our attention to the artists who celebrate the experimental, who set sail for uncharted horizons and create their own table of values, discovering their personal strength(s), so we ourselves can be inspired and attempt to educate ourselves towards possible greatness.

It is important to note as well that we take these artists and creators only as *examples*, not models to be imitated or idols to be worshiped. This notion of cultivating one's own path to the creation of greatness will be taken up in more detail when we discuss Thus Spoke Zarathustra and the teachings of the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche claims that we need to give gratitude to the artists for uncovering “what each man *is* himself . . . they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters,” whereas religion can be seen as focusing on the human as “immortal criminal” (GS 78). To be authentic is to discover one's own path of right and wrong, rather than morally judging actions as good or evil based on some pre-existing dichotomy. Morality, according to Nietzsche, can be an instrument of control which prevents us from having our own ideals. He draws our attention to the importance of “a *plurality of norms*” — rather than attempting to make a single interpretation of existence a rule or law for all — in the “invention of gods, heroes and overmen of all kinds” (GS 143).

And yet we tend not to turn to the artists for our ethical example, but to religion and universalizing moralities which will, as Nietzsche's philosophy is an attempt to prove, ultimately lead us only into decay and nihilism. We cower from the “hardness,” the courage to create our own existence (SE 1). It is far easier to accept our upbringing or cling to an established moral code or religion than to attempt to discover one's own good and evil. In fact, Nietzsche states, that is how most of us live: without giving thought to purpose, or working to create an authentic self. He writes:

Usually we do not transcend animality, we ourselves are those creatures who seem to suffer senselessly . . . but there are moments *when we understand this*; then the clouds break and we perceive how we, along with all of nature, are pressing onward toward the human being as toward something that stands high above us . . . All of us know in individual moments how the most extensive arrangements of our own lives are made only in order to flee from our true task . . . how even in our daily work we slave away without reflection and more ardently than is necessary not to stop and reflect. Haste is universal because everyone is fleeing from himself; universal, too, is the timid concealment of this haste, because we want to appear satisfied . . . What is it that assails us so often, what mosquito is this that refuses to let us sleep? Ghostly things are occurring around us, every moment of life wants to tell us something, but we do not want to hear this ghostly voice. When we are quiet and alone we are afraid that something will be whispered into our ear, and hence we despise quiet and drug ourselves with

sociability. (SE 5)

Again Nietzsche considers the authentic as the individual opposed to (or beyond) the herd morality that populates society and intends to impose its views upon the individual. It is interesting to note that fellow German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) adheres to a similar notion of authenticity, marked by the individual who opposes a publicly-imposed identity.²⁷

In the above quote from Nietzsche we can see him again stress that there is the possibility of greatness within all of us (or rather “high above” all of us, foreshadowing images later evoked in *Zarathustra*), realized only by “those true *human beings*, those *no-longer-animals*, the *philosophers*, *artists*, and *saints*” (SE 5) like Schopenhauer, who are strong and courageous enough to discover and create themselves. These “true *human beings*” demonstrate other possible ways of existing in their self-creation, setting new goals and create new values instead of adopting a pre-established table of values. Nietzsche seems to be suggesting an ethics of openness or perspectivism where we are free to observe, learn, experiment and come to our own conclusions concerning our actions. One interpreter writes: “The strong person seeks his life’s task in working out his creative *self*. This *self-seeking* differentiates him from the weak person who, in the *selfless* surrender to that which he calls ‘good,’ sees morality.”²⁸ However, the problem remains that so few are striving for this project of self-creation. Nietzsche sees this as a grave mistake and claims it to be the duty of humanity (philosophy and politics alike) to work towards the production of these great humans. He here writes: “This is the fundamental idea of *culture*, insofar as it is capable of charging each of us with one single task: *to foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints within us and around us, and thereby to work towards the perfection of nature*” (SE 5). As one critic has noted, “Nietzsche is saying, in opposition to the dominant tradition in Western political philosophy, that society should be dedicated to the promotion of the highest type rather than the universal good or the common good.”²⁹

Nietzsche speaks of the importance of individuals “setting a new goal for themselves” (SE 6), a demand we see present in Zarathustra’s teachings. Steiner suggests: “Already at the time when he wrote his Schopenhauer book, he saw in his conception of the superman, the fundamental idea of *culture*.”³⁰ The *Übermensch* is a metaphor meant to inspire people to become higher human beings. Scholar Rudiger Sanfranski concurs that the theme of “self-

²⁷See Heidegger’s discussions of authenticity and “*Das Man*” in *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1962).

²⁸Steiner, p. 101.

²⁹Detwiler, p. 101.

³⁰Steiner, p. 137.

configuration and self-enhancement” is present throughout Nietzsche’s thinking.³¹ The goal or purpose of existence suggested by Schopenhauer and adopted by Nietzsche is that humanity “must search out and produce those favorable conditions in which those great, redeeming human beings can come into being” (SE 6). We must not merely preserve ourselves, but must work towards our perfection. The self needs this outer communication with and education from these teachers in order to create or discover the conditions for the possibility of greatness. Perhaps there exists an inherent desire towards self-enhancement. If so, it would be, as G.B. Madison writes:

the desire *d’un plus etre*, not just self-preservation but self-enhancement. The self, which desires to be itself, desires to *become* itself, to realize what it imaginatively can be, to realize its ownmost possibilities of being. And this means: The self, which desires of other selves, those selves which are other selves, to be sure, but also those other selves which are itself. It is only through that conversation that we are constantly pursuing and constantly desiring with other selves that we can become the self we desire to be and can be who we are.³²

Nietzsche writes in a later text: “every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority” (BGE 26), and we will see shortly the importance of the notion of self-overcoming suggested in Zarathustra. To use Madison’s metaphor, Nietzsche discovers that the conversation humanity has been having with popular religion and morality is quite one-sided. Upon examination, it appears that the code of ethics implied by these different philosophies of existence which have been adopted by the many actually work against our preservation (we shall see how when we turn our attention to The Gay Science).

As noted, it is Schopenhauer’s own historical development that Nietzsche uses as an example of greatness. He summarizes the characteristics of Schopenhauer that demonstrate great health:

Free manliness of character; early knowledge of human nature; no scholarly education; freedom from narrowness of patriotism; exemption from the need to be a breadwinner; no ties with the state — in short, freedom and nothing but freedom, the same wonderful and dangerous element in which the Greek philosophers flourished. (SE 8)

³¹Rudiger Safranski, Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography, trans. Shelley French (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 259.

³²G.B. Madison, “Hermeneutics of (Inter)Subjectivity,” The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 166.

Schopenhauer had the hardiness, the courage, the “unbending and rugged manliness”(SE 7) to overcome his own age and become a great, original thinker. He lived dangerously — a concept whose importance we shall examine further in connection with GS 283 — as he created his own laws for himself, opposing the tyranny of state, religion and public opinion over private cultivation of genius (SE 3). Nietzsche admired Schopenhauer’s independence of thought and believed that he created a new “image of the human being” (SE 4), giving humanity a new purpose, setting us a new goal: to work towards the cultivation of our own greatness.³³ The Schopenhauerian human being recognizes that the purpose of culture is to work towards the production of “the superior individual specimen, the more unusual, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful specimen” (SE 6).

Safranski concurs that the theme of “self-configuration and self-enhancement” is one that can be seen at all stages in Nietzsche’s writings.³⁴ Speculating upon this notion of finding the authentic self through the help of another — or “model” — Safranski writes that a “soul that is determined and encouraged will discover a positive direction. Each model functions as an encouragement to itself. Guided by these models, we need to reach beyond ourselves to realize our full potential.”³⁵ Again we see the important role of the educator in the achievement of authenticity and project of self-creation. Safranski’s detailed biographical research shows that the notion of “the will to life enhancement” is one that interested this thinker from quite an early age, prior even to his first published philosophic works. In 1862, a teenaged Nietzsche penned the essay “Fate and History” which, we are told, “centered on the question of how our view of the world might change if there were no God . . . God was the essence of meaning and goals; if this essence vanishes, meaning and goals in nature and history fade accordingly.”³⁶ We can see that the project the *Übermensch* — call it, as Safranski does, “the will to life enhancement” — occupied Nietzsche’s mind from his earliest writings. We shall also shortly see the important role the notion of the disappearance (or death) of God plays in the development of Zarathustra’s *Übermensch*.

The Gay Science (1882) opens, much like “Schopenhauer as Educator,” with a formidable critique of humanity. Although mere preservation can be suggested as a goal preferred amongst humans, Nietzsche goes so far as to state that this instinct towards preservation “constitutes *the essence* of our species, our herd” (GS 1), and contends there is something problematic with the manner in which we have claimed to preserve ourselves. We, according to Nietzsche, “still live

³³An interesting commentary on the three human images Nietzsche claims were available to his age (those presented in the writings of Rousseau, Goethe and Schopenhauer) can be found in Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, pp. 167-172.

³⁴Safranski, p. 259.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 259-260.

³⁶Ibid., p. 36.

in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions”(GS 1), as we have yet to realize that these acts of preservation need a purpose that contributes to creating the possibility of human greatness. As we have seen in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” culture must work towards actualizing “the superior individual specimen” (SE 6). Moralities that are concerned with the promotion of the common good or establishing a universal table of values are ultimately detrimental to the very project of self-enhancement. Nietzsche continues to critique the notion presented by many ethical theories that we adopt a pre-established code of behavior. He considered this to be merely a means of control, hindering the freedom necessary for authenticity. It has been suggested that in The Gay Science “Nietzsche continues his psychological analyses of the mechanisms involved in Christian morality, attempting to demonstrate that ostensibly self-sacrificing values are often veiled efforts to assert control over others.”³⁷ But beyond Christianity, Nietzsche critiques *any* morality which would dictate that we think of the consequences of our actions in terms of a “common good,” for good and evil are relative terms, determined by each individual through personal self-examination. Throughout Nietzsche’s writing he attempts to make explicit that notions of a strict “good” and “evil” need to be overcome when the goal is preservation (and, ultimately, perfection) of the species.

In the first aphorism of The Gay Science Nietzsche continues his attack on moralities that fail to work towards the project of human greatness. He writes: “It is easy enough to divide our neighbors quickly, with the usual myopia, from a mere five paces away, into useful and harmful, good and evil men; but in any large-scale accounting, when we reflect on the whole a little longer, we become suspicious of this neat division and finally abandon it.” In fact, what “is called evil belongs to the most amazing economy of the preservation of the species” (GS 1). He explains: “What is new . . . is always *evil*, being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary markers and the old pieties; and only what is old is good” (GS 4). “Evil” is the term used to describe individuals who strike out against the herd in an attempt to establish their own order of rank or table of values, a characteristic — previously seen with Schopenhauer — this thinker considered “noble” or “higher” (GS 3). Later, in Beyond Good and Evil, he claims: “everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called *evil*” (BGE 201). According to Nietzsche, universal distinctions of good and evil are inappropriate for judging the value another’s actions and what has been deemed “evil” has led to greatest advancements. He elaborates, explaining that the evil person “nurtures either in himself or in others, through his effects, instincts without which humanity would long have become feeble or rotten” (GS 1).

Ethical theories that adhere to the principle that what is “good” and virtuous aids the community are challenged on the basis that they assume the individual is at the disposal of society; “a devoted *instrument*” (GS 21). The portrait that many moralities paint of existence seems questionable if our desired goal is producing the conditions for the possibility of human greatness. If we sacrifice ourselves for a society that wishes to keep us weak and docile so as to maintain control of the herd, how can we work towards authentic self-enhancement? “The praise of virtue

³⁷Solomon and Higgins, p. 74.

is the praise of something that is privately harmful — the praise of instincts that deprive a human being of his noblest selfishness and the strength for highest autonomy” (GS 21). To transcend this stifling notion of good and evil guiding one's actions, to create one's own existence, is to discover one's own health (self enhancement through self-creation).

What is needed, if we may return to the opening aphorism of The Gay Science, is a “purpose.” Indeed, as we shall see, the type of purpose Nietzsche intends to emphasize — which he believed would work towards the production of further greatness — is projected in the teachings of Zarathustra. The desire for preservation is present in all of humanity — high and low — yet an ethical teacher is needed to posit a purpose for the “eternal comedy of existence” (GS 1), and to encourage free cultivation of our uniqueness. We see a similar theme carried over from “Schopenhauer as Educator.” Nietzsche recognizes that these teachers have often been met with laughter, but what is important is the newness that they were able to introduce by attempting to either give humanity an answer to its “*why?*,” or demonstrate that the creation of a new tables of values is possible. Again, the importance falls on their overall effectiveness in the production of greatness. On the ethical teacher, he writes:

His inventions and valuations may be utterly foolish and overenthusiastic; he may badly misjudge the course of nature and deny its conditions — and all ethical systems hitherto have been so foolish and anti-natural that humanity would have perished of every one of them if it had gained power over humanity — and yet, whenever “the hero” appeared on the stage, something new was attained: the gruesome counterpart of laughter, that profound emotional shock felt by many individuals at the thought: “Yes, I am worthy of living!” Life and I and you and all of us became *interesting* to ourselves once again for a little while. (GS 1)

The ethical teacher, like the artist, plays a major role in enabling us to create and discover ourselves. The conversation, to again use Madison's metaphor, between ourselves and the other allows the possibility for us to discover conditions of our own health. The artist is able to inspire the individual towards their own self-enhancement.

Based on what we have seen in “Schopenhauer as Educator” and The Gay Science, it is evident that Nietzsche saw potential in all of us. Though it seems that artists (creators) play an exceptional role, their major importance is in their *example*. Each of us have the potential to recognize these examples and cultivate our authentic self. As we have noted above, he thought “all of us harbor concealed gardens and plantings” (GS 9). This notion, if we take it seriously, seems to prove problematic for those who wish to claim that Nietzsche is attempting to instigate some sort of political aristocratic radicalism, a new class system, order of rank, or fascist regime.³⁸

³⁸We have noted earlier the negative interpretations based on violent conditions suggested by Ansell-Pearson, pp. 41-42, and Warren, p. 178. Nietzsche is charged with the creation of “monstrous” children in Daniel Conway, “Odysseus Bound?,” Why Nietzsche Still?, ed. Alan Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000),p. 36.

Again, it seems clear that Nietzsche stresses the potential in *all*. Though it is obvious that he recognized that few make the potential actual — as we saw above he conceded that many prefer to live lazy in their own ignorance than submit to the hard conditions necessary for the production of greatness — this does not diminish or negate the existence of that potential. To return momentarily to “Schopenhauer as Educator,” we find the following passage:

Each of us bears within himself a productive uniqueness as the kernel of his being, and when he becomes conscious of this uniqueness, a strange aura – the aura of the unusual – surrounds him. For most people this is something unbearable, because, as observed earlier, they are lazy, and because a chain of efforts and burdens is attached to that uniqueness. (SE 3)

What is important is the notion of perspective and self-examination which is emphasized as necessary to discover and develop one's own health. Nietzsche is attempting to develop a philosophy of existence that does not set up an absolute table of good and evil against which all other actions are judged, for, as we saw, he recognizes immense problems with this method. As we saw, he even thinks that “evil” is essential to promoting individual health. A system which operates based on a good-bad dichotomy ignores that what is good (bad) for one may not be good (bad) for another, a fact crucial if we are to discover our own health. In Nietzsche's own words: “the poison of which weaker natures perish strengthens the strong — nor do they call it poison” (GS 19).

To know one's own self and to discover one's own poison is of utmost importance to the project of self-enhancement. We must keep in mind that the *Übermensch* cannot be described or defined in absolute terms. The *Übermensch* is a poetic symbol rather than a concrete or discursive concept, representing something personal and individual, appealing to the particular rather than the universal. One of the difficulties in attempting to define this symbol is the emphasis placed upon the discovery of one's own uniqueness, which is a constant process, and, as we have pointed out, this process is different for each one of us. We can only look to exemplary teachers and within ourselves for examples. As has been previously noted, “It is of the first importance that the *Übermensch*'s ideal should represent a *process* as inherently valuable, rather than a product.”³⁹ Ultimately, one's health can only be discovered through self-examination, not imitation. He writes: “there is no health as such, and all attempts to define a thing that way have been wretched failures. Even the determination of what is healthy for your *body* depends on your goal, your horizon, your energies, your impulses, your errors, and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul” (GS 120). It is our responsibility to “give style” to our character (GS 290), that is, to feel free to experiment and establish our own way to achieve greatness within our own horizon.

According to Nietzsche, authenticity requires “an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive for it his own law, joys, and rights” (GS 143). In this aphorism the philosopher theorizes

³⁹Owen and Ridley, p. 153.

that the existence of an “overworld,” where “one [is] permitted to behold a *plurality of norms* . . . It [is] here that one first honored the rights of individuals. The invention of gods, heroes, and overmen of all kinds . . . [is] the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignty of the individual” (GS 143). This, again, is why we must use broad attributes (such as creativity, courage and ambition) to characterize the *Übermensch*, rather than building a specific list of requirements.

In the fourth book of *The Gay Science*, the final section in the original 1882 edition of the text, Nietzsche speaks of “preparatory courageous human beings . . . who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome*” (GS 283). We see this notion of overcoming reappear in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this aphorism he writes that “the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is — *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourself!” (GS 283). In this passage we see many of the concepts already discussed, and they continue to be present throughout Nietzsche’s philosophy and his writings on greatness. It is clear that he thought difference to be an important factor in greatness, an obstacle which has made it difficult for many to clearly define the *Übermensch*. However, if Nietzsche had provided a clear and concise list of characteristics, or a model for authenticity which could be adopted by all, this would in fact contradict the very nature of the greatness he advocates. To “*live dangerously*” we must not all live alike. This is something his writings continually stress. There is strength to be found in the strife, which we have already seen at work in the importance of the contest; a model for achieving authenticity would be diverse and conflicting, rather than uniform and homogenized.

We can see the attributes which the *Übermensch* embraces in another frequently employed term of Nietzsche’s, the “free spirit.” Speaking about those who manage to give style to their character, he writes:

Such spirits — and they may be of the first rank — are always out to shape and interpret their environment as *free* nature; wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising. And they are well advised because it is only in this way that they can give pleasure to themselves. For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims. (GS 290)

To be satisfied with ourselves (to be authentic) is “*to become those we are*” (GS 335). Again, this means to be free to discover our authentic selves (particular) rather than accepting a universal code of ethics. As he writes: “it is selfish to experience one’s own judgement as a universal law; and this selfishness is blind, petty, and frugal because it betrays that you have not yet discovered yourself nor created for yourself an ideal of your own, your very own — for that could never be somebody else’s and much less that of all” (GS 335). Nietzsche would consider authentic the courageous Schopenhauerian types who rage against the dogmatic herd, who recognize the power

that we have to bestow value. “Whatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature — nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present — and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that concerns man!*” (GS 301). Therefore, the artists and creators of new values seem to represent *examples* of exemplary or higher human beings, who demonstrate the potential that lie dormant in all of us.

Near the end of the fourth book of The Gay Science, he again calls on us to overcome stifling notions of morally judging another's actions as good or evil, and attempt instead to work towards something higher for ourselves. In language strikingly similar to that which we find in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, he writes:

Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and valuations and to the *creation of our own new table of what is good*, and let us stop brooding about the “moral value of our actions”! Yes, my friends, regarding all the moral chatter of some about others it is time to feel nauseous. Sitting in moral judgement should offend our taste. Let us leave such chatter and such bad taste to those who have nothing else to do but drag the past a few steps further through time and who never live in the present — which is to say the many, the majority. We, however, *want to become those we are* — human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, create themselves. (GS 335)

Nietzsche wanted to celebrate a philosophy that embraces experimentation, that demands that we be courageous and strive to uncover what is unique and great within ourselves. He wanted us to recognize this squandered potential of our authentic selves and “re-activate authentic modes of living.”⁴⁰ By drawing our attention to these examples set by artists and free spirits such as Schopenhauer, and illuminating the incoherence in major moralities and ideologies, he was beginning to develop a theory which works toward the production of human greatness.

Thus far we have seen evidence of the project of cultivating human greatness throughout Nietzsche's early career. He held that the moralities adopted by many were detrimental to the achievement of authenticity. The true self is not to be discovered by appealing to a universal code of behavior, but away from the mob, where we are free to examine ourselves, free “*to become those we are*” (GS 335). So we can see that his concern was for the individual rather than a unified community. While other ethical theorists have attempted to construct a system where the whole of society would benefit by our self-restraint, Nietzsche believes this sacrifices our possible uniqueness and our power to create value for ourselves. Whether we are considering a Kantian notion of a categorical imperative, or the utilitarian greatest happiness for the greatest number principle, or the Christian table of good and evil, Nietzsche demonstrates that with these we can only decrease the possibility for the production of greatness.

However, Nietzsche does not leave us in the dark as to how this greatness is possible, as

⁴⁰Golomb, p. 250.

some critics suggest.⁴¹ From his earliest essays we have seen evidence of an attempt to demonstrate the method of achieving authenticity. We also saw celebrated the role of creation and the act of giving value in one's own life. From the examples of artists and ethical teachers (like Schopenhauer, and unlike preachers of morality) we educate ourselves, meanwhile uncovering our own tastes, our own set of values, constructing a healthy soul. Perhaps unlike any other philosopher Nietzsche praised creativity in the achievement of human greatness and discovery of the authentic self, pointing out that it is often recognized by others as "evil." But creativity is not enough. One needs, as we saw, courage. "Schopenhauer as Educator" proves — if nothing else — that courage is a necessary characteristic for the production of exemplary human beings. Authenticity requires us to strike off against or away from dominant ideologies or adopted presupposing codes of conduct and one must possess the courage to manage the hardness that is required for this project. This authentic individual needs faith in themselves (GS 284), and "it will always be the mark of nobility that one feels no fear of oneself" (GS 294). Furthermore, courage plays a major role in the notion of the contest (or the virtue of having the "flame of ambition"), which Nietzsche considers to be another characteristic necessary for achieving authenticity and thus, before we turn our attention to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, there remains this concept of the contest that must be discussed.

Although published posthumously, the fragmentary essay written in 1872 entitled "Homer's Contest" reveals that, if we are to work toward the *Übermensch* — discovering greatness in our activities — we must, like the Greeks, possess the "flame of ambition" (HC, p. 35). What separates the Greeks in their great achievements is the method of valuing at work in their culture. The Greeks are characterized as approaching life as a struggle, as a contest. "The greater and more sublime a Greek is, the brighter the flame of ambition that flares out of him, consuming everybody who runs on the same course" (HC, p. 35). Nietzsche here focuses on the notion that "the contest is necessary to preserve the health of the state" (HC, p. 36). The Greeks were able to realize this culturally and politically, therefore sowing the seeds of greatness (as is the goal of great culture as we have seen in "Schopenhauer as Educator"). These contests are "but a means of stimulation . . . there are always *several* geniuses who spur each other to action" (HC, pp. 36-37). As one critic contends, "the Greek education system was designed to cultivate respect for the *agon*."⁴² According to Nietzsche, what made Hellenic pedagogy unique was that it recognized the role of the contest necessary for the achievement of personal greatness. In his own interpretation of the role of the contest in the creation of the *Übermensch*, Leslie Paul Thiele notes: "The hero is

⁴¹Conway, as has been noted, speaks of "Zarathustra's faulty teaching of the *Übermensch*" ("The Genius as Squanderer," International Studies in Philosophy 30: 3 (1998), p. 81), and makes reference to "Nietzsche's failure to establish necessary and sufficient conditions of human greatness" ("Overcoming the *Übermensch*," p. 212).

⁴²Alan D. Schrift, "Nietzsche's Contest: Nietzsche and the Culture Wars," Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics, ed., Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 193.

he who courageously strives for preeminence. *Arete* is to be displayed; struggle is the means of its attainment. Only the love of struggle provides the stimulus for self-overcoming, the drive to reach beyond oneself so as to achieve excellence.”⁴³ We repeatedly see Nietzsche emphasize the role of the contest in the production of greatness throughout his writing.

It may also be of interest to note that in the opening paragraph of “Homer’s Contest” Nietzsche again critiques moralities or codes of ethics that propose universal tables of good and evil. He writes that “those of his abilities which are terrifying and considered inhuman may even be the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity can grow in impulse, deep, and work” (HC, p. 32); a statement startlingly similar to those we have previously seen in “Schopenhauer as Educator” and The Gay Science. However, it may perhaps be of more importance to note that he is *not* praising these inhuman actions in themselves but the consequences and conditions that ensue from these actions. Nietzsche contends that the Greeks developed law in response to the violent environment in which they found themselves; “the nobler culture takes its first wreath of victory from the altar of the expiation of murder” (HC, p. 34). We must move away from this activity of moral judgement, as Nietzsche directly advised in GS 335, if we are attempting to achieve an authentic existence.

As we turn our attention to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, where the teaching of the *Übermensch* takes center stage, we have already become familiar with what is at stake with this symbol. Through our brief examination of texts that precede Zarathustra it is clear that Nietzsche believed that true human greatness is produced apart from community authority, where we create our own table of values, cultivating our own uniqueness in perpetual contests. Creativity, courage and this “flame of ambition” essential for the contest are virtues (or at least characteristics) that Nietzsche continues to concede as the utmost importance in the project of authenticity.

⁴³Leslie Paul Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 13-14.

Chapter 2: The Teaching of Zarathustra

Ecce Homo, written in 1888 but unpublished until 1908, has been called “Nietzsche’s own interpretation of his development, his work, and his significance.”⁴⁴ There he calls Thus Spoke Zarathustra “the highest book there is . . . born out of the innermost wealth of truth” (EH “Nietzsche’s Preface,” 4). Later in the same text it is prophesied that, “some day institutions will be needed in which men live and teach as I conceive of living and teaching; it might even happen that a few chairs will then be set aside for the interpretation of Zarathustra” (EH “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 1). These bold claims indicate that he obviously felt confident about the philosophy found within its pages. Unfortunately, but perhaps fittingly, Thus Spoke Zarathustra is one of his most challenging works. In his own time, he seemed to regret the lack of scholarly understanding which plagued his philosophy and directly addressed misinterpretations of the *Übermensch*. He writes:

The word “overman,” as the designation of a type of supreme achievement, as opposed to “modern” men, to “good” men, to Christians and other nihilists — a word that in the mouth of a Zarathustra, the annihilator of morality, becomes a very pensive word — has been understood almost everywhere with the utmost innocence in the sense of those very values whose opposite Zarathustra was meant to represent — that is, an “idealistic” type of a higher kind of man, half “saint,” half “genius.” (EH “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 1)

To this day, as we have noted, a clear and concise portrait of the *Übermensch* is still missing from the pages of Nietzschean scholarship. Yet, as we have seen, from his earliest writings he began to document and examine possible conditions for authenticity, working towards the *Übermensch* which he thought to be nothing idealistic, but something all-too *realistic*, a true possibility. The symbol is a recognition of potential, a representation of “supreme achievement.” He recognized humanity “as the source of as yet undetermined possibilities,”⁴⁵ but only if we recognize the correct path to greatness. Creativity, courage and the “flame of ambition” essential for the contest are personal characteristics to be cultivated if we are to combat the nihilism humanity is facing. He returns to these three fundamental attributes throughout his writing, repeatedly presenting these conditions as necessary for the achievement of greatness.

As has been noted, though most of Nietzsche’s direct treatment on the subject of the *Übermensch* can be found in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, this does not mean the idea is dismissed or

⁴⁴Walter Kaufmann, Editor’s Introduction, On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 201.

⁴⁵Jaspers, p. 130.

unimportant in other works. We have seen how the notion of greatness was present in his earliest writings, such as “Schopenhauer as Educator,” and we are beginning to get a clear picture of the conditions he viewed as necessary to produce such greatness. *Zarathustra* is a poetic attempt to call our attention to the possible cultivation of the *Übermensch* (a symbol of individual greatness and authenticity), instead of perpetuating the unhealthy, inauthentic existence presented by many moralities and religions.

As the text opens, we find Zarathustra leaving his mountain cave following a self-imposed ten years of solitude. He is returning to the land of the living with the intention of sharing the “wisdom” which he has gained. As he tells the sun: “I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 1). Nietzsche wastes no time in setting up Zarathustra in the role of educator, as he sets off in search of pupils. But what “wisdom” does Zarathustra have to communicate to humanity? Perhaps a clue can be found in Zarathustra’s first encounter.

The first character Zarathustra meets after descending from his mountain cave is an old man residing in the forest. The old man, who is also referred to as “the saint,” recognizes the figure, proclaiming: “Zarathustra has changed, Zarathustra has become a child, Zarathustra is an awakened one” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 2). The metaphor of the child is important in our effort to clarify the meaning of the *Übermensch*, and we shall return to it momentarily. When the old man asks why Zarathustra has returned he is answered that his journey rooted in “love” and he bears the gift of his wisdom. As shall soon become clear, this wisdom is the teaching of the *Übermensch*. The saint scoffs at Zarathustra’s dream to educate society and warns that people “are suspicious of hermits and do not believe that we come with gifts” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 2). The saint tells Zarathustra that he is concerned only with the love of God. Zarathustra realizes that his journey must proceed; his wisdom would only be wasted on the likes of the saint. Zarathustra wonders to himself: “Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 2). And thus, abruptly enough, ends the second section of the prologue.

One must ask: why would Nietzsche end the section without clarifying or discussing in more detail this notion of the death of God? Why would he introduce a concept as fundamental to the whole of his thought (as well as for the project of the *Übermensch*) as the death of God with such disregard? Some have claimed that the death of God would come to be *the* “central fact for the nineteenth century,” as recognized by Nietzsche and Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855),⁴⁶ and the importance of the death of God in relation to the project of the *Übermensch* is one of the few ideas recent scholars seem to agree upon.⁴⁷ Therefore, it seems

⁴⁶William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958), p. 150.

⁴⁷Though we have to see more specifically *how* the death of God impacts the possibility of the *Übermensch*, it can be noted that the relationship between these two events has been agreed upon by many interpreters; for examples see Golomb, p. 243, Detwiler, pp.61-62, Safranski, pp. 271-272, Ansell-Pearson, p.8.

necessary to consider why he would introduce such a fundamental concept without further discussion. Is he assuming the reader's familiarity with other passages proclaiming the death of God in his previous published texts? The tense in which Zarathustra speaks of the death of God leads one to conclude that it had occurred prior to the time in which the action of the text is taking place. The death of God is not something Zarathustra is announcing. We know it has already taken place because Zarathustra is surprised to learn that the old man had no previous knowledge of the event. Let us consider the passages in which Nietzsche speaks of this event in writings published prior to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In aphorism 108 of *The Gay Science*, entitled "*New struggles*," the death of God is briefly discussed, spoken of as a shadow hanging over humanity. Nietzsche warns that following the death of God "there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown," and says that "we still have to vanquish his shadow" (GS 108). Kaufmann notes that this is the first appearance of the proclamation of the death of God in Nietzsche's published texts.⁴⁸ The shadow of God sounds quite ominous and interesting, but it does not sufficiently address what is at stake with this notion. If we turn to examine a later passage in the same text — in which the madman appears proclaiming the death of God — perhaps we may be able to discover something of the intention of this curious idea. For our purposes, and the importance the event has upon our quest to clarify the meaning of the *Übermensch*, it seems necessary to consider the section in its entirety:

The madman. — Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" — As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Had he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? — Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him* — you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as though an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

⁴⁸Kaufmann, *Gay Science*, p. 167, n. 1.

“How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us — for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners, and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. “I have come too early,” he said then; “my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars — *and yet they have done it themselves.*”

It has been related further than on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: “What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?” (GS 125)

In the first paragraph we meet the character dubbed “the madman” searching for God in the market place. His urgent calling is met only with laughter, reminiscent of Zarathustra who is, likewise, met with laughter in the market place (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 5). In the second paragraph the madman declares the search unnecessary for God is dead and humanity is responsible. The event is of such severe importance that Nietzsche has the character declare humanity the “murderers” of God. Fortunately, this death is not to be grieved. The madman asks (rhetorically) for the root of this great power which enabled humankind to rid itself of its’ supposed Creator. He asks: “Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?” (GS, 125). The answer points toward the virtue of creativity. The death of God is not something to be bewailed but to be celebrated, presenting outstanding possibilities for humankind, a necessary condition for the achievement of greatness. The madman speaks of the future and those who shall benefit in the wake of this great death, as he claims: “for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto” (GS 125). Therefore, the death of God must be a necessary condition for greatness to be actualized. Still, it seems legitimate to ask: how is a “higher history” possible *only* with the death of God? Why must this death precede the coming of the *Übermensch*?

In The Gay Science 343 Nietzsche speaks God’s death, calling on the new breed of future philosophers he envisages, his “free spirits,” to embrace this vast arena of possibilities. He writes:

At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the

daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea.”— (GS, 343)

What is at stake is human freedom itself. What the death of God allows is the possibility of free creation. It is necessary for the sake of authenticity to consider the individual as creator of values and concepts of good and evil which do not originate from a higher power such as God. Zarathustra defines esteeming as the essence of humanity (Z I, “On the Thousand and One Goals”). Creativity is our personal highest power, a necessary virtue for the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche sees this as being ignored by traditional moralities, especially Christianity. Moralities often present one with a strict guide or system of behavior, without offering the possibility for experimentation and self-discovery. Belief in the existence of God diminishes the power available for humanity and, according to Nietzsche, this idol must be removed if we are to have creative control over our own existence. God is but a mere “concept” (BGE 57), something naive (BGE 58), often used as an instrument to control behavior. The death of God is a necessary precursor to the possible coming of the *Übermensch*. As Zarathustra states: “God died: now we want the overman to live” (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 2). In the wake of the death of God, the madman asks: “Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” (GS 125). Would we then be correct to conclude that the concern is with individuals becoming god-like to replace the once ever-evasive figure? Is the *Übermensch* this god-like symbol — “Nietzsche’s inverted secular god equivalent”⁴⁹ — who will redeem humanity from looming nihilism? Some scholars believe this to be the case. Conway claims that Zarathustra teaches “the *Übermensch* as a potential redeemer of humankind,” and suggests that “a standard picture of *Übermenschlichkeit* has emerged, as comprising an ideal of transcendence and discontinuity.”⁵⁰ In her interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Liliane Frey-Rohn writes: “Nietzsche realized a new image of God in the figure of Zarathustra.”⁵¹ However, these readings, upon even brief investigation, prove problematic.

As noted, Nietzsche considers the concept of God to be naive (BGE 58). In Part Two of Zarathustra he writes: “God is a conjecture; but I desire that your conjectures should not reach beyond your creative will. Could you *create* a god? Then do not speak to me of any gods. But you could well create the overman” (Z II “Upon the Blessed Isles”). Therefore, it is problematic to conclude that the *Übermensch* is yet another “God,” or represents some form of “self-

⁴⁹Magnus, p. 95.

⁵⁰Conway, “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” pp. 215, 212.

⁵¹Liliane Frey-Rohn, Friedrich Nietzsche: A Psychological Approach to his Life and Work (Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag, 1989), p. 83.

deification.”⁵² As creativity continues to be an essential virtue in Nietzsche's project of authenticity and enhancement, it appears that the interpretation of the *Übermensch* as a replacement God would conflict with textual evidence. Zarathustra explains:

Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty — thus Zarathustra teaches it . . . In knowledge too I feel only my will's joy in begetting and becoming; and if there is innocence in my knowledge, it is because the will to beget is in it. Away from God and gods this will has lured me; what could one create if gods existed? (Z II “Upon the Blessed Isles”)

Safranski links Nietzsche's emphasis on the will directly to the notion of the contest, describing it as “a swarm of diverse ambitions, an arena of energies battling for power.”⁵³ An interpretation of the *Übermensch* which suggests that we become gods thus seems unhelpful and contrary to the image of greatness intended in his published works. We know that the “shadow” of God (GS 108) must disappear for the *Übermensch* to emerge; the death of God is necessary for us to realize and actualize our creative potential. The denial of responsibility for one's own existence must cease, and it is clear that “the powerful and authentic man is not identical with an omnipotent and absolutely perfect God.”⁵⁴ As Zarathustra reminds readers: “*Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live*” (Z I, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue, 3”). Let us return to “Zarathustra's Prologue,” where the teaching of the *Übermensch* begins.

Zarathustra stands amongst the people in the market place, proclaiming:

I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman . . . The overman is the meaning of the earth . . . remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! (Z I, “Zarathustra's Prologue,” 3)

But what did Zarathustra wish humanity would overcome? And what is this notion of remaining faithful to the earth all about? Let us address the second question first.

As has been suggested, “for Nietzsche . . . what is definitive of Christianity in particular and nihilistic culture in general is that they institutionalized horizons of consciousness in which one

⁵²Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 19.

⁵³Safranski, p. 300.

⁵⁴Golomb, p. 253.

condition of willing — the ‘natural’ world of experience — is hidden from view.”⁵⁵ We have noted that Nietzsche emphasized that the death of God is a necessary pre-condition for authentic freedom. Zarathustra (as does Nietzsche) links “health” with the physical world. God may have been the meaning of “the Afterworldly,” but the *Übermensch* is the meaning of the earth. Zarathustra praises the creative will and demands we “affirm it, and no longer to sneak away from it like the sick and decaying” (Z I, “On the Afterworldly”). We must not turn away from physical life, but embrace all its aspects — evil and suffering included. Later in his life, in a text that centers on exposing the nihilistic tendencies of Christianity, he writes: “When one places life’s center of gravity not in life but in the ‘beyond’ — *in nothingness* — one deprives life of its center of gravity altogether” (A 43).

The notion of remaining faithful to the earth as prerequisite for an authentic existence is something Zarathustra returns to throughout his teachings (as does Nietzsche throughout his philosophy, especially apparent in his attack on Christianity in The Antichrist which we shall examine shortly). Near the end of Part One of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, he stresses that we must “lead back to earth the virtue that flew away . . . back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a new meaning, a human meaning” (Z I, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 2). It would be problematic if we claim that he is recommending a project of mastery over nature, such as one finds in the writings of French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650). In his Discourse on Method, Descartes suggests that the role of knowledge and of philosophy itself is to render us “masters and possessors of nature,”⁵⁶ hence interpreting us as creators of all meaning. Zarathustra’s intentions are otherwise. As Laurence Lampert quite rightly points out, the concept of remaining faithful to the earth is about “celebrating the cyclical coming and goings of things,”⁵⁷ referring to Part Three of Zarathustra, where Zarathustra announces himself as “the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle” (Z III, “The Convalescent,” 1). We must overcome this “*world of pure fiction*” (A 15) posited by the Christian religion to realize authentic freedom. If we are truly concerned with the project of human greatness and the possibility of achieving authenticity, then we must abandon any theory which promotes “gods and afterworlds” (Z I, “On the Afterworldly”). Nietzsche summarizes his position against the religion:

Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever *contradicts* the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself; it has corrupted the reason even of those strongest in spirit by teaching men to consider the supreme values of the spirit as something sinful, as something that leads into error — as temptations. (A 5)

⁵⁵Warren, p. 32.

⁵⁶René Descartes, Discourse on Method and The Meditations, trans. F.E. Sutcliffe (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 78.

⁵⁷Lampert, p. 22.

So, as we can see, the notion of remaining faithful to the earth has to do directly with the project of human greatness and achieving authenticity and his critique of certain moralities. Zarathustra urges us to “no longer bury [our] head[s] in the sand of heavenly things” (Z I, “On the Afterworldly”). We must embrace our embodiment in an effort to make authenticity (and the *Übermensch*) possible.

Let us turn now to the second necessary question: What did Zarathustra want humanity to overcome? This concept is central to the project of the *Übermensch*. Conway suggests: “the goal of self-overcoming is to gain for oneself a measure of freedom from the limitations of one’s age, in order that one might command an expanded range of affective engagement and expression.”⁵⁸ This again can be seen as directly tied to the death of God and the free creation of value which then becomes possible. Zarathustra proclaims that “what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end . . . that he is an *overture*” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 4). Again we can see the importance of potential being emphasized. But potential for what? Perhaps we can come closer to an answer (and also learn something about the characteristics on an *Übermensch*) by examining the character of the *last man* introduced in the Part One of Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

Echoing the charges that we are generally too lazy and fearful to embark on the quest for authentic existence (SE 1), Zarathustra claims: “the earth has become small” and populated by the sick. Everywhere courage, creativity and the flame of ambition necessary for greatness are lacking. Society is ruled by a herd mentality. “No shepherd and one herd! Everyone wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 5). As one scholar observes: “the last man is the most despicable type . . . He pursues a narrow egalitarian happiness that puts him beyond love, creation, and longing, beyond exertion and distinction . . . he is the antipode of mankind’s highest hope, which is the superman.”⁵⁹ This point of the *last man* being the antithesis of the *Übermensch* has been commented upon by many.⁶⁰ Solomon and Higgins write:

The *Übermensch* aspires continually to greatness, living a life of creative adventure. Zarathustra contrasts the *Übermensch* with “the Last Man,” his caricature of a person who is too risk-averse to pursue any aim beyond comfort, to such an extent that even procreation is too exerting. Zarathustra poses these as two alternative goals, asking modern individuals which mode of existence their own lives embody and promote.⁶¹

⁵⁸Conway, Nietzsche and the Political, p. 65.

⁵⁹Detwiller, p. 73.

⁶⁰For examples see Berkowitz, pp. 142-143; Detwiller, p. 73; Owen and Ridley, pp. 149-152.

⁶¹Solomon and Higgins, p. 76.

The *last man* is spoken of as a dangerous possibility, a perpetuation of the will to nothingness, or nihilism. “What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?” thus asks the last man, and he blinks” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 5).

One of the important notions we can see at work in the image of the *last man* is that the authentic individual self (or the *Übermensch*) is found apart from herd morality. As we have noted, the *last man* embodies the herd, those who obey rather than command (and create), and authenticity can never be found amongst the herd. Zarathustra proclaims near the end of the prologue, “to lure many away from the herd, for that I have come.” In the same passage, Zarathustra addresses the importance of our becoming creators, “those who write new values on new tablets” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 9). Only through becoming creators can we set the stage for the coming of the *Übermensch*.

If we now turn our attention to the stunning metaphor that begins “Zarathustra’s Speeches,” we are given more evidence as to how Nietzsche characterizes the achievement of greatness. At work in this metaphor we can see the aforementioned attributes (creativity, courage and the ambition of a contestant), fleshing out the project of authenticity. Zarathustra begins by speaking of “how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child” (Z I, “On the Three Metamorphoses”). This transformation is possible only under conditions earlier noted: courage and creativity, achieved through an active involvement in the contest of self-enhancement. As Nietzsche sees the human being in the inauthentic state, the spirit is a camel. The camel bears the burdens of existence, much like the figure of the *last man* which we have discussed. The camel is merely a member of the herd, too weak to create value and meaning for itself. For Steiner, this preliminary stage is characterized by reverence before God. The camel says: “All wisdom comes from God, and I must follow God’s path.”⁶² If this camel can “conquer his freedom and be master” and accept the death of God, the camel becomes the lion.

The lion is symbol of a courageous will (or “healthy self-assertion and strength”).⁶³ He explains: “creation of freedom for oneself for new creation — that is within the power of the lion. The creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred ‘No’ even to duty — for that, my brothers, the lion is needed.” Beyond representing courage, the lion can be seen as symbolizing the contest as well. The lion is the one “who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks out his last masters: he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon” (Z I, “On the Three Metamorphoses”). Zarathustra explains that the dragon represents “all created value” of all previous moralities and religions. The dragon is the “Thou shalt” that the lion must defeat with a courageous: “I will!” One must struggle to overcome imposed values and scales of good and evil if one is to achieve metamorphosis.

In the final metamorphosis, the spirit becomes a child. In order to create new values, the goal for which authenticity aims, the child is needed. “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’ For the game of

⁶²Steiner, p. 71.

⁶³Soloman and Higgins, p. 233.

creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world" (Z I, "On the Three Metamorphoses"). Noting the social implications of this metaphor, Golomb writes: "the individual ('the lion') must liberate himself from 'the camel,' i.e., from all the external layers imposed on him by institutional conditioning."⁶⁴ As seen already in "Schopenhauer as Educator," he considered greatness to be cultivated by forging one's own uniqueness in individual, self-willed situations, rather than succumbing to a system of mass morality. At this final stage when the spirit is a child, "the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world" (Z I, "On the Three Metamorphoses"). The child, like the *Übermensch*, symbolizes the possibility of freedom and creating (willing) value in our own existence.

For the remainder of Part One of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche continues to wax poetic about his project for greatness. In a series of strange stories, we again see courage and creativity being called for in the cultivation of the *Übermensch*. Much of what Zarathustra discusses as being conditions for the possibility of the *Übermensch* we have already seen established in earlier texts. In one of his first speeches, Zarathustra returns to the importance of physical embodiment (as we had already seen prior in Z I, "Prologue," 3). In the same passage he speaks indirectly of the death of God:

Alas, my brothers, this god whom I created was man-made and madness, like all gods! Man he was, and only a poor specimen of man and ego; out of my own ashes and fire of this ghost came to me, and, verily, it did not come to me from beyond. What happened, my brothers? I overcame myself, the sufferer; I carried my own ashes to the mountains; I invented a brighter flame for myself. (Z I, "On the Afterworldly")

Here again we see emphasized the creative freedom made possible by God's death. In Zarathustra's words: "The earth is free even now for great souls" (Z I, "On the New Idol"). We have seen the importance Nietzsche placed on a philosopher's ability to set an example (SE 3), but Zarathustra calls for "solitude" and self-examination in the project of authentic existence. Again, he is stressing the importance of the particular and individual, and the strength of one's will. Zarathustra states: "A new will I teach men: to *will* this way which has walked blindly, and to affirm it, and no longer to sneak away from it like the sick and decaying" (Z I, "On the Afterworldly"). This notion of exploring and discovering who we are personally and within our selves, rather than appealing to "despisers of the body" or those who promote universal moral laws has already been seen in earlier work. (SE 1, GS 335). As has been noted, "the positive 'ethic' that Nietzsche advances in place of morality is denoted by life-enhancement."⁶⁵ The basis of this positive 'ethic' is the notion of embracing individual creation of value relative to one's own

⁶⁴Golomb, pp. 246-247.

⁶⁵Simon May, p. 107.

physical existence.

We have seen the importance of creativity (and the creation of new values) already captured in the metaphor of the metamorphoses of the spirit, specifically in the image of the child, as Zarathustra continues to speak of creation of new values as paving the road to the *Übermensch*.

Throughout Part One, Zarathustra reserves highest praise for those who have created value for themselves. Here we find such bold statements as: “Around the inventors of new values the world revolves: invisibly it revolves” (Z I, “On the Flies of the Market Place”), and: “The noble man wants to create something new and a new virtue” (Z I, “On the Tree on the Mountainside”). Zarathustra again emphasizes the importance of holding virtue as personal, “in common with nobody” (ZI, “On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions”), rather than appealing to an outside authority.

Creating, or the act of giving value, is so essential Zarathustra claims it *defines* human existence (Z I, “On the Thousand and One Goals”). But these concepts of “good” and “evil” — the most powerful concepts, according to Zarathustra — seem lacking in a goal. Valuing is linked with preservation, from which the tendency towards self-enhancement should follow. Zarathustra claims “humanity still lacks a goal,” seeming to suggest problems in traditional moralities when the concern is the project of self-enhancement. His quest for the *Übermensch* involves finding someone who can affirm the ultimate question of authenticity: “Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your own will over yourself as law?” (Z I, “On the Way of the Creator”). Instead of giving ourselves our own good and evil necessary for self-enhancement and health, we have allowed “good and evil” to be dictated by outside authority (whether that be a universalizing morality, or religion, or the state, Zarathustra attacks each as counter to the project of human advancement). Zarathustra repeatedly calls for his readers to “find yourselves” (Z I, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 3), much like Nietzsche’s call for us “*to become those we are*” (GS 335).⁶⁶

The importance of the individual and self-examination cannot be stressed enough in his call for authenticity. We have already seen this in Nietzsche’s earlier works, and we are beginning to see Zarathustra emphasize individuality (and creating value), and we shall continue to see it throughout his later published texts. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche speaks of the importance of “human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves” (GS 335). These characteristics are also what he praised in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” and they are strikingly present in Zarathustra’s symbol of the *Übermensch*.

Part One of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ends in a lament for these future creators. Zarathustra claims: “*Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live*” (Z I, “On the Gift-Giving Virtue,” 3). This notion is repeated near the beginning of Part Two, as Zarathustra suggests that, unlike God, the *Übermensch* remains a creative possibility that can be actually achieved and created. Zarathustra asks rhetorically, “*Could you create a god? . . . But you could well create the overman*” (Z II, “Upon the Blessed Isles”). Again, any attempt to claim that Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) considered the *Übermensch* to be the replacement of the deceased God seems to be

⁶⁶Also in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes: “*What does your conscience say? — You shall become the person you are*” (GS 269).

countered by repeated textual evidence. In the same section Zarathustra claims:

Creation — that is the greatest redemption from suffering, and life's growing lift. But that the creator may be, suffering is needed and much change. Indeed, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators. Thus you are advocates and justifiers of all impermanence. To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth-giver . . . Whatever in me has feeling, suffers and is in prison; but my will always comes to me as my liberator and joy-bringer. Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty — thus Zarathustra teaches it. (Z II, "Upon the Blessed Isles")

Creation (and willing) are here linked with freedom and the coming of the *Übermensch*. Zarathustra claims: "To will liberates, for to will is to create" (Z III, "On Old and New Tablets," 16).

Part Two of Thus Spoke Zarathustra continues to emphasize the significance of the contest or struggle in cultivating the *Übermensch*. Zarathustra, with images rehashed from his prologue, states:

On a thousand bridges and paths they shall throng to the future, and even more war and inequality shall divide them: thus does my great love make me speak. In their hostilities they shall become inventors of images and ghosts, and with their images and ghosts they shall yet fight the highest fight against one another. Good and evil, rich and poor, and high and low, and all the names of values — arms shall they be and clattering signs that life must overcome itself again and again. (Z II, "On the Tarantulas")

Life is characterized by this "will to power," the struggle necessary for the production of greatness. We have seen the importance of the *agon* in the unpublished "Homer's Contest," with the contention that the role of the contest in Greek society succeeded in cultivating greatness. Conway claims that this notion of the contest "enables the political dimensions of Nietzsche's moral perfectionism."⁶⁷ Zarathustra says: "That struggle and inequality are present even in beauty, and also war for power and more power . . . Let us strive against one another like gods" (Z II, "On the Tarantulas"). From the friction of actively engaging with other creators, authenticity can be forged.

Perhaps the most important and enlightening section in Part Two of Zarathustra, for our purposes, is "On Self-Overcoming." Here it is suggested that all values and conceptions of good and evil are transient. We have seen this, both in Thus Spoke Zarathustra (for example, Z I "On the Thousand and One Goals"), as well as in earlier writings (present in both SE 5 and GS 143, to isolate merely two of numerous cases). Zarathustra's thoughts on good and evil are tied to "the

⁶⁷Conway, Nietzsche and the Political, p. 70.

nature of all the living . . . Whatever lives, obeys . . . he who cannot obey himself is commanded. That is the nature of the living.” He fleshes out his theory of advancement further, deeming courage and strength as requirements for the task; “commanding is harder than obeying” (Z II, “On Self-Overcoming”).

This concept of commanding and obeying can be seen as essential to the project of the *Übermensch*, and Nietzsche's portrait of authenticity overall. Commanding and obeying are linked directly to notions of creating and giving value. Conway writes: “The goal of self-overcoming is to gain for oneself a measure of freedom from the limitations of one's age, in order that one might command an expanded range of affective engagement and expression.”⁶⁸ Nietzsche's stress continues to fall on the individual, as opposed to a universal or common unifying picture, which adds to the difficulty in determining a clear and concise portrait of the *Übermensch*. As Zarathustra later states: “There are many ways of overcoming: see to that *yourself!* But only a jester thinks: Man can also be *skipped over!*” (Z III, “On Old and New Tablets,” 4). The character of the jester, which also appears in “Zarathustra's Prologue,” further clarifies the concept of authenticity and the *Übermensch*.

In the prologue, Zarathustra stands in the market place, announcing his *Übermensch* to a crowd of people awaiting a tightrope walker (“Zarathustra's Prologue,” 3). Nietzsche uses the jester and the tightrope walker as a metaphor to represent a distortion of Zarathustra's teaching. The jester says to the tightrope walker, “you block the way for one better than yourself” (“Zarathustra's Prologue,” 6), which recalls Zarathustra's earlier claim that “man” blocks the way for the “overman.” Zarathustra says: “a jester can become man's fatality. I will teach men the meaning of their existence — the overman, the lightning out of the dark cloud of man” (“Zarathustra's Prologue,” 7). In a beautiful play on words, “fatality” suggests both a demise as a result of something, as well as helplessness in the face of fate. This notion is perhaps clearer if we consider the notion of *Amor fati* Nietzsche develops in his writing.⁶⁹ However, for our purposes, let us merely note that Zarathustra is stressing that overcoming and the way to the *Übermensch* cannot be accomplished without struggle or hardship. The process towards self-enhancement is nothing that can be “*skipped over*,” as it requires the utmost courage. Again emphasized is the self and the individual. Zarathustra later says: “He who cannot command himself should obey. And many *can* command themselves, but much is still lacking before they also obey themselves” (Z III, “On Old and New Tablets,” 4). We shall return to this notion of commanding and obeying shortly when we consider the project of greatness at work in Beyond Good and Evil.

Though the *Übermensch* is hardly spoken of for the remainder of the text, Zarathustra repeatedly makes reference to the symbol of the *great noon* throughout Parts Three and Four. This is yet another peculiar metaphor we must examine. Again evoking the figure of the *last man*,

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 65.

⁶⁹Kaufmann provides references to the development of this concept in both Zarathustra and Ecce Homo, see notes 1-4 in The Gay Science, p. 223. This concept of *Amor fati* is also linked to Nietzsche's emphasis on the act of creating by Warren, p. 193.

Zarathustra returns to investigate humanity: “For he wanted to determine what had happened to man meanwhile: whether he had become greater or small” (Z III, “On the Virtue That Makes Small,” 1). But, like the author, Zarathustra discovers that people have not worked towards self-enhancement at all. The small, or “the comfortable ones,” personify “cowardice . . . Virtue to them is that which makes modest and tame . . . That, however, is mediocrity, though it be called moderation” (Z III, “On the Virtue That Makes Small,” 2).

Zarathustra speaks of the importance of being “*able to will*” (Z III, “On the Virtue That Makes Small,” 3), which we saw previously linked to the virtue of creating. Though his teachings are still misunderstood (“nobody has *my* ears”), he suggests there is still the possibility for realizing something greater. Part Three ends with imagery similar to the prologue, where he spoke of the possibility of the *Übermensch*: “Behold, I am a herald of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud; but this lightning is called *overman*” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 4). Again, though the *Übermensch* is not specifically mentioned, we hear it reverberating in Zarathustra’s cry: “O blessed hour of lightning . . . it is coming, it is near — *the great noon!*” (Z III, “On the Virtue That Makes Small,” 3).

In another important passage of Part Three — harkening back to earlier metaphors — he asks: “On what bridge does the present pass to the future? By what compulsion does the higher compel itself to the lower? And what bids even the highest grow still higher?” (Z III, “On the Three Evils,” 1). Kaufmann suggest that “the praise of so-called evil as an ingredient of greatness is central in Nietzsche’s thought, from his early fragment, *Homer’s Contest*, to his *Antichrist*.”⁷⁰ Though it seems fitting to question the extent to which he was praising “evil as an ingredient of greatness,” it is evident that the section recalls prior allusions to the *Übermensch*. Again, Zarathustra cries: “it is near, the great noon!” (Z III, “On the Three Evils, 2”). It seems problematic to claim his philosophy advocates evil actions over good actions as we consider the extent to which he treats his theory that good and evil are mere human constructions. Zarathustra claims: “what is good and evil *no one knows yet*, unless it be he who creates. He, however, creates man’s goals and gives the earth its meaning and its future. That anything at all is good and evil — that is his creation” (Z III, “On Old and New Tablets,” 2). Though many have suggested that Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) was advocating “evil” as necessary for authenticity, greatness, or the *Übermensch* — Zarathustra says as much in Part Four: “the greatest evil is necessary for the overman’s best” (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 5) — this literal reading seems somewhat flawed.⁷¹ We shall return again to this subject in more detail as it appears in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

⁷⁰Editor’s notes, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 281.

⁷¹In their interpretations, both Ansell-Pearson and Warren read Nietzsche as calling for violence in his ethics of self-creation.

As Part Four opens,⁷² we find Zarathustra after another long, self-imposed exile in his mountain cave. Though his concern is still with the achievement of authenticity — he urges us again to “Become who you are!” (Z IV, “The Honey Sacrifice”) — he does not return to the market place, but instead waits for those who are able to rise up (overcome themselves) to meet him. Though the *Übermensch* is mentioned in name only once throughout Part Four, the notion of working towards greatness is still present in Zarathustra’s teachings in this final chapter of the story.

This final part sees Zarathustra meet with a series of odd characters, representing distortions of his philosophy. Conway claims: “For notwithstanding their comic appearance and vulgar renditions of Zarathustra’s teachings, these individuals nevertheless represent the highest humanity the age has to offer, for they alone aspire to self-creation.”⁷³ Though he invites these figures to return to his cave, Zarathustra tells his guests: “You may indeed all be higher men . . . but for me you are not high and strong enough” (Z IV “The Welcome”). Again, though the *Übermensch* is not mentioned here by name, the metaphors employed — referring to people as “mere bridges” and the proclamation that “*laughing lions* must come!” (Z IV “The Welcome”) — are consistent with those used earlier. These higher men in the cave have yet to break free from the mob, and there is a longing for something higher (the *Übermensch*) which continues until the end of the book.

The section entitled “On the Higher Man” offers a recap of Zarathustra’s quest and again outlines characteristics necessary for the realization of the *Übermensch* (or the achievement of authenticity). We are directed away from “the market place” and “the mob” (Z IV “On the Higher Man,” 1), away from the universal or common good, in favor of individual cultivation. Zarathustra, reminiscent of the prologue, states:

The most concerned ask today: “How is man to be preserved?” But Zarathustra is the first and only one to ask: “How is man to be overcome?” I have the overman at heart, *that* is my first and only concern . . . what I can love in man is that he is an overture and a going under. And in you too there is much that lets me love and hope. (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 3)

Though the virtue of courage is again required (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 4), we see Zarathustra directly speaking of self-examination and its role in authenticity. This notion of self-examination we have seen previously in Nietzsche’s philosophy (for example GS 120). Zarathustra teaches: “Will nothing beyond your capacity: there is a wicked falseness among those who will beyond their capacity” (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 8). Further, he warns: “Do not be virtuous

⁷²Kaufmann claims: “Part Four was originally intended as an intermezzo, not as the end of the book.” *Ibid.*, p. 344. Interesting historical background to the composition and publication of the final book of *Zarathustra* can also be found in Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, pp. 287-289.

⁷³Conway, “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” p. 217.

beyond your strength! And do not desire anything of yourself against probability” (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 13). We see how this theme links to notions already discussed, such as the theory of commanding and obeying in Beyond Good and Evil. It is enough to note the significance of individual, personal discovery of one's own strengths and weakness in the attempt to discover one's own health.

The final part of Thus Spoke Zarathustra closes with Zarathustra alone, coming full circle, as he again speaks to the morning sun (the “great star”), just as we found him in the beginning. Though Zarathustra says of himself, “I still lack the right men,” hope and possibility for the future are implied in the closing passage: “The lions came, my children are near, Zarathustra has ripened, my hour has come: this is *my morning, my day is breaking: rise now, rise, thou great noon!*” (Z IV, “The Sign”). As we saw, the metaphor of the *great noon* symbolizes the coming of the *Übermensch*. He is here employing similar imagery, I believe, in an effort to present his philosophy (or this picture of authenticity) as a continuing possibility for humankind.

It has been suggested that “the *Übermensch* ideal is not Nietzsche's, but Zarathustra — and only then in Parts I-II; we must therefore beware of precipitately attributing to Nietzsche the provisional teachings of Zarathustra.” Conway conceives that Nietzsche, as well as Zarathustra, “disowns his redemptive vision,”⁷⁴ following the interpretation of Zarathustra proposed by Laurence Lampert in Nietzsche's Teaching. However, as we have seen, it is not so clear that Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) abandon this symbol. In fact, it seems ridiculous to conclude that Zarathustra is a “fool” or “failure,” as Conway does,⁷⁵ when we read what Nietzsche himself writes about the text:

Among my writings my Zarathustra stands to my mind by itself. With that I have given mankind the greatest present that has ever been made to it so far. This book, with a voice bridging centuries, is not only the highest book there is, the book this is truly characterized by the air of the heights — the whole fact of man lies *beneath* it at a tremendous distance — it is also the *deepest*, born out of the innermost wealth of truth. (EH, “Nietzsche's Preface,” 4).

We have noted how Nietzsche makes repeated reference back to Thus Spoke Zarathustra and its importance throughout his work. The Antichrist opens with a statement claiming that the “book belongs to very few . . . Maybe they will be the readers who understand my Zarathustra” (A, “Preface: Revaluation of All Values”). If by failure they perhaps intended to highlight Zarathustra's inability to bring the *Übermensch* into existence by the final chapter of the story, they may be correct, but only in one sense. Zarathustra's quest could be characterized as a failure, but it seems that the broader intention of Nietzsche's philosophy, to encourage individuals to cultivate the *Übermensch* within themselves, in which the success or failure would depend upon the

⁷⁴Conway, “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” p. 215.

⁷⁵Ibid., 218.

individual and not the teacher.

From this investigation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra it seems fair to conclude that, although somewhat obtrusive and often obscured with poetic metaphors and imagery, Nietzsche presents readers with a clear picture of an ethic of self-creation. We see him critique common moralities and religions, and their failed attempt at working towards the production of human greatness. We have been presented with the figure of the *last man* who represents possibility squandered on the will to nothingness and nihilism. Yet we are also given hope in the figure the *Übermensch*, who represents freedom and the possibility of authenticity. Though much of what Zarathustra says about the *Übermensch* is rather ambiguous, we must keep in mind that this is necessary for consistency with Nietzsche's stress on the importance of individual self-examination and its role in achieving authenticity. Health, as has been stated, is a relative term that each of us must strive to discover within ourselves. However, we are not left entirely in the dark. Contrary to Conway's claim that Nietzsche fails "to establish necessary and sufficient conditions of human greatness,"⁷⁶ it seems quite evident that certain characteristics, which Nietzsche in fact investigated, pondered and promulgated in writings as early as his Untimely Meditations, have come together in the symbol of the *Übermensch* in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, representing a theory of greatness he is concerned with until the end of his career. Creativity and courage are necessary attributes if we are to cultivate the *Übermensch* within ourselves.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 212.

Chapter 3: After Zarathustra

Looking to the texts published after Thus Spoke Zarathustra, it becomes apparent that the *Übermensch* and concern for the cultivation of greatness hardly disappear from Nietzsche's philosophy. In Beyond Good and Evil, published in 1886, composed just after the completion of the fourth and final book of Zarathustra, the presence of the *Übermensch* is obvious. Hope for encouraging people to actualize their potential and harvest their individual authenticity (which we saw the *Übermensch* symbolizes) seems represented even in the subtitle: "Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future." As we have seen, the *Übermensch* represents something higher which humanity can work towards — a goal, if you will — Nietzsche here paints the picture of this new thinker, his "free spirit," who similarly embraces his conception of human greatness. Much of his thought found in these later writings pertaining to the project of authenticity can be considered a direct correlation and continuation (often bordering upon repetition) of his earlier work, and we shall see that the central virtues of creativity and courage are reiterated. As we examine this text and The Antichrist we shall continue to see a reappearance of themes creating a continuity and demonstrating his suggested "way" towards authenticity.

The preface to Beyond Good and Evil sets forth one of the central tasks of the book (and his philosophy as a whole): criticizing dogmatizing philosophers. Here continues the attack on degenerative philosophies which hinder attempts to cultivate individual authenticity (in particular, Platonism and Christianity, "for Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'"). He describes how the struggle against dogmatic philosophy has created "a magnificent tension of the spirit" within Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, writing: "we good *Europeans* and free, *very* free spirits — we still feel it, the whole need of the spirit and the whole tension of its bow. And perhaps also the arrow, the task, and — who knows? — the *goal*" (BGE "Preface"). We have seen use of this figure, the "free spirit," previously, and it again appears as a symbol of the potential greatness within humankind. Once more we see a model which embraces challenge and hardship, rather than happiness and security. It is clear he considered that greatness flourished under pressure. The "free spirit" recognizes the necessity of strife, the need for the "tension of bow." Nietzsche's coy questioning on the ability (or inability) for a goal to be set is also something we have previously witnessed. In "Schopenhauer as Educator," he emphasizes the importance of individuals' ability of "setting a new goal for themselves," working towards "the superior individual specimen, the more unusual, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful specimen" (SE 6). He later links the philosopher of the future to the project of cultivating human greatness directly, stating that it is the responsibility of his "free spirits" to partake in the "project of cultivation and education" (BGE 61). It is their duty "to know a *new* greatness of man, of a new untrodden way to his enhancement . . . In the philosopher's ideal . . . strength of will, hardness, and the capacity for long-range decisions must belong to the concept of greatness" (BGE 212). He diagnoses modern Europe as still being populated by a herd mentality which advocates equality of rights. A direct correlation with Zarathustra's *Übermensch* seems logical. Though Nietzsche does not call on his readers to overcome themselves and become the *Übermensch*, the

manner in which authenticity is defined remains the same. Attributes previously ascribed by Zarathustra as necessary for cultivating the *Übermensch* here reappear in Nietzsche's description of his "free spirit." This preface surely reminds us of the Zarathustra who criticized humanity's inability to set goals and achieve greatness, which he sees related to having the strength and courage to create one's own table of values (Z I, "On the Way of the Creator").

Just as young Nietzsche warned of "pseudo-human beings" (SE 1), a notion present in Zarathustra's urging for us to break from the crowd's herd morality, here too he speaks of the importance of individual independence, opposed to the mob. We recall Zarathustra's overview of popular philosophies, religions, and politics: "No shepherd and one herd! Everyone wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse" (Z I, "Zarathustra's Prologue," 5). As he states quite explicitly:

Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority — where he may forget "men what are the rule," being their exception — excepting only the one case in which he is pushed straight to such men by a still stronger instinct, as a seeker after knowledge in the great and exceptional sense. (BGE 26)

But popular morality (dogmatic philosophy) has been more concerned with the common good rather than the cultivation of individual authentic existence. Further on in the text, Nietzsche critiques utilitarian philosophy for also partaking in the creation of this herd which cares only for "security" and "equality," ignoring necessary conditions for the production of great individuals (BGE 44). According to Jaspers, "the *inequality* amongst men means not only that there are innumerable ways of conceiving of their *factual* existence, but also that the various conceptions of human *possibilities* cannot be gathered together within *one single* valid ideal."⁷⁷

Nietzsche believed that we must recognize difference or an "order of rank" amongst individuals, instead of imposing uniformity. Uniqueness and difference amongst individuals must be celebrated for the sake of health.

Men not high and hard enough to have any right to form *man* as artist; men, not strong and farsighted enough to *let* the foreground law of thousand fold failure and ruin prevail, though it cost them sublime self-conquest; men, not noble enough to see the abysmally different order of rank, chasm of rank, between man and man — *such* men have so far held sway over the fate of Europe, with their "equal before God," until finally a smaller, almost ridiculous type, a herd animal, something eager to please, sickly, and mediocre has been bred, the European of today — (BGE 62)

Nietzsche has no respect for the unhealthy "lamb" morality and religion have thus far created (BGE 201). However, we should be careful not to interpret this concept of an "order of rank" as

⁷⁷Jaspers, pp. 163-164.

evidence he was advocating an aristocratic political or social order. It seems much more appropriate to link this concept to the critique of philosophers and moralizers who wish to enforce an equality amongst people. In this text, he accuses Christian-European morality of succeeding only in the creation of “the dwarf animal of equal rights and claims” (BGE 203). Feeling that difference amongst beings must be recognized if we are to cultivate authenticity and greatness he writes: “Moralities must be forced to bow before the *order of rank*” (BGE 221). This notion of “order of rank” can be seen in direct relation to his concepts of commanding and obeying.

In an important and telling aphorism in Part Six of Beyond Good and Evil, it is stated that the development of a “genuine philosopher” is preconditioned by the creation of new value. We have seen how essential creating new value was for Zarathustra’s project of the *Übermensch* (for example, Z II, “On the Tarantulas”). Young Nietzsche emphasized the importance of a philosopher’s ability to set an example (SE 3); he here writes: “*Genuine philosophers . . . are commanders and legislators: they say: ‘thus it shall be!’*” (BGE 211). We recall Zarathustra stating: “he who cannot obey himself is commanded. That is the nature of the living” (Z II, “On Self-Overcoming”). This sentiment can be found repeated throughout Thus Spoke Zarathustra (see, for example, Z III, “On Old and New Tablets” 3). Strength and courage to command and create new values is something we saw in Zarathustra’s teaching of the *Übermensch* and it continues to be a vital element of his overall conception of greatness. As emphasis has been placed on individual self-examination, it seems reasonable to conclude that he was again speaking of something personal, rather than social.

We see how the role of the contest is also present in his work, especially apparent in the concept of commanding and obeying. He writes: “One has to test oneself to see that one is destined for independence and command — and do it at the right time. One should not dodge one’s tests, though they may be the most dangerous game one could play and are tests that are taken in the end before no witness or judge but ourselves” (BGE 41). This seems to further indicate that he considered healthy personal self-examination, rather than an outward imposing of a code of behavior. The idea of judging your self to determine if you should be commanding (creating value for one’s self) or obeying is repeated again later as he urges: “vivisect the ‘good man,’ the ‘*homo bonae voluntatis*’ — yourselves!” (BGE 218). Recalling imagery which opens Thus Spoke Zarathustra, particularly the metamorphoses of the spirit, he again laments that rarely do we break from the herd (become commanders), and challenge the “thou shalt” imposed by any outside force (BGE 199). We recall from the metamorphoses of the spirit the dragon is the “thou shalt” that the lion must defeat with a courageous: “I will!” (Z I, “On the Three Metamorphoses”). It is the commanders who have the courage to turn from the imposed “*formal conscience*,” refusing to obey. Nietzsche attests that the “art of commanding” has been lost, subsequently affecting human development. Later, in The Antichrist, he claims his “free spirits” have had “every ‘thou shalt’” positioned against them, to inhibit the production of greatness (A 13).

Concerning an overall ethic, Nietzsche recognizes a plethora of ways of existing, relative to each individual, rather than a universal type or set of characteristics (BGE 194). As he suggests, again recalling earlier passages: “What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type” (BGE 30). We have seen that Nietzsche considered good and evil to be subjective terms, particular to each individual and their

situation, rather than tools for defining universal moral judgement (hence the title, “Beyond Good and Evil”). His model of authenticity, as has been demonstrated, embraces strife and danger, therefore demands courage. He offers: “Perhaps hardness and cunning furnish more favorable conditions for the origin of the strong, independent spirit and philosopher than that gentle, fine, conciliatory good-naturedness and art of taking things lightly which people prize” (BGE 39). This sentiment is shared by Zarathustra, who says of his *Übermensch*, “the greatest evil is necessary for the overman’s best” (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 5). On his philosopher of the future he writes: “I venture to baptize them with a name that is not free of danger . . . these philosophers of the future may have a right — it might also be a wrong — to be called *attempters*” (BGE 42). This again is something we have seen previously in Nietzsche emphasis of living dangerously (GS 283). The philosopher of the future “risks *himself* constantly, he plays the wicked game” (BGE 205). On his “free spirits,” Nietzsche states:

We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man, everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species “man” as much as its opposite does. (BGE 44)

It is clear that each of these figures evoked, the “free spirits,” the philosophers of the future, and the *Übermensch*, all play an intricate role in defining Nietzsche’s conception of authenticity. Through descriptions of these characters, we can see how he conceived of human existence, and how he measured achievement. These are metaphors for those who have gone beyond the major moralities of their time, independently breaking free of the herd, creating value for themselves.

Nietzsche thought we must recognize a “*pathos of distance*” amongst individuals. This is necessary for self-overcoming (BGE 257). In *The Antichrist*, he criticizes modern politics and humanity for not having the courage to respect the “*pathos of distance*” amongst our peers. Again, he states that this is necessary for “every growth of culture” (A 43). Although he emphasises *higher* culture and *higher* humanity, he does recognize that the *lower* culture/humanity must also exist. For every master, there must be a slave. The individual striving for authenticity against the herd has been suggested as a “permanent and tragic feature of the human condition.”⁷⁸ Nietzsche’s philosophy is aptly described as an attempt to call attention to the ignored project of human greatness, a hope to break from the crowd and achieve authenticity. He writes: “There is among men as in every other species an excess of failures, of the sick, degenerating, infirm, who suffer necessarily” (BGE 62). More belong to the herd, who are marked by obeying (BGE 119), than can be called “*sovereign*” individuals, who command their own existence. He recognized that the cultivation of the *Übermensch* was a project for the few. His philosophy attempts to undo thousands of years of thought based on equality and security, overcoming dogmatic religions and any advocacy of a universal ethical theory, while creating the possibility for an authentic

⁷⁸Warren, p. 61.

individual existence to be forged. Beyond Good and Evil furthers the project of Zarathustra's *Übermensch* in the guise of the philosopher of the future, the "free spirit," who creates his or her own value through personal tests and contests, in an attempt to overcome the mob and an inauthentic existence.

Written in the final year of his mental productivity, but unpublished until 1895, The Antichrist is a scathing critique of Christianity and its tendency towards nihilism rather than the production of exemplary human beings. The text opens with an intimate prologue in which the author fears his work will be misunderstood. He writes: "This book belongs to the very few . . . Maybe they will be the readers who understand my Zarathustra: how *could* I mistake myself for one of those for whom there are ears even now?" (A "Preface"). By making such a strong, clear link between this later text the preceding Thus Spoke Zarathustra, it seems only probable that there exists a continuity in thought amongst these texts. Images from Thus Spoke Zarathustra can be found in all of the texts written thereafter, as Nietzsche repeatedly returns to quote passages from the earlier work (see, for example, A 53 or EH "Preface" 4). This seems to further evidence to counter the claim that Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch* and human greatness were inadequate.

Much like previous works, this text opens with the philosopher claiming humanity to be marked by laziness, making authenticity unattainable (A 1). We have the same theme present in work as early as "Schopenhauer as Educator." He states his intent from the opening, the same task he assigned his "free spirits" (BGE 212), "the problem I thus pose is not what shall succeed mankind in the sequence of living beings (man is an *end*), but what type of man shall be *bred*, shall be *willed*, for being higher in value, worthier of life, more certain of future" (A 3). Nietzsche contends that greatness has come into being previously only under accidental circumstance. In Beyond Good and Evil he states that it is the duty of his "*new philosophers* . . . to teach man the future of man as his *will*, as dependent on a human will" (BGE 203). We saw Zarathustra link willing and liberating in his teaching of the *Übermensch* (Z II, "Upon the Blessed Isles"). Morality and religion, he suggests, have instead created "the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick human animal — the Christian" (A 3). Under conditions of the latter, freedom is suppressed and one's will is under control from the outside. As we saw demonstrated in his speech "On the Three Metamorphoses," Zarathustra praises the lion-spirit who has the courage to will against the great dragon "Thou shalt" (Z I "On the Three Metamorphoses").

As Nietzsche's philosophy demonstrates, most moralities and popular philosophies have worked against the cultivation of an authentic existence. He here directly accuses the organized religion of Christianity preventing the *Übermensch*. He writes: "Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base . . . it has made an ideal of whatever *contradicts* the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself" (A 5). This charge reflects Zarathustra's request for us to "*remain faithful to the earth*" (Z I, "Zarathustra's Prologue," 3). Nietzsche's concept of authenticity involves embracing the physical embodiment of existence, including pain and strife. In The Antichrist, he writes that Christianity is characterized by "hatred of the *spirit*, of pride, courage, freedom, liberty of the spirit; Christianity is the hatred of the *senses*, of joy in the senses, of joy itself" (A 21). We recall a similar sentiment expressed by Zarathustra (Z I, "On the Afterworldly"). Nietzsche will further the charge: "When one places life's center of gravity not in life but in the 'beyond' — *in nothingness*

— one deprives life of its center of gravity altogether” (A 42). According to Nietzsche, Christianity, like any dogmatic philosophy, perpetuates a nihilistic state of existence where greatness and health are discouraged rather than cultivated.

Turning from the crowd and having the courage to create value for oneself, conditions necessary for the achievement of human greatness, are present again in The Antichrist. Nietzsche states: “A virtue must be *our own* invention, *our* most necessary self-expression and self-defense: any other kind of virtue is merely a danger” (A 11). Health is to be found in individual self-examination, rather than being imposed from outside. He continues to stress the self over the herd, the individual over the community. Greatness and virtue are cultivated in dangerous contests. Nietzsche here calls for the necessary recognition of the “*pathos of distance*” — which we have already seen in BGE 257 — for the sake of a healthy culture (A 43). But with this recognition of a difference amongst individuals, amongst those who can command and those who should obey, amongst higher and lower castes, “responsibility increases” (A 57). In the same aphorism he suggests: “As one climbs *higher*, life becomes harder” (A 57).

Conway, who claims that Nietzsche failed to clearly establish the conditions he considered necessary for greatness,⁷⁹ considers The Antichrist to be a better representation of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* than Thus Spoke Zarathustra or any previous writing. In an interesting attempt to correct supposed misinterpretations of “Zarathustra's faulty teaching of the *Übermensch*,”⁸⁰ Conway re-interprets the figure and Nietzsche's conception of “higher humanity” in relation writings found in The Antichrist. He contends, as he does elsewhere, that Zarathustra did not provide necessary conditions for the possibility of greatness. Claiming that the representation of the *Übermensch* in the later writing marks a considerable difference due to Nietzsche's clarity and emphasis on certain concepts, Conway states that the notion that “the *Übermensch* is willed” is missing from previous accounts. Oddly enough, Conway himself refers to “Schopenhauer as Educator,” indicating that the project of human authenticity (and that it is something *willed*) was present within Nietzsche's philosophy as early as 1874. As we are called to focus our attention on “what type of man shall be *bred*, shall be *willed*” (A 3), we are reminded of the task present in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” “*to foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints within us and around us, and thereby to work towards the perfection of nature*” (SE 5). Conway further claims this later configuration of “higher humanity” found in The Antichrist is a more accurate portrayal of the Nietzsche's notion of the “revaluation of all values.”⁸¹ However, as we have seen throughout, Nietzsche has stressed the relativity of good and evil, calling on his *Übermenschen* to create value for themselves. This is clearly stated by Zarathustra: “You shall create a higher body, a first movement, a self-propelled wheel — you shall create a creator” (Z I, “On Child and Marriage”). The notion is present in the very title of the

⁷⁹Conway “Overcoming the *Übermensch*,” p. 212.

⁸⁰Conway, “The Genius as Squanderer,” p. 81.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 83.

following work, Beyond Good and Evil. Though Conway is correct to point out that The Antichrist gives us a picture of Nietzsche's concept of "higher humanity" as developed in his later works, we can see that the major elements of his philosophy stay consistent throughout.

Though we have limited our investigation to only two texts composed prior to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, the concern for the production of human greatness (and even the symbol of the *Übermensch*) remains constant through Nietzsche's philosophy. Conway attempts to trace what he terms Nietzsche's "political perfectionism" through Twilight of the Idols.⁸² Though he contends elsewhere that the project of the *Übermensch* has been abandoned,⁸³ Conway here suggests otherwise:

Borrowing from Pindar, a predecessor moral perfectionist, Nietzsche exhorts himself and (some of) his readers with the slogan that he incorporates into the subtitle of his 'autobiography': *become what you are . . .* One is obliged, in short, to produce oneself as an *ubermenschlich* human being.⁸⁴

As has been demonstrated, the *Übermensch* can be seen present throughout his entire corpus. Of the six texts published in Nietzsche's productive time following Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil and The Antichrist seem more appropriate to aid in defining his concept of authenticity. We have seen a direct correlation of ideas and a repetition of imagery throughout his work; notions present in texts written in the last productive year, 1888, directly reflect the thoughts in his first published writings. Rudiger Safranski, as previously noted, suggests that the theme of self-enhancement can be seen throughout Nietzsche's philosophy, as early as unpublished teenaged essays.⁸⁵ Authenticity is represented by the strong and courageous individual who turns away from the dictates of society to discover their own selves, creating value for their own existence. Through personalizing virtue, Nietzsche builds a philosophy which, he believes, will cultivate further instances of authenticity and greatness. To encourage acts of courage and creation, Nietzsche considered the element of the contest — as he envisaged present in Ancient Greece — to be of utmost importance. Artists flourish under pressure and challenge. From his first works to his last, the brilliant figure of the *Übermensch* is unquestionably present.

⁸²See Conway, Nietzsche and the Political, chapter 3: "Perfectionism in Twilight of the Idols," pp. 43-60.

⁸³Conway, "Overcoming the *Übermensch*" p. 216.

⁸⁴Conway, Nietzsche and the Political, p. 54.

⁸⁵Safranski, p. 36.

CONCLUSION

It has been charged Nietzsche's symbol of the *Übermensch* embodies the very nihilistic elements he wishes to critique and correct in humanity. Some critics have contended that Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is to be interpreted as the redeemer of humankind, as a figure which ultimately dismisses current existence for something idealistic.⁸⁶ If we return once again to one of Nietzsche's earliest pieces, "Schopenhauer as Educator," we find the following passage:

Our curious existence in precisely this Now gives us the strongest encouragement to live according to our own standards and laws: the inexplicable fact that we live precisely today and yet had the infinity of time in which to come into being precisely at this moment. We are accountable to ourselves for our own existence. (SE 1)

In "Schopenhauer as Educator" a young Nietzsche asks: "What *present* conditions would we have to wish or, if need be, provide for an emerging philosopher so as to make it possible for him to breathe at all and, in the most favorable case, attain an existence like that of Schopenhauer — something that is by no means easy, but at least possible?" (SE 7). Zarathustra's quest, the whole reason for leaving his cave and his solitude, is to bring the gift of his wisdom, the teaching of the *Übermensch*, which exemplifies personal cultivation. As Golomb has stated, this is "'a mere instrument' to entice us to form our authenticity."⁸⁷ If we do not examine our own existence and begin by working on the self, the *Übermensch* will never come to be. Although humanity as a whole has failed, "success in individual cases is constantly encountered in the most widely different places and cultures: here we really do find a *higher type*, which is, in relation to mankind as a whole, a kind of overman. Such fortunate accidents have always been possible and *will* always be possible" (A 4). Authenticity is always attainable and creating the *Übermensch* is constantly in the cards as long as human beings exist. The symbol of the *Übermensch* does not dismiss current existence for something ideal or imaginary, for it is to be cultivated by each individual person, for as long as they live, and does not transcend that personal existence. Nietzsche's philosophy can be seen as a "literary enticement to form powerful and authentic selves."⁸⁸ It is a call to cultivate the *Übermensch* within each of us. It is a call for self-examination. As he states: "For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself" (GS 290)

Though the direct teaching of the *Übermensch* is found almost exclusively within the pages

⁸⁶ Ansell-Pearson, p. 102.

⁸⁷ Jacob Golomb, "Nietzsche on Authenticity" *Philosophy Today* 34:3 Fall (1990), p. 247.

⁸⁸ Golomb, p. 248.

of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, it is clear that Nietzsche does not abandon the teaching, and it has been demonstrated as significant at all stages of the philosopher's career. If anything, we see how the *Übermensch* becomes clearer in later work, as ideas are repeated and rehashed in his characterization of authenticity. Though rarely mentioned after Zarathustra, the project of working towards producing an authentic existence and the attempt to re-interest humanity in this goal of cultivation— again, a project the *Übermensch* symbolizes — occupies his thoughts until the end of his life. Nietzsche had the highest praise for his Zarathustra and the philosophy to be found within its pages, often returning to figures and imagery originating in the earlier text. We see him fantasize about future students studying his work at institutions of higher learning (EH “Why I Write Such Good Books,” 1). In The Antichrist, he quotes directly from Thus Spoke Zarathustra (A 53), and Zarathustra's strength and freedom are praised (A 54). Here again we see evidence that Conway's charge of inconsistency proves problematic. Quite clearly, Nietzsche's work demonstrates a high level of consistency pertaining to his thoughts on human greatness and the conditions he thought necessary for its achievement also stay the same, from his earliest writings until his last.

Whether evoked through the title *Übermensch*, “free spirit,” or “philosopher of the future,” the *type* is seemingly characterized synonymously as one who is courageous, creating his or her own values based on the discovery of personal health and virtues. Though the moniker changes, the ingredients and conditions of greatness remain consistent. Zarathustra states:

The most concerned ask today: “How is man to be preserved?” But Zarathustra is the first and only one to ask: “How is man to be overcome?” I have the overman at heart, *that* is my first and only concern . . . what I can love in man is that he is an overture and a going under. And in you too there is much that lets me love and hope. (Z IV, “On the Higher Man,” 3)

Similarly, we recall the “free spirits” characterized as those who have “opened their eyes and conscience to the question where and how the plant ‘man’ has so far grown most vigorously to a height” (BGE 44). As early as “Schopenhauer as Educator” he establishes that cultivating human authenticity is the goal at which humanity must aim, and this remains of the highest interest for the philosopher until his last composed writings. Opposing dogmatic philosophy, Nietzsche calls for readers to cultivate the *Übermensch*, which requires personal self-examination rather than appealing to an already established set of rules.

Attacking dogmatic philosophies and moral systems, Nietzsche attempts to build an ethic not based upon any conception of a “common good” or universal code of behavior. He stresses the importance of self-discovery and self-examination in the cultivation of personal virtues. He writes: “It is selfish to experience one's own judgement as universal law; and this selfishness is blind, petty, and frugal because it betrays that you have not yet discovered nor created for yourself an ideal of your own, your very own — for that could never be somebody else's and much less that of all” (GS 335). He later states: “there are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena” (BGE 108). It is clear that his concern is for the self rather than the other, and he considers virtue as personal, “in common with nobody” (ZI, “On Enjoying and

Suffering the Passions”). In order to achieve an authentic existence, we must be free to develop our own character — through experimentation and being “*attempters*” (BGE 42) — working towards being able to create our own values and legislate our own lives. This method involves deep self-examination to discover if one can command or create new value, only available by a heightened level of self-confidence. Nietzsche writes: “One must learn to love oneself — thus I teach — with wholesome and healthy love, so that one can bear to be with oneself and need not roam” (Z III “On the Spirit of Gravity” 2). This is similar to the sentiment found in later writings (see, for example, EH “Why I Am So Clever,” 10). His ethics stresses love of the self as prerequisite of achieving authenticity.

One of the goals of Nietzsche’s philosophy is to prove that good and evil are relative terms, particular to an individual, dependant on their history and environment. He considers any morality or religion which enforces a unified behavior or strict table of values to be detrimental to the project of cultivating greatness (detrimental to human existence itself). Nietzsche’s philosophy is an attempt to prove that these systems perpetuate nihilism, creating a society in which herd mentality, rather than individual achievement, prevails. Zarathustra says: “to lure many away from the herd, for that I have come.” In the same passage, he addresses the importance of our becoming creators, “those who write new values on new tablets” (Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 9). This is the code or method he proposes: a system that encourages the cultivation of unique, individual identity rather than a universal way, is the only method for fostering authenticity. We see this element present in Zarathustra teaching of the *Übermensch*. He states: “This is *my* way; where is yours? . . . For *the* way — that does not exist” (Z III “On the Spirit of Gravity” 2). Perhaps giving us some indication of the difficulty of composing a set of characteristics of the symbol, the image is “open” to personal interpretation, and needs to be defined with broad and general terms (as I have done here). Each is her or his own possibility of the *Übermensch* if one is able to learn to command and create. Nietzsche “tried to construct a philosophy consistent with the extraordinary openness he felt was available to man.”⁸⁹ Implied in Nietzsche’s critique of dogmatic philosophies is the highest emphasis upon the virtue of creativity. As opposed to the notion of “discipleship,” as suggested by Leslie Paul Thiele,⁹⁰ we are urged to “*become those we are* — human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves law, who create themselves” (GS 335). Zarathustra will ask: “Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your own will over yourself as law?” (Z I, “On the Way of the Creator”).

The virtue of creativity (or the act of freely creating value for one’s self) is given the utmost significance in the cultivation of the *Übermensch*. To be authentic is to be a creator of new values, rather than a follower of popular morality. This thinker considered the act of creating value to be so important, he insisted that it defined human existence itself. He writes, we recall: “Only man placed values in things to preserve himself — he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself “man,” which means: the esteemer” (Z I, “On the

⁸⁹Arthur C. Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher (New York: MacMillan, 1968), p. 12.

⁹⁰Thiele, p. 169.

Thousand and One Goals”). The self is the root of all value and creation (GS 301). The authentic is the individual who, like Schopenhauer, moves away from the herd and away from preachers of universal tables of good and evil. Against old codes of ethics the lion takes a stand against the dragon “Thou Shalt” and attempts to set the stage for their own future and the child who can create value (Z I, “On the Three Metamorphoses”). This must be understood and achieved for us to cultivate the *Übermensch*.

Further, we have heard Zarathustra speak of courage and emphasize the role that contest plays in this quest for authenticity and his *Übermensch*. We find Schopenhauer's strong will praised in an early essay, his “unbending and rugged manliness”(SE 7) enabled him to cultivate his individual authenticity. Nietzsche repeatedly links courage as prerequisite of the creation of new values (for example, GS 55). His free spirit recognizes the “hardness” necessary for the production of authenticity (BGE 41). As what is unique and new is often called, by the herd, “evil” (GS 4), so the *Übermensch* must possess the courage to do battle with those opposed to the creation of new value.

Nietzsche believes “open enemies” (GS 169) push us to achieve greatness. He thought that the Ancient Greeks achieved a more successful society based on the cultivation of greatness as demonstrated in their emphasis on the contest. As a young Nietzsche writes: “The greater and more sublime a Greek is, the brighter the flame of ambition that flares out of him, consuming everybody who runs on the same course” (HC p. 35). We see a similar sentiment at work in the *Übermensch*, who must exhibit this “flame of ambition” in order to cultivate his or her uniqueness. In the unpublished essay, he speculates: “Every talent must unfold itself in fighting” (HC p. 37). Zarathustra will likewise claim: “We do not want to be spared by our best enemies . . . War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of the neighbor” (Z I “On War and Warriors”). Again, it would seem inconsistent with published texts to suggest that when Nietzsche praises “war” he was advocating violence. He addresses his own war-like existence in *Ecce Homo*, stating how it relates to his own philosophic writings (EH “Why I Am So Wise” 7). The contest he imagines is between creators, between artists. Just as is proposed was particular of Ancient Greek culture, Nietzsche holds this “flame of ambition” to be important throughout his work.

As has been clearly shown, Nietzsche's philosophy provides clear and sufficient conditions for the possibility of cultivating authenticity. Zarathustra's *Übermensch*, a symbol of human greatness, striking out against dogmatic philosophies and pre-established, universal codes of ethics, recognizes that God is dead and wishes to “remain faithful to the earth” (Z I, “Zarathustra's Prologue,” 3). Nietzsche believed we need to embrace all aspects of life, suffering and evil included, if we are to cultivate greatness. Unlike the *last man*, who is a product of herd morality and dogmatic philosophy, who is “small,” the *Übermensch* symbolizes something higher, one who has “overcome” the small existence. Strength is defined, as we see clearly in Zarathustra's speech “On the Three Metamorphoses,” by one who can freely create value for his or her own existence. Through creativity, courage and the “flame of ambition” for the contest, we see how Nietzsche repeatedly characterizes his conception of authenticity. If we are able to overcome dogmatic philosophy and work towards creating our own value, the *Übermensch* remains a true possibility.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

English translations of texts by Friedrich Nietzsche have been cited by abbreviation and section number (with the exception of “Homer’s Contest,” which is referenced by abbreviation and page number).

- AC The Antichrist. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. The Portable Nietzsche Edited and Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin, 1982, pp 565-656.
- BGE Beyond Good and Evil. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1966.
- EH Ecce Homo. Translated Walter Kaufmann. On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo. New York: Vintage, 1967, pp. 201-344.
- GS The Gay Science. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- HC “Homer’s Contest.” Translated by Walter Kaufmann. The Portable Nietzsche. New York: Penguin, 1982, pp 32-39.
- SE “Schopenhauer as Educator.” Translated by Richard T. Grey. Unfashionable Observations. Chicago: Stanford University Press, 1995, pp. 169-255.
- Z Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. The Portable Nietzsche. New York: Penguin, 1982, pp 103-439.

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