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**NIETZSCHE AND THE “FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF ‘MAN AND WOMAN’”**

**By**

**Elizabeth Rebecca Kaufer**

**A DISSERTATION**

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## ABSTRACT

### NIETZSCHE AND THE 'FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF 'MAN AND WOMAN''

By

Elizabeth Rebecca Kaufer

This study is an attempt to understand Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps the most unabashed critic of liberalism, and the modern condition by examining Nietzsche's insistence on maintaining a differentiation of the sexes. Over a century ago Nietzsche warned that the egalitarian and feminist movements threatened to homogenize society--a prospect that horrified him to no end. Nietzsche's underlying critique of egalitarianism is too serious to ignore. Nietzsche recognizes that establishing the proper the relations between the sexes constitutes a cardinal problem--for man, for woman, and for society at large. Although the dissertation is critical of Nietzsche's prescriptions in several instances (such as his suggestion that women ought to be treated as concubines), Nietzsche's criticisms are nevertheless worthy of serious scrutiny. Anyone who cares seriously about the future relations between the sexes, the equal treatment of man and woman, the fight for equal access to education, the condition of the family, or the possibility of fulfilling love between the sexes would be well-advised to engage Nietzsche's critique of the modern condition. The ultimate purpose of reading Nietzsche, the opponent of egalitarianism par excellence, is to formulate a defense of women's liberation and find a responsible notion of equal rights. Nevertheless, it may not be possible to find such a defense in his thought, since Nietzsche is no liberal democrat. The effort yields some intriguing results. Though Nietzsche does not offer much hope for the liberated woman, the dissertation concludes by making some suggestions for ennobling liberal democratic politics. My suggestions arise from considering the problems that Nietzsche helps to raise.

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To Dr. William Shapiro,  
my teacher and friend

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO NIETZSCHE ON WOMEN

Why are Nietzsche's Comments on Woman Worth Considering?	1
Why Scholars Have Neglected Nietzsche's Teaching on Woman	4
The Use and Abuse of Nietzsche by Feminists	9
Myths and Deconstruction	17
Freudian Psychobabble: Nietzsche's Mother and Sister	19
Baubo and other Myths Exaggerated to Epic Proportions	21
Woman, Women, and the Feminine	23

### CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALIZING NIETZSCHE'S COMMENTS ON WOMAN

Criticism of Woman's "Liberation"	26
How to read Nietzsche	31
The Four Components of the Nietzschean System	35
<i>God is Dead</i>	35
<i>Übermensch</i>	36
<i>Will to Power</i>	42
<i>Eternal Return of the Same</i>	43
Is Nietzsche Guilty of a Metaphysical Relapse?	45

### CHAPTER 3: NIETZSCHE'S REVALUATION OF NIHILISM

The Fundamental Fact of Modernity	48
Problem of Communicating and Communicability	51
Truth as Woman	53
The Substantive Meaning of the Death of God	60
The Implications of the Death of God	63
How the Historical Sense Killed God	64
Is All Truth Perspectival?	67
Critique of Sterile Historians, Objectivity, and Modern Scholars	70
The Tension Between Life and Knowledge	77
The Fertile Genius	78
<i>The Female Scholar: A Paradox</i>	80
<i>Why Man Is "The Sterile Animal"</i>	84
Nietzsche's Standard to Replace the Historical Sense	85

### CHAPTER 4: THE ÜBERMENSCH

Return to Nature	89
Übermensch versus Übermenschen	93
What is the Übermensch?	98
Has There Ever Been an Übermensch?	102
Creative Evolution	106
Malleability of Humans	108
The First <i>Human</i> Ideal	109
Nietzsche's Focus on the Body	111
Should Biology Matter?	114
The Relationship Between Physiology and Psychology	117
The Übermensch as the Ideal to Counter the Last Man	120
The Significance of the Übermensch's Sex	122
The Übermensch as a Child and Mother	123
The Respective Roles of Man and Woman in the Creating of the Übermensch	124

<b>CHAPTER 5: WILL TO POWER</b>	
Why the Übermensch Must Be Willed.....	133
What is the Will to Power?.....	134
The Relation Between Will to Power and Instinct.....	137
The Masculine and The Feminine Drive.....	139
Life as the Will to Power.....	142
Commanding and Obeying.....	146
Ressentiment and Willing.....	148
Will and Willingness.....	150
Why Women Have Not Created Ideals, Values, or Moralities.....	165
Love as Will to Power.....	170
The Will to Truth (Philosophy).....	171
Sexual Love.....	174
The Relationship Between the Body and Will.....	178
<b>CHAPTER 6: ETERNAL RECURRENCE</b>	
The Eternal Return of the Same as a Scientific Fact.....	180
Willing versus Affirming.....	182
What is the Eternal Recurrence of the Same?.....	183
The Eagle and the Serpent--a Metaphor for Eternal Recurrence.....	188
The Implications of the Eternal Recurrence.....	191
Is the Eternal Recurrence a New Metaphysics?.....	196
Löwith's Criticism.....	198
The Greatest Weight or the Highest Affirmation of Life?.....	202
What Happens to the Will to Power and the Übermensch Doctrines?.....	209
Prerequisites For Acceptance of the Eternal Recurrence.....	210
The Relationship Between the Eternal Recurrence and the Eternal Dichotomy of the "Masculine" and "Feminine".....	212
Eternally Hostile War Between the Sexes.....	213
<b>CHAPTER 7: NIETZSCHE'S "TRUTHS" ABOUT WOMAN</b>	
Do Nietzsche's Observations Warrant a Privileged Status?.....	216
Critique of Universal Education.....	219
What Does the "Enlightened" Woman Abandon?.....	226
Criticism of Feminism.....	234
What is Feminine?.....	244
Equality and Sameness.....	247
Why an Aristocracy is Needed: The "Pathos of Distance".....	248
Transvaluation of Neighbor love and Christian Friendship.....	249
Love and Duality.....	253
Nietzsche's New Definition of Marriage.....	260
An Alternative: Solitude.....	264
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION</b>	
Which Sex is Superior?.....	268
Are Man and Woman Different By <i>Nature</i> or By <i>Nietzsche's Nature</i> ?.....	275
Is Nietzsche's Standard of Nature a Fixed, Eternal Truth?.....	280
Can Liberal Democrats Find a Practical Teaching in Nietzsche's Thought?.....	282
Can Feminists Learn From Nietzsche?.....	287
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>290</b>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Why are Nietzsche's Comments on Woman Worth Considering?

Since the outset of the feminist movement, women “have been claiming the right to be members of society and citizens of the state on an equal level with men” (Okin, 4). And women have made progress toward this goal. For example, Gail Evans notes that women now make up over 46% of the total work force in the U.S. Yet in spite of these strides toward complete equality between the sexes, many women are left feeling isolated, depressed, or disenchanted both at work and at home. This disillusionment probably should not surprise us. Our contemporaries write polemic after polemic demanding equal rights for women in all aspects of life while disregarding any potential repercussions such rights might entail (for the individual woman, for the family, for women, for society at large). No longer is it considered relevant or even permissible to question the legitimacy of sexual equality as a goal; instead, the task is to devise ways to achieve that goal ever more quickly. Our “ardent, insatiable, eternal, and invincible” passion for equality (Tocqueville, 506) will not be quenched until society has become completely color-blind, gender-blind, sex-blind--in short, blind. Yet there is no clear evidence that the social conventions today are an improvement over those of previous generations. Predictably, the failure to question the validity of this pursuit has led to our inability to manage (or even acknowledge) the deleterious consequences of women's liberation such as anxiety, divorce, declining social connectedness, and isolation experienced by women. But contemporary American feminists rarely acknowledge that these issues are even problems for women. At most, they would have us believe that the root of the dissatisfaction experienced by so many women lies in our inability to receive equal treatment in the workplace.

Gail Evans' recently published and well-received book *Play like a Man, Win Like a Woman* represents the culmination of this trend and epitomizes the thinking so typical in contemporary American political thought. Feminists like Evans would have us believe that the root of the isolation and dissatisfaction experienced by a multitude of women today is

the failure of achieving real equality.<sup>1</sup> Evans, like Okin and many other contemporary feminists, implicitly measures real equality “in terms of characteristics traditionally valued in citizens, such as education, economic independence, or occupational status” (Okin, 287). Without questioning those traditionally valued bourgeois goals, Evans seeks to help other women achieve those goals more easily. Evans, therefore, offers women a handbook of rules that will guide them to such success in the workplace. Her solution to this problem is to teach women to “play like men” instead of women. But playing like a man does not simply mean following Evans’s list of hitherto unwritten business rules; it actually means fighting women’s feminine inclinations, habituating women into having masculine emotions, masculine reactions, and most importantly, masculine goals.<sup>2</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps the most unabashed critic of liberalism, feminism and egalitarianism, warns us to be aware of this direction in which we are heading. Over a century ago Nietzsche warned that the feminist movement threatened to turn women into men--a prospect that horrified him. The foundation of his rejection of feminism is his

<sup>1</sup>Evans recognizes women are discontent, but misconstrues the reasons why. She, for example, notes that “Many of us [women] aren’t always clear about what we want from this thing called a career. We anguish over whether it will be a career at all, or just a job to provide supplementary income. We obsess about whether it will have any real meaning to us, or whether we are doing it solely to please our family. We have incessant internal discussions over where we are going, and the route never seems to be as direct as we thought. ...We live in what I call divine discontent” (Evans, 25). Her explanation for why men do not experience the same type of discontent is due to the fact that “For most men, the actual job content isn’t crucial. The trappings of success, such as title, prestige, and/or money can ameliorate the boring, unpleasant daily grind.” (ibid.). Evans implicitly acknowledges that women may be constituted differently from men by nature and therefore may seek different goals at work, but Evans nevertheless tries to find ways for women to “succeed” in the workplace by becoming CEOs like men. Evans fails to make the necessary connection that women may not seek the prestige, title, or money to the same degree as men and *this* may explain why women do not become CEOs of the top corporations--not discrimination and not women’s misunderstanding of man’s business rules.

<sup>2</sup>Here are some examples of woman playing like a man in Evans’ game. She begins by telling women not to be modest--instead they should toot their own horn, speak up, grab the best seat at the conference table. She tells women not to expect to make friends at work (Evans, 79). Friends are not the goal, money, title, prestige, and office space are worthy goals at work. It escapes Evans concern that making friends may be a reason that women seek employment. She tells women to take the big central office even if she is more comfortable in a smaller, cozier one (ibid., 91). She suggests women place themselves in a sexually neutral environment (ibid., 124). If one is not yet convinced that Evans intends to desex women, she adds that men can have sex with co-workers (i.e., he can maintain his masculinity and sexuality), but women cannot (ibid., 124-125).

disagreement with the very core of democratic morality, which is based on the notion of universal equal rights. His criticisms of extending equal rights to women fall into three general categories. First, he challenges the goal of establishing complete equality because it implies treating unequals as equals. In practice, this means attempting to ignore even the most obvious physical differences between man and woman. Nietzsche predicts that promoting this ignorance will make man and woman more and more alike. He reviles against the disappearance of separate roles for man and woman, not because it is “unnatural” and not because he wants to subordinate woman to man, but because this homogenization is evidence of a decaying human species. Second, feminists and other egalitarians actively seek to teach woman to be like man, which, Nietzsche argues, is the surest road to her enslavement, not her empowerment. Woman’s so-called equal rights destroy the uniquely feminine attributes that should serve as her source of liberty and strength. Third, Nietzsche suggests that woman lacks genuine self-understanding--she does not really *want* to be man’s equal (i.e., identical to man). Women may not find fulfillment in the same activities, occupations, or rewards as men.

In light of current social trends, the plausibility of Nietzsche’s assessment is startling. Nietzsche would provide as evidence that the isolation and dissatisfaction that so many women are experiencing in the workplace and in the family is a direct consequence of woman’s lack of self-understanding. Although Nietzsche is not primarily concerned with woman’s fulfillment, his challenges to feminism provide an explanation for why women today are unhappy. If Nietzsche is correct that the emancipation of women inevitably leads to homogenization and that homogenization leads necessarily to her mediocrity and dissatisfaction, scholars would be wise to consider what can be done to correct these flaws. Nietzsche suggests that teaching women to play like men (which in effect means to “become men”) is the very source of society’s problems today. His underlying critique of the homogenization of society is too serious for feminists, contemporary scholars, and women generally to ignore.

## **Why Scholars Have Neglected Nietzsche's Teaching on Woman**

Nevertheless, contemporary Nietzsche scholarship has ignored this fundamental aspect of Nietzsche's thought. Indeed, most scholarship on Nietzsche's discussion of women does not recognize the issue of homogenization as the core of Nietzsche's thought on women. The scholarship on this subject falls into four general categories. First, there are those who read Nietzsche as an unabashed misogynist and simply dismiss him as undemocratic. These writers refuse to scrutinize his comments and dismiss them out of hand. Second, some scholars *attempt* to turn him into some type of leftist or feminist because they understand his perspectivism as source of inspiration for their egalitarianism. These apologists for Nietzsche attempt to assimilate what they consider to be the favorable aspects of Nietzsche's thought as a way to equalize the sexes, which Nietzsche wholeheartedly opposed. Third, others focus entirely on Nietzsche's use of myth. This group tends to duck the political ramifications of Nietzsche's teaching on the sexes and instead focus on style and poetics. Finally, some scholars try to explain Nietzsche's discussion of women through Freudian psychoanalysis of Nietzsche's relationship with his mother and his sister. None of the modern scholarship takes the issue of sexual homogenization seriously enough. As a result, scholars misunderstand Nietzsche's teaching on the sexes and fail to heed his warnings. Furthermore, democratic prejudices have corrupted virtually all scholarship on Nietzsche and women. The result is that those who study Nietzsche tend to take one of two extreme positions. Either they dismiss him altogether because he is not democratic, or they mold him for some liberal democratic use. Still others attempt to reinvent Nietzsche's teachings for the sake of some unclear egalitarian goal, without any attempt to understand him.

Traditionally, scholars have avoided the issue of women in Nietzsche's writings because it offends their liberal democratic sensibilities. For instance, Nietzsche's notorious comments about women have led Walter Kaufmann to dismiss him as a misogynist. Burgard attributes the general avoidance and misunderstanding of Nietzsche's teaching on



the sexes in contemporary scholarship to Kaufmann's dismissal of the teaching (Burgard, 2). But Burgard fails to notice that Kaufmann is simply voicing the deeply held opinion of most contemporary scholars. Since they cannot excuse Nietzsche's so-called misogynistic words, Kaufmann and others argue that they are "philosophically irrelevant" aspects of Nietzsche's thought that are not even worthy of our attention (Kaufmann, 84).

Kaufmann's translations are replete with footnotes that simply dismiss Nietzsche's arguments as random, incorrect, misogynistic assertions. In reference to Nietzsche's insistence that those who fail to understand the problem of "man and woman" are too shallow for all fundamental problems of life (BGE, 238),<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann snidely notes in a footnote, "Fortunately for Nietzsche, this is surely wrong. But it is worth asking which, if any, of his other ideas are of a piece with his secondhand wisdom about 'woman' ...At these points Nietzsche's deliberate 'untimeliness' now seems time-bound, dated, and as shallow as what he attacked" (BGE, 238, n. 31).<sup>4</sup> Of course, Kaufmann offers no contextual analysis of Nietzsche's "time-bound" statements in his footnotes. On the contrary, Kaufmann's and others' dismissal of Nietzsche's writings on the sexes is time-bound itself because their objections are inextricably rooted in liberal democratic prejudices. Hastily dismissing the relevance of Nietzsche's posturings on woman enables Kaufmann to

<sup>3</sup>All subsequent references to *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Gay Science* will cite the aphorism only. References to *On the Genealogy of Morals* will cite to the essay number and aphorism. I will cite the volume and aphorism number of references to *Human all-too-Human*. References to the rest of Nietzsche's texts (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ*, *Ecce Homo*, *The Use and Abuse of History*, and *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*) will cite the page number of the reference. References to *The Will to Power* will cite the fragment number as listed in Kaufmann's edition. With the exception of R.J. Hollingdale's translation of *Human all-too-Human*, Middleton's *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, and Adrian Collins' edition of *The Use and Abuse of History*, all references will cite the Kaufmann editions.

An additional note about the 1989 translation of *Beyond Good and Evil* is needed here. Apparently in publishing the 1989 edition of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Kaufmann made some changes in the translation. However, Kaufmann makes no note in the 1989 edition that he has updated the translation. Consequently, certain passages cited from the 1989 edition of this text may be different from the same sections in the previous Kaufmann editions.

<sup>4</sup>Other examples include: BGE, 232, n. 23; GS, 72, n. 9.

defend Nietzsche's philosophy. Bruce Detwiler falls into the same trap. He notes that Nietzsche's "views on women need no comment except to say they are probably the most thoroughly discredited aspects of his thought" (Detwiler, 193). Although Detwiler gives a thorough discussion of the other aspects of Nietzsche's politics, he still goes to great lengths to distance himself from the "unabashed misogynist" (Detwiler, 15).

In sum, rather than consider whether Nietzsche really understood women, most Nietzsche scholars, including such notable examples as Kaufmann and Detwiler, have ignored or simply overlooked this aspect of Nietzsche's thought altogether. Nietzsche's views on women are discredited because they are adverse to liberal democratic ears and they are ignored because they are discredited. Many modern intellectuals do not embrace (or even consider seriously) Nietzsche's politics because he is an outspoken opponent of feminism and egalitarianism. But the fact that Nietzsche's words initially *seem* to be chauvinistic does not justify ignoring his teaching on the sexes altogether. As Ophelia Schutte rightly argues, "the weeding out of the least attractive elements in Nietzsche's work amounts to either self-deceit or censorship, and ...this practice keeps us from understanding the whole of Nietzsche's vision" (Schutte, 1984, 186). At the very least, Nietzsche scholars need to explain why he discusses women at all. Given the hasty dismissal of such a discussion, an examination of Nietzsche's teaching becomes singularly important.

One reason why Kaufmann fails to give the proper attention to Nietzsche's discussion of woman is because he interprets Nietzsche as an anti-political or apolitical proponent of individual creativity.<sup>5</sup> Kaufmann does not fully appreciate the extent to which

<sup>5</sup>For a critique of the anti-political interpretations of Nietzsche, consult Detwiler's book *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*. Although Detwiler offers a balanced account of Nietzsche's aristocratic leanings, he still ducks the issue of women. Similarly, Bergmann's *Nietzsche, "the Last Antipolitical German"* explores Nietzsche's thought within the context of the politics of his time. The fact that Nietzsche called himself "antipolitical" does not imply that he has no political teaching, according to Bergmann. Bergmann argues that both the apologists and critics of Nietzsche fail "to consider Nietzsche's politics as a whole" (Bergmann, 1). Although Bergmann attempts to fill in this gap in the research, he also does not systematically analyze the subject of women and its implications for the Nietzschean system. Though this is not his main purpose in writing the book, a complete understanding of Nietzsche's politics

Nietzsche's revaluation of values is an inherently political act. Nietzsche's reevaluation consists mainly of transcending Christianity, which also includes an overturning of liberal democratic politics and the enlightenment project. And since his revaluation is overtly political, Nietzsche's sexual politics are relevant in at least two respects. First, the initial step in Nietzsche's task is to destroy the remnants of current democratic regime which promotes feminist ideology and egalitarian sexual relations. And as Joel Schwartz notes, "the manner in which sexual relationships are conducted is relative to (and relevant for the understanding of the preservation, transformation, and destruction of) the political regimes in which they occur" (Schwartz, 5). Second, Nietzsche intends to "*posit a goal and mold facts according to it*" (WP, 605).<sup>6</sup> Achieving this new goal (i.e., the *Übermensch*) will generate an entirely new politics. And the radical order of rank (the "pathos of distance") he proposes requires a new arrangement of sexual relations (an eternally hostile war between the sexes) which Nietzsche indicates is of fundamental importance. Nietzsche's prescriptions for sexual relations are essential elements of a revaluation of democratic values (in particular, equal rights and freedom from suffering) and a positing of a new goal for humanity (the *Übermensch*). But even more importantly, his discussion of why masculinity and femininity ought to be preserved, and his recognition of the threat of their complete erosion make Nietzsche's insights relevant for men and women today.

Martha Nussbaum goes a step further than Kaufmann and Detwiler. Without any sustained analysis of his political teachings on woman, she dismisses Nietzsche as a misogynist and consequently concludes that Nietzsche is not a political thinker at all, for, requires an examination of his views on women as they relate to his political goals.

<sup>6</sup>A note of caution on the use of *Ecce Homo* and *Will to Power* is needed here. Nietzsche wrote *Ecce Homo* when his mental health was failing and it is not clear how much of this work is colored by his insanity. There has been a considerable amount of controversy regarding the relevance of *The Will to Power* because it was unfinished and published after Nietzsche's death under the supervision of Nietzsche's sister. Strictly speaking, the work consists of fragments, not polished aphorisms. When I consider *Ecce Homo* and *The Will to Power*, I do so to elaborate or highlight Nietzsche's arguments in his other works. For a fuller discussion of the status of *The Will to Power* and a list of relevant sources on the controversy, see n. 9 of Dannhauser's *Nietzsche's View of Socrates* (Dannhauser, 1974, 18-19).

she implies, no *serious* political thinker could reach his anti-egalitarian, anti-feminist, anti-woman conclusions. She asserts:

There is nothing in Nietzsche on the topic of women and the family--a topic to which he devotes a good deal of space, and concerning which he is inordinately proud of his insights--that is any more than the silly posturings of an inexperienced vain adolescent male. His musings on women's guile, stupidity, sensuality, and mendacity are like little extracts from Rousseau *without the argument or the subtlety* (Nussbaum, 5, emphasis added).

Nussbaum continues by listing some of Nietzsche's prescriptions:

He proposes the elimination of marriages founded upon love... He proposes the reintroduction of socially approved concubinage.... He is adamantly opposed, repeatedly and *without argument*, to women's suffrage. He opposes measures to extend higher education equally to women, offering in argument only the consideration that the exceptional woman cannot prove her exceptional character except by surmounting adversities... These proposals and others like them, as Nietzsche articulates them--that is to say, *without any analysis or sustained argument*--are not even worth getting irritated about. Twelve-year-old boys say many silly things about sex, and on this topic Nietzsche is a twelve-year-old boy (Nussbaum, 5-6, emphasis added).

Nussbaum's egalitarian and feminist inclinations lead her to the ridiculous declaration that Nietzsche has *no argument* behind his prescriptions. And Nussbaum is not alone in making this faulty assertion. Linda Singer also insists that Nietzsche rarely supplies arguments to support his remarks on women: "When referring to women he tends to favor the aphorism, and many of his statements take the form of passing asides, often invoking women for contrast. He relies heavily on pejorative insults and one-liners" (Singer, 1998, 174). Contrary to these bald assertions by Nussbaum and Singer, Nietzsche actually does present a powerful and coherent argument against liberal democracy, homogenization, and feminism. Serious scholars must scrutinize whether his argument is persuasive, rather than merely rejecting it out of hand. And whereas Singer is correct to note that Nietzsche presents many of his comments on woman in aphorisms, she is wrong to imply that Nietzsche reserves this form for his observations on women and thereby intends to undermine women. Nietzsche employs aphorisms (as well as enigmatic forms such as poems, speeches, and songs) throughout his texts on all topics. But because he writes in aphorisms, it is more difficult to understand the subtleties in his arguments. As with any

topic in Nietzsche, it requires patience and careful reading to tease out the intricacies of his reasoning. His discussion of woman, the feminine, and feminism is no exception. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche explains the proper method of reading aphorisms: "Whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read but to be learned by heart. In the mountains the shortest way is from peak to peak: but for that one must have long legs. Aphorisms should be peaks--and those who are addressed, tall and lofty" (Z, 152). In the Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche explains in more plain terms:

An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been "deciphered" when it has simply been read; rather, one has then to begin its *exegesis*, for which is required an art of exegesis. I have offered in the third essay of the present book an example of what I regard as "exegesis" in such a case--an aphorism is prefixed to this essay, the essay itself is a commentary on it. To be sure, one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an *art* in this way, something that has been unlearned most thoroughly nowadays--and therefore it will be some time before my writings are "readable"--something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a "modern man": *rumination* (GM, Preface, 8).

Nietzsche does not intend his assertions to be easily understood and expects that most readers will not take the time to piece together his meanings. One must ponder and ruminate over each aphorism--and the context in which each occurs--before one grasps Nietzsche's arguments (which is something for which modern academics eagerly seeking publications or tenure have little patience). Just because Nussbaum and Singer do not find a coherent argument in Nietzsche does not mean that there is none to be found. In the same passage of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche suggests that courage is also needed--the courage that allows one to transcend the shallow opinions of one's time and challenge deeply felt illusions at the mountaintop. One is forced to wonder whether some scholars' indignation might not actually arise from an unwillingness to address Nietzsche's arguments for fear that Nietzsche may be correct, or at least not completely wrong.

### **The Use and Abuse of Nietzsche by Feminists**

What is worse than the general dismissal and ignorance of Nietzsche's arguments is some scholars' attempts to transform Nietzsche into a proponent of everything he opposes. Appel also notices among Nietzsche scholars "a claim being made with increasing

confidence and frequency” that an “embrace of Nietzsche’s emancipatory message is easily reconcilable with a steadfast commitment to egalitarian ideals” (Appel, 2). Many of the scholars who examine Nietzsche find him useful for forwarding any political platforms they please, including leftist liberalism<sup>7</sup> and feminism. Partisans of the political left and right are hasty “to proclaim the irrelevance of Nietzsche’s illiberalism and antiegalitarianism” (Appel, 3). The worst damage is done by the feminist interpretations who ignore the condemnations of feminism that are right before their eyes. One of the most recent books to tackle the subject of Nietzsche and women is *Feminist Interpretations of Nietzsche*. As one might guess from its title, this book has a political agenda--containing essays interpreted from the perspective of the feminist--and as such gives scholars reason to question how objective its interpretations are. And, it turns out, over half of the book is devoted to feminists’ use of Nietzsche as a springboard for feminism.<sup>8</sup> One of the

<sup>7</sup>Lawrence Hatab’s *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy* attempts to turn Nietzsche into a leftist liberal. Hatab “redefine[s] democracy without some of its traditional baggage, to see if democracy can express even some of Nietzsche’s own predilections” (Hatab, 53). His purpose is not to understand Nietzsche, but to contort Nietzsche’s ideas into Hatab’s own liberal democratic ideal. Indeed, Hatab admits that his intention is not to interpret Nietzsche as Nietzsche understood himself; “if the reader is looking for clear answers about which interpretation of Nietzsche’s political remarks is the right one, or how we might interpret particular passages properly, I must say that I have no idea how to provide this” (Hatab, 53). This is an amazing admission to make at the beginning of his book. Hatab attempts to use Nietzsche as a defense for democracy despite his admission that he does not intend to interpret Nietzsche’s writings properly. One must wonder why Hatab reads Nietzsche at all. Hatab’s misappropriation of Nietzsche forces the reader to overlook Nietzsche’s criticisms of the foundations of liberal democracy. Even a cursory glance at sections 232-239 of BGE would demonstrate Nietzsche’s opposition to Hatab’s goals.

<sup>8</sup>The essays in the second section include: Linda Singer, “Nietzschean Mythologies: The Inversion of Value and the War Against Women”; Maudmarie Clark, “Nietzsche’s Misogyny”; Lynne Tirrell, “Sexual Dualism and Women’s Self-Creation: On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading Nietzsche for Feminists”; Debra B. Bergoffen, “Nietzsche Was No Feminist”; Kathleen J. Winniger, “Nietzsche’s Women and Women’s Nietzsche”; Daniel W. Conway, “The Slave Revolt in Epistemology”; Ofelia Schutte, “Nietzsche’s Politics”; and David Owen, “Nietzsche’s Squandered Seductions: Feminism, the Body, and the Politics of Genealogy.” Tasmin Lorraine’s “Nietzsche and Feminism: Transvaluing Women in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*” should also be included in this group because she attempts to mold Nietzsche’s writings to suit her own perspectival feminism.

In grouping these essays, I do not wish to imply that all of these essays corrupt Nietzsche’s thought, nor do those who turn Nietzschean politics into some shallow form of feminist ideology corrupt his writing to the same degree. For example, both Clark (1998) and Schutte (1998) give some fine analysis. Clark should be commended for her close textual reading of section 7 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. However Clark reaches a conclusion that it is possible to construct a Nietzschean feminism which does not fit with much of that textual analysis that she cites. Regarding Schutte, though I do not agree with all of her



contributing authors boldly asserts; “We all know that Nietzsche is no feminist” (Lorraine, 119); yet this recognition does not prevent her and other scholars in the volume from trying to turn him into one. For instance, the explicit purpose of Lorraine’s essay “Nietzsche and Feminism: Transvaluing Women in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.” is to see what feminists can get from Nietzsche’s discussion. In particular she proposes “a feminist style of listening and speaking, reading and writing, drawn from Nietzsche’s texts” (Lorraine, 120). Instead of scrutinizing the implications of Nietzsche’s difficult passages (namely the unflattering assertions of Zarathustra in “On Old and Young Little Women”)<sup>9</sup> she tries to reconcile the sections she finds appealing with her hope for a non-oppressive society. But this approach, in effect, is merely to ignore the aspects of Nietzsche’s thought that do not “fit” with her feminist aspirations. She explains; “Going through the positions offered me in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I don’t have to reject any of them out of hand. Instead, I can affirm them all as providing material for my own future, material that I sort through, taking the flavors and aromas I need to conjure up the image dearest to me” (Lorraine, 127). But in doing so, she seizes on the “scents and aromas” that would smell most disgusting to Nietzsche. As part of her project, she proceeds to create her own feminine Zarathustra. Though a creative spirit might quite plausibly be feminine,<sup>10</sup> though this too must be questioned, to pick and choose the material that she personally finds affirming is to misunderstand Nietzsche and his perspectivism. Most likely Lorraine herself would object to others corrupting her own texts in this manner. One wonders why she reads Nietzsche

conclusions, her basic premise that it is necessary to see “how his political views apply to our present and future well-being” is sound (Schutte, 1998, 283).

<sup>9</sup>Zarathustra’s speech on woman is entitled “Vom alten und jungen Weiblein.” Kaufmann translates the title as “On Little Old and Young Women,” but this does not emphasize the fact that “little” modifies *both* “young” and “old” women. I will refer to the speech as “On Old and Young Little Women.”

<sup>10</sup>For my discussion of the feminine traits of the *Übermensch* and the question of whether the *Übermensch* could be a woman, see the section entitled “The *Übermensch* as Child and Mother” in chapter 4.

at all if she wants him to say something other than he does.

A number of others attempt similar misappropriations of Nietzsche's thought. Linda Singer asks a very serious question, "Given how wrong he is about women, how seriously can we take Nietzsche's remarks about human existence in general?" (Singer, 183). This is similar to Maudmarie Clark's question of how Nietzsche's "Seven Epigrams on Woman" could be so unlike anything else he wrote (Clark, 1998, 189). Nietzsche's analyses of nihilism, the death of God, and perspectivism is so compelling to Clark that she simply cannot understand Nietzsche's tone when it comes to women. Both scholars have difficulty understanding why his view of women and the feminine diverges from their own views. But if he is so wrong on the topic of woman, there is no reason to be upset about anything he says on the topic of women. But both scholars protest too much because each takes Nietzsche very seriously. Singer reduces Nietzsche's "proto-masculine ethic" (Singer, 185) to mere reflections of his historical setting.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly she chastises other scholars who dismiss Nietzsche's sexism as peripheral, but then she decides herself to take from Nietzsche only the empowering aspects of his thought (will to power) to create a feminine ethic. Similarly, Maudmarie Clark tries to reconcile Nietzsche's "overt antifeminism" with what she calls "a feminism that is beyond good and evil." In "Nietzsche's Misogyny," she presents a line by line textual analysis of Nietzsche's Epigrams on woman by reading them as Nietzsche's demonstration of the virtue of honesty. But honesty is not the fundamental virtue of the free spirit nor is it the virtue he intends to demonstrate in this section. Clark therefore falsely concludes that Nietzsche simply does not believe that what he says about women is true (Clark, 1998, 192). How honest *is* this, then? While her close textual analysis does present some helpful insights, it

<sup>11</sup>See the sections entitled "Critique of Sterile Historians, Objectivity, and Modern Scholars" and "Scholars Are Themselves Democrats" in chapter 3 for Nietzsche's critique of this practice by modern scholars.



suffers from a misunderstanding of Nietzsche's basic intention in this section.<sup>12</sup> Clark concludes by asserting that Nietzsche would be a feminist if "a feminism beyond good and evil" could be found. But she does not tell us what this type of feminism would be, since it is grounded on the faulty suggestion that Nietzsche does not mean what he says about woman. Instead of scrutinizing Nietzsche's arguments, Singer and Clark look for a way to discredit them from the outset. Both scholars need to provide an explanation of how Nietzsche could transcend his time in so many other ways, and yet fail to do so when it comes to women. Of course this is completely absent.

Lynne Tirrell, on the other hand, is puzzled that Nietzsche does not eliminate the hierarchical arrangement with respect to the sexes. She correctly notes that Nietzsche does not take sexual dualism to be an unalterable fact about the world, but incorrectly concludes from this that what is missing from Nietzsche is an attack on the man/woman duality (Tirrell, 2006). Nietzsche, in fact, had specific reasons for maintaining and cultivating sexual dualism. He *insists* that this duality is the key to preventing a movement toward complete egalitarianism. He intended to promote this duality, not because the differences between the sexes are fixed necessities, but for the opposite reason. Nietzsche's fear that this duality will disappear and humanity will become last men is the precise reason that he tries to *maintain* the duality. Nevertheless, Tirrell uses Nietzsche's more general arguments against metaphysical dualism to make the argument he "should have made" against sexual dualism (Tirrell, 2006). Thus, because she overlooks how Nietzsche's discussion of women fits into his project as a whole, she does not consider what Nietzsche's very serious reasons might be for not articulating an argument against sexual dualism (or the master/slave dualism for that matter).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>See my own textual analysis of "Our Virtues" in the section entitled "Do Nietzsche's Observations Warrant a Privileged Status?" in chapter 7.

<sup>13</sup>Tirrell also contends that Nietzsche should have made an argument against master/slave relations given his wider rejection of metaphysical dualities. Tirrell completely misses Nietzsche's central theme that a rigorous order of rank is conducive to a noble society. This means that Nietzsche was most assuredly a



Tirrell's essay, perhaps more than any other, gives striking evidence of the measures scholars will take in order to protect their democratic ideologies.<sup>14</sup> But one must be careful not to let one's own timely prejudices blind the scholar from interpreting Nietzsche properly. Schutte, for instance, is correct that the reason one should read Nietzsche is to see how his insights can contribute to our well being (Schutte, 1998, 283). But, before putting Nietzsche on the path of liberal democracy, we must explain properly his rejection of the enlightenment of women, feminism, and egalitarianism in the context in which Nietzsche presents it. My goal is therefore to read Nietzsche on his own terms, which means reading the clusters of aphorisms on woman as they relate to the Nietzschean system as a whole. Only then can one assess the feasibility and desirability of his prescriptions. If Nietzsche is correct that sexual homogenization is evidence of degeneration, perhaps liberal democrats can find a way to maintain that difference within the framework of a mutually respectful society. But one should not harbor any false hopes.

A few common threads run through this second group of scholars. First one notices their knee-jerk reaction that a genius like Nietzsche surely could not think these things about woman; consequently, he must not mean them. There also seems to be a deep misunderstanding of Nietzsche's perspectivism. As Clark points out elsewhere, Nietzsche

proponent of conventional slavery (cf. BGE 257-260).

<sup>14</sup>Several other examples of the use and abuse of Nietzsche can be found. Here are a few others: David Owen's "Nietzsche's Squandered Seductions: Feminism, the Body and the Politics of Genealogy"; Daniel Conway's "Das Weib an Sich: The Slave Revolt in Epistemology"; Kathleen Winiger's "Nietzsche's Women and Women's Nietzsche"; and Kathleen Higgins, "Gender in *The Gay Science*." Notice that Higgins focuses only on a pre-Zarathustra text, as several other premature studies do. Though Book V of *The Gay Science* was written after *Zarathustra*, most of her analysis focuses on the earlier aphorisms in the text. Though *The Gay Science* is the least objectionable early text because it was written so close to *Zarathustra*, the attempt to find Nietzsche's full teaching on woman in his immature texts is an improper procedure. As will be discussed in chapter 6, without considering Nietzsche's later development of the eternal return of the same, such analysis fail to probe into the intricacies of the entire Nietzschean system. They thus fail to appreciate Nietzsche's profundity.





is no shallow nihilist.<sup>15</sup> That he recognizes knowledge as perspectival does not mean that Nietzsche's writings can mean whatever the scholar wants them to mean. In general, little or no attempt is made to read Nietzsche's texts properly, that is, attempt to understand Nietzsche's words as he understood them himself. Their preference is to read Nietzsche through their own narrow human-all-too-human or feminist-all-too feminist perspective. Although they would like to maintain perspectivism because they find it to be potentially empowering to a feminine perspective, underneath their own perspectivism lies a shallow relativism or nihilism that says that *all* perspectives are valid (*except*, of course, a misogynistic one).

Inherent in other analyses is the prejudice that a *male* philosopher cannot possibly unveil the truth about woman, nor can a man possess feminine qualities himself.<sup>16</sup> Ansell-Pearson (indeed, a male himself) voices this opinion in his essay "Nietzsche, Woman, and Political Theory." Ansell-Pearson is deeply offended that Derrida and Nietzsche (as men) think they can speak authoritatively about woman and the feminine. "To claim, as he [Derrida] does, that Nietzsche writes with the hand of woman<sup>17</sup> or that his philosophy speaks of the 'feminine', is to run the risk of adding insult to injury by adding further to philosophy's insidious silencing of women" (Ansell-Pearson, 35). Ansell-Pearson reiterates Oliver's concern: "For if male philosophers such as Nietzsche or Derrida can write with the hand of woman, what is the role and purpose of female philosophers?"

<sup>15</sup>See Maudmarie Clark's book, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, especially chapters 3-6, pp. 63-125.

<sup>16</sup>Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Nietzsche* voices a similar prejudice. She contends that male philosophers leave women out of their philosophic scheme and a woman like herself is needed to find or speak for the feminine. Irigaray "proposes to uncover silenced femininity by 'romancing the philosophers'" (Oliver and Pearsall, 8). She takes for granted that these male philosophers cannot and do not speak to or about women. This mentality denigrates what the philosopher stands for and misunderstands what meaningful philosophy is.

<sup>17</sup>In *Postponements: Women, Sensuality, and Death in Nietzsche*, David Farrell Krell also argues that Nietzsche "writes with the hand of woman" (Krell, 1986, 10).

(Ansell-Pearson, 35-36)?<sup>18</sup> This question is most disturbing. Ansell-Pearson, Oliver, and others rule out the possibility that a genius could transcend his or her time, historical conditions, and gender. To assume from the start that man can understand nothing about woman is closed-minded, sexist, and dogmatic, to say the least. The converse, that woman can understand nothing about man, would also have to be conceded by this line of argument. It is dubious that the scholars who deny man's ability to understand anything about woman would also denounce woman's ability to understand anything about man.

The real test is whether male writers can explain the emotions, thoughts, desires, and actions of women as women themselves experience them. Many male scholars, artists, and novelists (including Plato, Rousseau, Goethe, Shakespeare, Stendhal, to name a few) have successfully and beautifully tapped into the feminine soul and have written compellingly and persuasively on various aspects of the subject of woman, the feminine, and sexual relations. Whereas I do not here endorse any specific one of these men, aspects of their writings contain key insights that are worthy of woman's concern. Women have much to learn from these geniuses as do men. Discrediting male writers like Nietzsche simply because they are male ensures that scholars like Ansell-Pearson will not learn from them. To be sure, many *women* misunderstand *woman*--what women want and what women are--as is demonstrated by the fundamental disagreements among feminists. Opinions range from those who contend that all women want to be lesbians to others who insist that women want to be mothers and housewives.<sup>19</sup> Every few years feminists redefine themselves because they are not quite sure what the essence of woman is. Perhaps, to contrast with today's typical scholars, the greatest minds are able to transcend their own gender, but scholars like Ansell-Pearson cannot see this possibility.

<sup>18</sup>Kelly Oliver (1988) also makes this point in her essay "Nietzsche's Woman: the Poststructuralist Attempt to Do Away with Women."

<sup>19</sup>Lyman Tower Sargent gives a helpful description and bibliography of the various types of feminism in his book *Contemporary Political Ideologies*.



## Myths and Deconstruction

Another group of Nietzsche scholars, including Jacques Derrida and others, attempt to understand Nietzsche's writings on women through the all-too-narrow lens of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.<sup>20</sup> Derrida finds the question of Nietzsche's style more compelling than his insights into the modern condition. Derrida uses a psychoanalytic decoding to interpret Nietzsche's style in terms of a "hymen's graphic" (Derrida, 99). Oliver and Pearsall explain Derrida's procedure: "Within the graphics of the hymen there is always something in excess of any attempts to create a neat system of categories. Hymen signifies marriage (fusion) and the membrane that stretches across the opening of the vagina (in-between inside and outside). ... Derrida suggests that Nietzsche's texts set up a graphics of the hymen, of the in-between" (Oliver and Pearsall, 7). Nowhere in the texts themselves--that is, in the aphorisms read in their intended context--is there reason to believe that Nietzsche intends the hymen graphic as a metaphor for woman. The supposed analysis is more confusing than are Nietzsche's texts themselves. Derrida's book is not only "highly disingenuous" (Ansell-Pearson, 33), but dense, impenetrable, and singularly closed to providing any illumination of Nietzsche's discussion. Moreover, Derrida's analysis lacks a grounding in the context of the sections on women. Indeed, Derrida admits that he often interprets Nietzsche's discussion of women in terms of castration without ever attaching it to a text of Nietzsche (Derrida, 73). Such an amazing analysis is possible because Derrida asserts that "there is no such thing as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's text" (ibid., 103). The purpose of such an analysis is not to understand Nietzsche, but to see how far psychoanalytic theory can go. And here, it does not go

<sup>20</sup>Examples include Sara Kofman's "A Fantastical Genealogy: Nietzsche's Family Romance"; Kelly Oliver's "Nietzsche's Abjection"; Susan Bernstein "Fear of Music? Nietzsche's Double Vision of the 'Musical-Feminine'"; Alan D. Schrift's "On the Gynecology of morals: Nietzsche and Cixous on the Logic of the Gift"; and David Farrell Krell's reading of Irigay in "To the Orange Grove at the Edge of the Sea."

anywhere. Derrida castrates woman, not Nietzsche.<sup>21</sup>

Kelly Oliver follows on the heels of Derrida. She imposes Derrida's triad categorization of woman (as castrated, castrating, and as affirming)<sup>22</sup> on Nietzsche's metaphor of woman as truth (BGE, Preface; GS, preface).<sup>23</sup> Oliver contends that when reading Nietzsche with her triad in mind, the woman (philosopher or scholar) who seeks the truth is castrated while the woman (artist) who creatively interprets the truth and hides it under illusions is castrating. The analysis is problematic for several reasons. First, Oliver confounds woman and truth in her discussion. She does not deal with the fact that Nietzsche suggests conceiving of truth *as* woman. Nor does Oliver offer a clear distinction between female *scholars* on the one hand, and *philosophers* and *artists* on the other.

<sup>21</sup>Ansell-Pearson similarly argues, "it is not feminism which castrates woman, but Derrida" (Ansell-Pearson, 34). Nietzsche, however, actually *does* argue that feminism castrates women (and men).

<sup>22</sup>Oliver's analysis is rooted in the following passage:

This inability to assimilate--even among themselves--the aphorisms and the rest--perhaps it must simply be admitted that Nietzsche himself did not see his way too clearly there. Not could he, in the instantaneous blink of an eye. Rather a regular, rhythmic blindness takes place in the text. One will never have done with it. Nietzsche too is a little lost there. But that there is a loss, that anyway is ascertainable, as soon as there is hymen. Nietzsche might well be a little lost in the web of his text, lost much as a spider who finds he is unequal to the web he has spun. Much as a spider indeed, several spiders even. Nietzsche's spider. Lautréamont's, that of Mallarmé, those of Freud and Abraham. *He was, he dreaded this castrated woman. He was, he dreaded this castrating woman. He was, he loved this affirming woman.* At once, simultaneously or successively, depending on the position of his body and the situation of his story, Nietzsche was all of these. Within himself, outside of himself, Nietzsche dealt with so many women. Like in Basel where he held council (Derrida, 101, emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup>In "Nietzsche Was No Feminist..." Debra Bergoffen also focuses on the question "What if truth is a woman?" By overemphasizing this single aphorism, this type of study tends to obscure the context. Bergoffen suggests that the question of woman lies close to the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy and philosophy generally. She proceeds to use Freud to understand the several uses of truth as woman. Her conclusion is that "Women, speaking their own voices, owe nothing to the name given them by others" (Bergoffen, 234). In other words, she asserts that Nietzsche's metaphor of truth as a woman need not mean anything to women. Bergoffen thus implies that Nietzsche's designation of truth as a woman is completely arbitrary and negligible. In a single sentence she undermines her own analysis. If understanding Nietzsche's metaphor is not worthwhile, the reader is forced to wonder why Bergoffen wastes her time writing an article on the subject.

Second, Oliver admits that she uses this triad as a way to create truth--not in order to understand Nietzsche's truths: "On possible way we theoreticians (or artists) can interpret, create, truth/woman is the triad we have developed out of Nietzsche's writings" (Oliver, 1998, 78). Consequently, her response to Nietzsche's characterization of female scholars as sterile is inadequate. Oliver refuses to judge whether women should "play like men" or not. But this is the key issue for Nietzsche and so Oliver cannot offer any serious response to the heart of Nietzsche's criticism. This essay give serious scholars reason to wonder whether Nietzsche might not be correct to say that truth is repugnant to woman.

Most astounding is Koelb's essay "Castration Envy: Nietzsche and the Figure of Woman." There is little to say on the essay beyond the title. To say that a man is envious of one who is castrated defies all logic. Koelb explains the notion of castration envy: "The potency of the penis is negligible in comparison to the irresistible might figured by its absence. Castration is the trope that stands for the ultimate power, an object as much of envy as of fear" (Koelb, 80). First, woman is not essentially a castrated being, nor did Nietzsche understand her to be. A feminine woman is far from castrated, though Nietzsche does consider certain *types* of women as sterile. And even if women were essentially castrated, Nietzsche certainly would not have wanted to be castrated himself--especially given his criticism of sterility--nor would any sane human being. Koelb's analysis even misses the very surface meaning of Nietzsche's teaching. Analyses like Koelb's attempt to interpret Nietzsche through very time-bound Freudian analyses. These scholars may understand Nietzsche's writings as castrated because their own work is castrated.

### **Freudian Psychobabble: Nietzsche's Mother and Sister**

Others follow Koelb's attempt to psychoanalyze Nietzsche by looking at his life experience with women. Some of these scholars argue that Nietzsche had little experience with women and so is not an authority on the subject of woman. Others focus on a single aphorism (or two) about Nietzsche's mother (out of context) and attempt to read his entire

philosophy through its narrow lens.<sup>24</sup> Such silly reductionist analyses are almost not worth responding to; however, because the scholarly community continues to produce them, a word or two is needed here. In “A Fantastical Genealogy,” Sara Kofman studies two versions of section 3 of *Ecce Homo*’s “Why I am So Wise” to find the source of Nietzsche’s disenchantment with women--his mother. She puts too much emphasis on the suggestion in *Ecce Homo* that Nietzsche is like his mother.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, her focus on this single passage from *Ecce Homo*, a source of dubious reliability, as a “prolegomenon to any further reflection on the position of women in Nietzsche’s work” (Kofman, 1994, 35) leads to scholarship that is of dubious reliability itself. These scholars apply a sexually charged theory of psychoanalytic jargon that holds no intrinsic validity. Not only is the method inappropriate, but it is difficult to prove what Nietzsche’s feelings toward his mother actually were (Picart, 12). Lou Andreas-Salomé agrees that following his biographical information is an incorrect method of interpreting Nietzsche’s thought. She explains; “Whoever wishes to proceed differently and view Nietzsche’s exterior experiences in order to grasp the inner, would at best hold only an empty shell from which the spirit has escaped” (Andreas-Salomé, 5).<sup>26</sup> This analysis does not focus on Nietzsche’s infrequent relationships with women, nor will it discuss the women in his life.

<sup>24</sup>Examples of such studies include: Sara Kofman, “A Fantastical Genealogy: Nietzsche’s Family Romance” (1994); Sara Kofman, “Baubo: Theological Perversion and Fetishism” (1998); Kelly Oliver, “Nietzsche’s Abjection”; Lawrence A. Rickels, “Insurance for and against women: From Nietzsche to Psychotherapy”; and Jean Graybeal, “Ecce Homo: Abjection and ‘the Feminine.’”

<sup>25</sup>Jean Graybeal’s essay is similarly flawed. He focuses singlemindedly on what he calls the riddle of Nietzsche’s origin posed at the beginning of *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche declares:

The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old. This dual descent, as it were, both from the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a *decadent* and a *beginning*--this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher *par excellence* for this--I know both, I am both (EH, 222).

<sup>26</sup>Picart also cites this passage (Picart, 11).



Nietzsche's teaching on man and woman is worthy of examination because he offers insights into the unintended consequences of the enlightenment project.<sup>27</sup>

### **Baubo and other Myths Exaggerated to Epic Proportions**

A wide range of the literature focuses on the purpose of myth and metaphor in Nietzsche, much of which is also replete with psychoanalytic jargon.<sup>28</sup> For example, Irigauy's pseudo-poetic musings as Nietzsche's "marine lover" which have spawned a great deal of research, focuses on Nietzsche's style and his brief references to mythological figures in his earlier texts. Rather than read Nietzsche contextually, Oliver and Pearsall describe Irigauy's goal as an attempt to "seduce" Nietzsche to "uncover silenced femininity" in his writings (Oliver and Pearsall, 8). Loosely rooted in Nietzsche's pre-Zarathustra texts, she attempts to construct what women might have to say in response to Nietzsche's arguments. Irigauy makes no effort to distinguish between the immature Nietzsche and the mature Nietzsche. The consequence of this is Irigauy's adolescent and obscure text. Kofman, no less obscure than Irigauy, focuses on one of the most frequently cited myths--Baubo. Kofman hesitates to mention that Nietzsche mentions Baubo once--and only in the revised version of the preface to *The Gay Science*. Surely this reference is interesting, but to make it the heart of the Nietzschean system is misguided. This particular mythological reference has stirred the imagination of Nietzsche readers for two reasons. First, Baubo is a personification of the female genitals. Second, a weak link can be made between Baubo and Dionysus (who is obviously an important figure in Nietzsche's thought). Unfortunately, Kofman's essay begins with an obscure reference and ignores

<sup>27</sup>For a discussion of the women in the life of Nietzsche, consult Carol Diethe's *Nietzsche's Women, Beyond the Whip*. Not only does Diethe discuss Nietzsche's relationship with his mother, his sister, and notorious others like Lou Andreas-Salomé and Cosima Wager, but in the closing chapters she also considers Nietzsche's reaction to contemporary feminists.

<sup>28</sup>Examples of such studies include: Sara Kofman's "Baubo: Theological Perversion and Fetishism"; Luce Irigauy's *Marine Lover of Nietzsche*; "The Medusa's Ears: The Question of Nietzsche, the Question of Gender, and Transformations of Theory" by Arkady Plotnitsky; and Clayton Koelb's "Castration Envy: Nietzsche and the Figure of Woman."

the very obvious surface meanings of Nietzsche's writings. In such an analysis, it generally is sensible to move from the obvious to the less obvious. Such attempts to explain the less obscure (his outspoken assertions about woman) by beginning from the more obscure (namely a single reference to Baubo and a questionable link to Dionysus) are not helpful. The most common feature of the essays in this group are that they are opaque and impenetrable.

The most recent attempt to understand Nietzsche's use of myth is Joan Picart's recent book *Resentment and the "Feminine" in Nietzsche's Politico-Aesthetics*. Although Picart focuses on the role of myth in Nietzsche's writings, she sets herself apart from all of the scholars listed above. The primary distinction between Picart and the others is that she attempts to contextualize her study by focusing on the three phases of Nietzsche's thought (pre-Zarathustra, Zarathustra, and post-Zarathustra). She attempts to stay true to the context; however, her subject matter and purpose make this a difficult feat. Rather than focus on "the degree of offensiveness of Nietzsche's ambivalent pronouncements on the 'feminine' and 'women,'" she attempts to "examine what this misogyny means for his political philosophy as a whole" (Picart, 3). She studies his misogyny as expressed through the use of myth throughout his texts. But in so doing, Picart, like so many others, makes the error of imposing her own scheme (her belief of the primary importance of mythology as it relates to the Nietzschean project) upon Nietzsche's thought. Picart obfuscates matters because she places too heavy an emphasis on Nietzsche's use of myth and metaphor. Perhaps the reason she does this is to give her book a continuity that is absent from Nietzsche's own writings. Although she notes that Nietzsche's use of myth diminishes in his post-Zarathustra stage, she overemphasizes the role that myth plays in that stage.

It is true that strictly and grammatically speaking, Nietzsche uses figures and tropes rather than mythic deities or figures here. But he essentially uses these figures/tropes to fill in for the mythic deities he seems to banish....Nietzsche precisely *appears* to downplay the role of mythology exoterically, only to result in an even more subtle esoteric mythology disguised as a nonmythology (Picart, 143).

Picart also operates under the *assumption* that Nietzsche was indeed a misogynist because she focuses less on the surface statements and searches too deeply for a profound meaning in myth. In other words, Picart skips past some of the exoteric assertions (and clear surface meanings) of Nietzsche in order to find a more profound esoteric Nietzsche that fits with her analysis. Nietzsche's use of myth may diminish because he becomes the philosopher with the hammer. The use of myth alone is not the key to understanding Nietzsche's view of women or why he discusses women so frequently. Nietzsche's outspoken condemnations of feminism and egalitarianism is a more reasonable place to begin such an analysis. In this manner, consideration of the surface meanings of his arguments will not be missed. Picart's focus on Nietzsche's entire genealogy and the development of his use of myth is on the right track. In part because she makes Nietzsche more esoteric than he is and because she focuses too heavily on his use of myth, Picart fails to explain why Nietzsche needs to discuss women at all, which appears to be a gap in all of the research considered to this point.

### **Woman, Women, and the Feminine**

Another common feature of most of the scholars discussed above is their failure to distinguish consistently between Nietzsche's metaphors and his discussions of actual women. Lack of clarity in the secondary literature also arises from the failure to draw a clear distinction between Nietzsche's use of the terms "woman" ("Weib" or "Frau") and the "feminine" (weiblich). Picart<sup>29</sup> attempts to distinguish between the concepts "woman," "womanly," and the "feminine" (Picart, 7), but her distinction is ambiguous and difficult to follow through her book. Although Nietzsche's distinction between "woman" and the "feminine" is not without its ambiguities, he certainly means two distinct concepts in his

<sup>29</sup>Tirrell mentions the difference between being a female and being a woman, but does not make clear what that difference is. Tirrell only notes that Nietzsche does not follow the contemporary distinction between sex and gender (Tirrell, 1998, 206). Clark mistakenly argues that "woman as such" (Das Weib an sich) is synonymous with the Eternal Feminine (Clark, 1998, 192). This false association leads her to conclude that the Eternal Feminine is an ideal that no woman could attain.

use of the terms “Weib” and “weiblich.” When Nietzsche speaks of woman (“Weib”), he is referring to an idea that is changeable over time. So for instance, his critical remarks about woman in section seven of *Beyond Good and Evil* refer to bourgeois women of the twentieth century who seek emancipation. He is describing the traits and instincts that the women of his time have, but also recognizes that those traits are not fixed in any permanent sense. As a free spirit who recognizes the implications of God’s death, Nietzsche acknowledges the amazing power that social conditioning has. Nietzsche notes that the women of the twentieth century are not particularly feminine (“weiblich”) because a defeminization (“Entweiblichung”) is taking place. In contrast, Nietzsche uses the term “feminine” to refer to traits that tend to fit best with woman, but that may also apply to man. The concept “feminine” may not be changeable over time. The “feminine” is a concept that transcends time, place, and historical conditioning. Maternal love is one of the most prominent aspects of femininity, according to Nietzsche. A particular woman may or may not be maternal, but a maternal quality will always be an aspect of femininity. Similarly, the terms “man” (“Mann”) and “masculine” (“männlich”) are not the same concepts. Man may be manly or emasculated. Incidentally, Nietzsche notes that in the twentieth century, manliness (“Mannhaftigkeit”) is no longer cultivated at all. Defeminized women and emasculated men are the men and women that modernity overwhelmingly tends to produce. Incidentally, Picart’s conception of effeminate (sterile) males and defeminized (sterile) women is not quite right. She understands effeminate males to be males who have incorporated the unattractive feminine qualities (Picart, 145). Effeminate men are primarily those males who have shed their manly qualities. The fact that they may also acquire the weakly feminine traits is of secondary importance. However, for a man to incorporate the praiseworthy feminine traits is a very good thing. Picart also associates woman’s seeking self-reliance with the abortive females to which Nietzsche refers (ibid.). This too is a misconception. An abortive female is one who sheds her feminine qualities, not one who seeks empowerment. The thought of a race of sterile humans fills Nietzsche with

revulsion. On the other hand, a feminine male or a masculine (manly) woman may be a very good thing for Nietzsche.

Scholars have so far fixated on the question of whether or not Nietzsche was a misogynist. The question of Nietzsche's misogyny is not as important as why Nietzsche needs to discuss woman at all. A careful examination of Nietzsche's teaching on the sexes calls his so-called misogyny into question anyway. Nietzsche challenges the supposed superiority of man over woman by prescribing an eternally hostile war of the sexes. Apparently Nietzsche sees woman as a worthy opponent for man. Her attributes, while different from man's, still rival his. And since man and woman are not equal, it is worth considering which sex Nietzsche considers to be superior. Nietzsche leaves this question open. This a surprisingly difficult question to answer, but the effort yields intriguing results.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALIZING NIETZSCHE'S COMMENTS ON WOMAN

### Criticism of Woman's "Liberation"

"“You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!” spoke the little old woman to Zarathustra (Z, 179).<sup>30</sup> This Nietzschean proclamation appears to be a traditional example of male chauvinism. Yet this notorious piece of advice may actually be the key to combating the greatest defects of modernity. Nietzsche suggests that understanding the distinct natures of man and woman can help cure humanity of the sickness of the modern condition. Nietzsche argues that cultivating the proper relationship between the sexes can recapture modernity's lack of vitality, which is why he devotes so much time to analyzing the differences between man and woman. Nietzsche even argues that the failure to comprehend the “fundamental problem of ‘man and woman’” makes one “too ‘short’ for all fundamental problems of life, of the life yet to come, too, and incapable of attaining *any* depth” (BGE, 238). The frequency of Nietzsche's discussions of woman and the “feminine,” as well as his insistence that the relations between the sexes constitutes a fundamental issue, suggest that his insights into the nature of woman and the “feminine” occupy a central role in his philosophy. Establishing the proper relationship between man and woman is a key component of Nietzsche's attempt to transcend nihilism.

Further, Nietzsche teaches that usually<sup>31</sup> something is sexually wrong with a woman with scholarly inclinations (BGE, 144). He also mentions that woman's “great art

<sup>30</sup>Few studies even mention the fact that a woman, not a man, makes this claim. Paul Patton notes this in the introduction to his book *Nietzsche, The Feminine and Political Theory*, but does not explain its significance (Patton, xi). Not only does a woman make this famous assertion, but a *little old* woman. Nietzsche most likely does not believe that a little old woman could offer any key insight into the essence of women or femininity (cf. HAH I: 419). Carol Diethe suggests that the fact that this statement is uttered by a woman gives the statement more credence. Because so few female voices are heard in Nietzsche, when they do speak they carry more significance (cf. Diethe, 63-66). But in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche indicates that intelligent women will not speak about women (BGE, 232). Perhaps the most wise women will not reveal their truths about women to men.

<sup>31</sup> See my discussion of “The Female Scholar--A Paradox” in chapter 2 for a comparison of BGE 144 with section 894 of *Will to Power*.

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is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty” (BGE, 232). Moreover, Zarathustra assures us that the riddle that is woman “has one solution: that is pregnancy” (Z, 178). Such comments make Nietzsche sound like little else than a chauvinist who would like to see all women barefoot and pregnant. But to read these comments as the ranting of a shallow misogynist is to ignore the context of these assertions. Nietzsche’s apparent degradation of woman is a commentary on modernity and not simply an assault on the entire female sex or on femininity.<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche’s acceptance of the general tenets of historicism precludes his understanding the differences between the sexes as fixed, objective, absolute, unconditional truths. Nietzsche considers all thought (including his own) to be time-bound. According to Nietzsche, the particular social and historical conditions in which one lives shape one’s ideas: “*You can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present*” (H, 40). Any perception (or understanding) of man or woman is historical, including Nietzsche’s own view. And since Nietzsche’s philosophy is an attempt to transcend the crisis of the modern condition, his comments on woman are a reflection of that project. In particular, his comments on woman are a reaction against the gradual homogenization of democratic societies. His apparently nasty suggestions do not indicate a hatred of the female sex, but a rejection of and an attempt to overturn the deleterious effects of the Enlightenment on woman. He argues that modernity turns woman into something less than she could be.

Nietzsche’s comments on women do not necessarily indicate misogyny. Indeed, one must also keep in mind that he makes derogatory remarks about man. After all, males have become the “scholarly asses” Nietzsche criticizes in the opening of *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE, 239; cf. BGE, preface). These males, Nietzsche contends, prefer ugly truths to life-affirming illusions. So if woman is the creator of lies, man is to blame for honoring

<sup>32</sup>Ofelia Schutte suggests that Nietzsche’s critique of marriage is an attack of *modern* marriage and not an attack of the institution itself (Schutte, 1984, 181-185). Similarly, Nietzsche’s condemnation of woman is a criticism of the bourgeois woman of the twentieth century and not all women of all historical epochs.



and loving “precisely *this* art and *this* instinct in woman” (BGE, 232). Furthermore, assertions that appear degrading to women from the liberal democratic perspective may be praiseworthy from the Nietzschean perspective. In Nietzsche’s view, not only does man benefit from woman’s ability to create lies (and inspire others to believe those lies), but this ability is a great superiority of woman over man. If there are no permanent truths, as Nietzsche contends (i.e., all gods are dead), there is a need to create in humans the belief that some impermanent truths are permanent. Lacking any gods or absolute ideals to which to dedicate oneself, human esteeming and willing may cease (Z, 129). Woman’s concern with appearance and beautiful illusions demonstrates her close connection to life, her desire to make life worth living. In fact, woman’s ability to create life-affirming illusions (as opposed to ugly truths) enables man to cling to life instead of judging this life as no good (cf. TI, 473).

In short, Nietzsche does not condemn all women, nor does he hate femininity itself; rather, he rebels against the gradual *elimination of* separate and distinct feminine and masculine wills which is characteristic of democracies. Nietzsche predicts that as democracies inevitably move toward ever more equality, the corresponding trend will be to create homogeneity. His interpretation of equality “as a certain factual increase in similarity, which merely finds expression in the theory of ‘equal rights’” has its roots in the German language (TI, 540). “Gleich,” the German term for “equal,” also means “same” and “identical.” Although German also has another term, “selbe,” that means “same,” the fact that “gleich” translates both as “equal” and “same” means that the German language does not explicitly differentiate between the concepts of equality and sameness. In English as well, although the two terms can have slightly different connotations, the concept of equality is often employed in the same way as the concept of sameness is used.

Treating man and woman (two distinct types) the same leads to the “defeminization” of woman and the emasculation of man--both of which Nietzsche wholeheartedly opposes (BGE, 239). Nietzsche intends to maintain distinct masculine and feminine perspectives

and to heighten the tension between the sexes beyond what it has ever been. Although Nietzsche hopes to promote a distinct feminine perspective, he adamantly opposes woman's "liberation." But to say Nietzsche is no feminist is tantamount to suggesting that Nietzsche is no egalitarian. What liberal democrats term "progress," that is, evolving toward complete social and political equality, Nietzsche calls "degeneration." Nietzsche instead praises suffering and slavery as necessary facts of life because human beings "'are not equal.' Nor shall they become equal!" (Z, 213; cf. BGE, 44, 239, 257, 259). Overly anxious to condemn Nietzsche's conception of femininity as chauvinistic and time-bound, scholars have continually failed to consider whether Nietzsche's conception of femininity may be necessary in order to promote sexual dichotomy.

Nietzsche considers sexual homogenization to be an especially troubling consequence of egalitarianism; consequently, establishing the proper relationship between man and woman may be the key to transcending modern degeneration. Nietzsche understands the fight to establish equality between the sexes as the fight to eliminate the last basic (eternal) difference that has provided the potential for struggle and inspiration (a pathos of distance) throughout history. And certainly the war between the sexes has always been a tempestuous one. The conflict between different types of people has created the greatest political orders, the most magnificent pieces of music, and the most inspiring religions. But in their pursuit of equal rights, some feminists intend "*to abolish suffering*" altogether (BGE, 225). And they perceive any type of struggle as a precursor of unnecessary suffering. For Nietzsche, an end to suffering and struggle means an end to a basic condition of life that is prerequisite for greatness. If the war between the sexes can no longer provide any longing or inspiration, perhaps nothing else can. Nietzsche predicts that without struggle, creativity and profound goals will cease altogether (Z, 129). As man and woman become more indistinguishable from one another (in appearance, in roles, in occupations, in weakness, etc...) the thought of universal homogenization becomes more and more plausible. Worse than war for Nietzsche would be for humanity to degenerate to

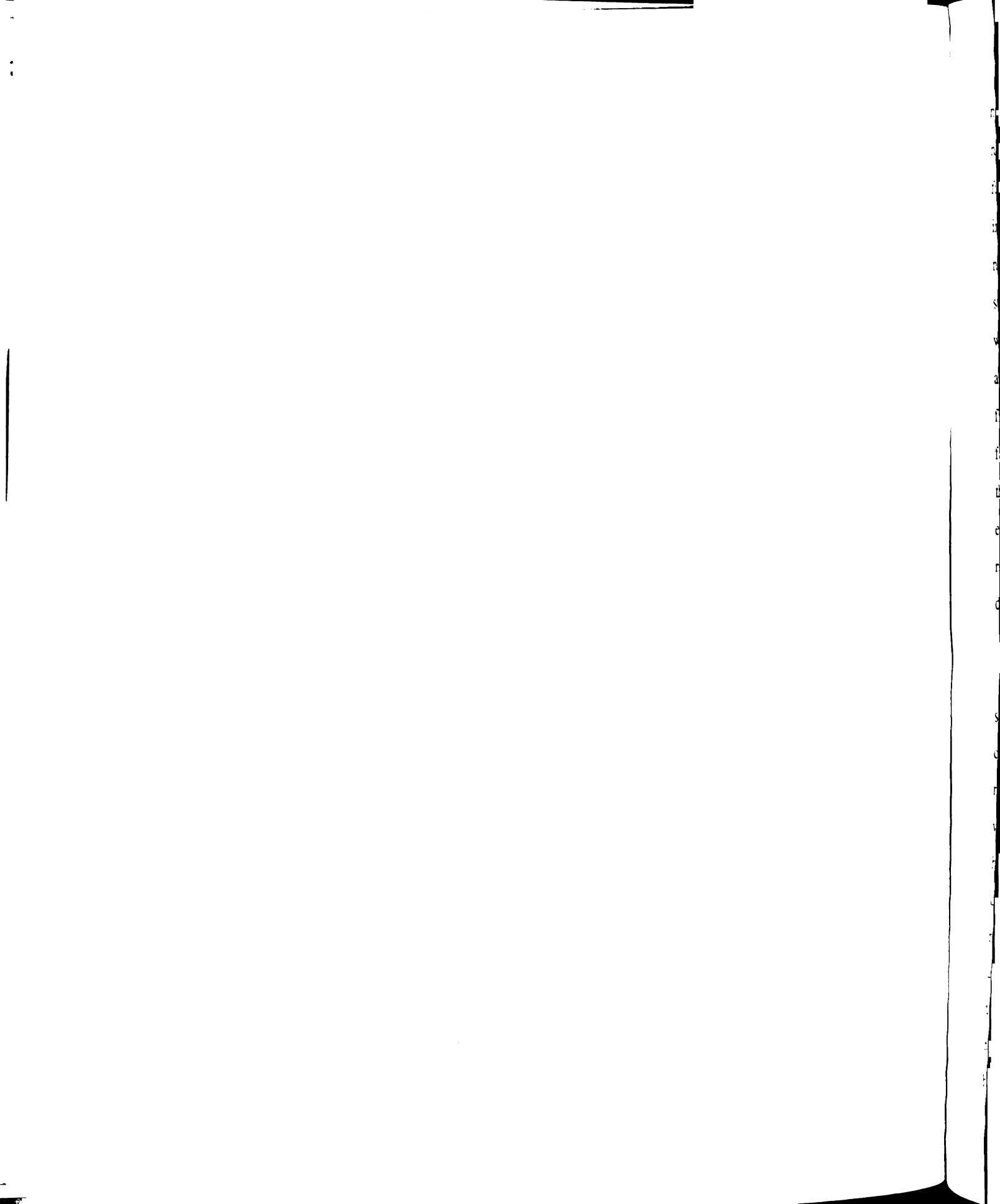
a condition in which people no longer fight any wars and the only goal is *comfortable* self-preservation, i.e., the condition of the last man. Insofar as a non-oppressive, homogenous, egalitarian society is part of the feminist ideal, Nietzsche necessarily opposes the feminists.

To a large degree Nietzsche reduces feminism to egalitarianism. Against both democratic ideologies, Nietzsche argues that man and woman should be as different from one another as possible. In order to maintain separate roles for man and woman, he recommends treating the sexes differently from one another (BGE, 238). This means that Nietzsche is a natural enemy of any woman who seeks rights equal to those of man.<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche urges that “an eternally hostile tension” between the sexes may be the only way to overcome the homogenization of humanity, the prevalence of herd morality, and the shallowness of bourgeois passivity (BGE, 238). Heightening the tension between the sexes beyond what it has ever been can potentially uplift both man and woman. Ultimately this sexual tension may be a necessary prerequisite to Nietzsche’s attempt to create a transcendent goal for the human species. Intensifying this mutual hostility necessitates cultivating a feminine perspective as a distinct and separate rival to a masculine one.

This study is an attempt to understand Nietzsche and the modern condition, not to endorse his teachings. Our deeper understanding of Nietzsche can be gained by examining one aspect of Nietzsche’s thought—his insistence on maintaining a separation of the sexes, which is a concern that pervades all periods of his thought. Turning to Nietzsche to learn about femininity and the proper roles of man and woman might seem odd since he is a

<sup>33</sup>Not all feminists recommend treating man and woman the same. Wolgast’s *Equality and the Rights of Women* presents a useful discussion of what it means to treat man and woman as equals. This book distinguishes the goal of *equality* from the goal of treating man and woman the *same*. Scholars often confound these distinct goals. But, she contends, sexual difference is in a different class than racial, ethnic, or religious differences. Biology as such is not irrelevant in the particular case of sex and gender, and ought to be given serious consideration. Because equality and sameness are two separate ideals, some feminists argue that man and woman should *not* be treated the same.

Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* also considers the significance of masculine and feminine differences. She recommends that the educational system ought to promote both the masculine and feminine types of creativity. The failure to affirm (or ignorance of) the distinct feminine perspective has had deleterious consequences for women, men, and education.



natural enemy of any woman who seeks rights equal to those of man. But Nietzsche recognizes that establishing the proper relations between the sexes constitutes a fundamental problem—for man, for woman, and for society at large. To defend the integrity of modern scholarship and reopen the serious issues of sex, gender, and sexual relations, Nietzsche's insights must be reexamined. The democratic prejudice and shallowness that infests modern scholarship makes most of the current defenses of women's liberation and liberalism shallow and unsound. Anyone who cares seriously about the future relations between the sexes, the equal treatment of man and woman, the fight for equal access to education, the condition of the family, or the possibility of fulfilling love between the sexes would be well-advised to engage Nietzsche's critique of the modern condition. The ultimate purpose of reading Nietzsche, the opponent of egalitarianism par excellence, is to formulate a defense of women's liberation and find a responsible notion of equal rights, if it is possible to do so, since Nietzsche is no liberal democrat.

### **How to Read Nietzsche**

Although focusing only on the discussions of women, woman, the feminine, and sexual relations will not unlock everything there is to know about Nietzsche, a careful consideration of this neglected topic will surely tell us more about Nietzsche and modernity. Scholars' refusal to read Nietzsche's comments on women in the manner in which he intended himself to be read has prevented them from understanding Nietzsche as he understood himself. Because he is a genius, one should read his works with a great deal of respect and care. Nietzsche insists that the "reader from whom I expect something must have three characteristics. He must be tranquil and read without haste. He must not always interpose himself and his 'education.' Finally, at the end he must not expect new tablets as a result" (Werke, 3: 272; quoted in Dannhauser, 1974, 17). In the Preface of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche notes that particular care must be exhibited in reading his masterpiece *Zarathustra*. He explains:

If this book [*On the Genealogy of Morals*] is incomprehensible to anyone and jars on his ears, the fault, it seems to me, is not necessarily mine. It is clear enough, assuming, as I do assume, that one has first read my earlier writings and has not spared some trouble in doing so: for they are indeed, not easy to penetrate. Regarding my *Zarathustra*, for example, I do not allow that anyone knows that book who has not at some time been profoundly wounded and at some time profoundly delighted by every word in it; for only then may he enjoy the privilege of reverentially sharing in the halcyon element out of which that book was born and in its sunlight clarity, remoteness, breadth, and certainty. In other cases, people find difficulty with the aphoristic form: this arises from the fact that today this form is *not taken seriously enough* (GM, Preface, 8).

What was true in Nietzsche's time is even more true today. Nobody writes in aphorisms anymore and most people are not able to understand them. This means that when scholars today reject his teaching, they often condemn a phantom of Nietzsche and do not confront this actual thought. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not seek objective readers, but thoughtful ones. Nietzsche explains in a letter to Carl Fuchs how he expects others to read his words:

If you should ever come round to writing about me (you lack the *time* for this, my valued friend!!), be sensible enough--as nobody has been till now--to characterize me, to "describe"--but not to "evaluate." This gives a pleasant neutrality: it seems to me that in this way one can put aside one's own passionate emphasis, and that it offers all the more to the more subtle minds. I have never been characterized, either as a *psychologist*, or as a *writer* (including *poet*), or as the inventor of a new kind of pessimism (a Dionysian pessimism, born of strength, which takes pleasure in seizing the problem of existence by the horns), or as an *Immoralist* (the highest form, till now, of "intellectual rectitude," which is *permitted* to treat morality as illusion, having itself become *instinct* and *inevitability*). It is not necessary at all--not even desirable--that you should argue in my favor; on the contrary, a dose of curiosity, as in the presence of a foreign plant, with an ironic resistance, would seem to me an incomparably more intelligent attitude. Forgive me! I have written several naïve things here--a little prescription for extracting oneself successfully from an *impossible* situation... (LET, 305).

Nietzsche is not suggesting that the reader ought to read his words objectively, as if that were possible; rather, he demands that his reader understand him before the reader attempts to use him. A proper reading might uncover some key insights into the relationship between the sexes.

In order to follow Nietzsche's advice, this dissertation will not reduce Nietzsche to his historical context, nor will it reduce his genius to biographical information. Such

information will only be noted in response to other scholars who attempt to read Nietzsche in this manner. The fact that Nietzsche understood his considerations on woman and the feminine, as well as his prescriptions regarding relationship between the sexes, to be closely related to his project provides reason enough to read Nietzsche's discussions on women. Nietzsche was proud of his insights on woman, characterizing himself as the "first psychologist of the eternally feminine" (EH, 266). Because Nietzsche highlights this as a fundamental concern of his, one must question whether Nietzsche understood women and what bearing his understanding has on his overall project.

Nietzsche wrote so voluminously that it is not possible here to study everything. Instead, this dissertation focuses primarily on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*<sup>34</sup> and *Beyond Good and Evil*. The existing scholarship focuses too heavily on the immature phases of Nietzsche's development. Focusing the study on these two works is sensible because these two works contain the most important of Nietzsche's thoughts. Löwith provides a useful division of Nietzsche's writings into three periods. The first stage includes his early works including *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations*. This is the immature phase of Nietzsche's career in which Nietzsche hoped to revive German culture. Dannhauser describes this stage as "an attempt to see and justify life as an aesthetic phenomenon" (Dannhauser, 1974, 19). The second phase includes *Human-all-too-Human*, *The Dawn of Day*, and the first four books of *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche's mature position is presented in *Zarathustra* and the books following it. Löwith's division fits with the division that Nietzsche himself suggests in Zarathustra's speech "On the Three Metamorphoses" (cf. Löwith, 21-26; Dannhauser, 1974, 19-20).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Instead of citing the complete title, all subsequent textual references to the book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* refer to the book as *Zarathustra*.

<sup>35</sup>Picart finds it useful to divide Nietzsche's texts into the Pre-Zarathustra, Zarathustra, and post-Zarathustra phases (Picart, 1). This division is not as accurate as Löwith's because Picart's does not align with "Of the Three Metamorphoses." Her division may suit her study of myth to a greater degree than does Löwith's.

Löwith suggests that all writings written after *Zarathustra* are to be understood as commentaries on it (Löwith, 19). He correctly notes that in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche posits or at least intimates all of his fundamental ideas. Nietzsche's later texts elaborate or make more explicit the key components of the Nietzschean system. In articulating the meaning of the death of God, special consideration of Nietzsche's remarks in *The Use and Abuse of History* is also warranted. Though this work is in the early period of his thought, he never denounced the ideas in the history essay and they are consistent with his final position. Other works will be used supplementally in order to elaborate sections of *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. *The Gay Science* is helpful for this purpose as it is the last text of the middle period which immediately precedes *Zarathustra*. The final aphorism of the original edition of *The Gay Science* is almost identical to *Zarathustra*'s "Prologue" (GS, 342, n. 72). When these and other earlier texts are referenced, close attention is paid to their context as they relate to his mature thought.

By exploring the relationship between the need to maintain sexual difference and Nietzsche's goal of transcending nihilism, this dissertation corrects the errors of those who have neglected the context of Nietzsche's comments on woman. The secondary texts that offer such a systematic discussion of the Nietzschean system, like Lampert's *Nietzsche's Teaching* or Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, fail to illuminate how Nietzsche's discussions of women are consistent with his fundamental teachings of the will to power and the eternal recurrence. In fact, given the comprehensiveness of the works of Kaufmann and Lampert, their failure to address Nietzsche's discussion of woman is quite striking. A brief consideration of the key components<sup>36</sup> of the Nietzschean system (i.e., the death of god, the Übermensch, the will

<sup>36</sup>Many noteworthy scholars focus their research on these key components. There are several examples of such comprehensive studies, but I will list only a few. Heidegger's four volumes present the most comprehensive analysis of Nietzsche's thought in its entirety. Consult Löwith's *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* for an in-depth analysis of the eternal recurrence. For a thorough analysis of the Nietzschean system as revealed through a close reading of *Zarathustra*, see Lampert's *Nietzsche's Teaching* and Rosen's *The Mask of Enlightenment*. Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* is a useful resource on the Nietzschean system as a whole.





to power and the eternal recurrence) as presented in *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil* demonstrates the centrality of his concern with the homogenization of the sexes.

### **The Four Components of the Nietzschean System**

#### ***God is Dead***

An obvious place to begin this analysis is with Nietzsche's beginning. His project begins with the assertion that God is dead (Z, 124). This means that belief in the Christian God has become untenable (WP, 5). On a deeper level, the death of God signifies that all gods are dead, including "science," "nature," and "truth"<sup>37</sup> as standards (Z, 191). One result of the death of God is radical relativism, the belief that all truth varies depending on cultural, historical, and social circumstance. This relativism, taken to its logical extension, leads to nihilism, the belief in nothing. Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God is the reason he is considered the father of the relativism that characterizes our intellectual age. A comprehensive understanding of the modern condition (what Nietzsche calls modern "degeneration") cannot be achieved without confronting significance of the relativism with which Nietzsche is credited. Nietzsche attempted to transcend nihilism; the issue is whether or not he succeeded. Clearly Nietzsche is no shallow relativist. He does not take a relativist's position regarding the respective roles of man and woman, for the erosion of sexual difference is indicative of the crisis of modernity. Scholars have not generally acknowledged the relationship between Nietzsche's maintenance of the dichotomy of the sexes and his attempt to transcend nihilism. His promotion of the separation of the sexes is not an insignificant misstep on Nietzsche's part, but a central insight of Nietzsche's. Any real understanding of Nietzsche's working through nihilism must explain why Nietzsche insists that man and woman should not become alike. A clear explanation of how

<sup>37</sup>I have placed quotation marks around the terms "science," "nature," and "truth" to indicate that these standards are dead. In general, I place quotation marks around the term "truth" when it refers to the kind of fixed, essential, unchanging truth that the death of God specifically rules out. I utilize the quotation marks in the instances that I wish to highlight the fact that the standard has died. I do not put quotation marks around the term "truth" when it refers to Nietzsche's own subjective truths because he means his truths to be for the future; his truths are not yet dead. I follow the same practice with the term "nature."

Nietzsche's insistence on sexual differentiation relates to his rejection of the last man will shed light on the alternate goal Nietzsche posits.

### *Übermensch*

The actualization of the *Übermensch* is the proper goal toward which Man must now turn. Nietzsche uses the term "*Übermensch*" to refer to the horizon of the future to be willed. Grasping the term "*Übermensch*" in German is a challenging task in itself, but the effort will yield results. First, one should note that conceptually English and German are not very different; English is a Germanic language. However, the German term "*über*" is used differently in German than it is in English. The term "*über*" usually means "over," "above," "exceeding," and "more than." German uses the word "*über*" as a prefix.<sup>38</sup> Typically the "*über*" as Nietzsche employs it in the term "*Übermensch*" translates into the English words "over," "higher," or "super."

The second half of the term, "*Mensch*," is more problematic for our purposes because there is no precise English connotative equivalent for the German term "*Mensch*." In German the masculine term "*der Mann*" signifies man. Additionally, the feminine term "*die Frau*" is the term typically used to refer to woman in German. "*Der Mensch*," however, is a masculine term which does not specifically connote either gender or sex. Although it is a masculine term (i.e., has the definite article "*der*"), the meaning of "*Mensch*" is really neutral or neutered. The most precise translations of the word "*Mensch*" are "human," "human being," or "person," yet it is not clear whether these English terms capture the meaning of "*Mensch*" as Nietzsche uses it in the term "*Übermensch*." But since Nietzsche uses "*Mensch*" instead of "*Mann*" or "*Weib*," clearly the term "*Übermensch*" does not specifically connote either a male or a female. In general, the term can be understood to mean an extraordinary type of individual who transcends the

<sup>38</sup>There are innumerable examples of this usage. For instance, the word "*Überschwemmung*" signifies inundation, flood or deluge while "*Schwemmen*" signifies to wash, to soak, or to carry away. An "*Übersetzer*" is a translator, while a "*Setzer*" is a compositor. "*Überwachung*" signifies superintendence or supervision, while "*wachen*" signifies to be awake or to guard.

human being (Mensch). Since there are two types of humans--men and women--the Übermensch transcends both types. Nietzsche does not state that the Übermensch will be a man or a woman; however, as discussed later, he does indicate that the Übermensch may more likely be a male.

Walter Kaufmann argues that the best translation of the term Übermensch is “overman” for two main reasons. First he argues that he wants to disassociate the term “overman” from the term “superman” which has been associated with the comical and the sarcastic (Z, editor’s note, 115). But it is doubtful that this association should disrupt the serious Nietzsche scholar. More importantly, Kaufmann argues that the term “overman” helps “to bring out the close relation between Nietzsche’s conceptions of the overman and self-overcoming, and to recapture something of his rhapsodical play on the words ‘over’ and ‘under’” (ibid.). But as Detwiler notes, there are just as many “über” adjectives that require the English equivalent “super” as there are adjectives requiring “over” (Detwiler, 48). While capturing Nietzsche’s play on words is certainly important, it is also true the prefix “über” has more than one English equivalent. And the term “super” captures the flavor of transcendence or overcoming just as well as (if not better than) the prefix “over.”

Additionally, Kaufmann’s term “overman” is simply too awkward as an adjective (cf. Detwiler, 48-9, 208). Not only do the terms “overmanish” and “overmanly” sound awkward, but they also corrupt the meaning of the second half of the term--“Mensch.” These two adjectives imply maleness while the adjective “übermenschlich” does not. Even Kaufmann concedes that the adjective “overmanly” is no good by utilizing the adjective “superhuman” for the adjective “übermenschlich”.

If one chooses to translate the noun, there are a few possibilities superior to Kaufmann’s choice. First, one may choose the literal translation “super-human being.” But this sounds awkward. The two remaining options are “superhuman” and “superman.” Since “superhuman” sounds more like an adjective than a noun and because “superman” sounds more pleasant, I prefer “superman” as a translation. Traditionally the terms “men”

and “man” refer to humanity as a whole; therefore, the term “superman” preserves the possibility of a male or female *Übermensch*.

One way to sidestep some of these translation difficulties is to leave the term “*Übermensch*” untranslated as Bernd Magnus does (cf. Magnus, 32-38). The topic of this dissertation makes this method most appropriate. The German term captures the ambiguous sexuality of the *Übermensch* better than any other English translation. However, it is not necessary to keep the adjective “*übermenschlich*” in the German. The term “superhuman” which can imply either maleness or femaleness is an adequate translation of the adjective.

Nietzsche never speaks of an “*Übermann*,” “*Überfrau*” or “*Überweib*”, but only an *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* may represent a transcendence of the “human all-too-human,” but not an overcoming of masculinity and femininity. Since “*Mensch*” is the term Nietzsche uses to refer to the “human-all-too-human,” some scrutiny of the difference between the term “*Mensch*” (a mere human) and the terms “*Mann*,” “*Weib*,” and “*Frau*” is necessary. In addition to his use of the generic term “*Mensch*” in his concept “*Übermensch*,” throughout his texts Nietzsche frequently discusses man and woman by utilizing the masculine term “*Mann*” and the feminine terms “*Weib*,” “*Weibchen*,” “*Weiblein*,” and “*Frau*.” These terms signify man and woman respectively, as opposed to a human being. Nietzsche purposely distinguishes between what is characteristic of man, what is typical of woman, and what is merely human. Nietzsche’s coined phrase “*menschliches, allzumenschliches*” which translates into “human-all-too-human,” suggests something lacking or incomplete about the *Mensch*. To contrast, Nietzsche never uses the parallel terms “masculine-all-too-masculine” or “feminine-all-too-feminine.”

The term itself does not settle the question of the sex of the *Übermensch*. Because Nietzsche does not explicitly state the sex of the *Übermensch*, most scholars assume that the *Übermensch*, like Nietzsche, is male. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that Nietzsche occasionally refers to a particular male as superhuman, but he never applies the

term to a woman (cf. WP, 983; BGE 200, 207).<sup>39</sup> Many scholars find this consideration to be decisive from the outset, yet Nietzsche never states that the *Übermensch* must be male. Hasty assumptions are made on the other side of the fence as well. Carol Diethe notes that many women who were “creative or active in the intellectual arena during Nietzsche’s generation” assumed that Nietzsche included women in his prescriptions for the *Übermensch* (Diethe, 7). Perhaps the best way to understand the *Übermensch* is as a male who transcends man and woman, or as a female who transcends man and woman. The decisive question is whether a female or a male would more likely possess the requisite traits to transcend the human-all-too-human.

Not only does translating the term “*Übermensch*” cause difficulties, but each of the terms Nietzsche uses to refer to woman carries connotations which are easily lost when translated into English. He most frequently uses the German term “*Weib*.” This is a noteworthy peculiarity since the term is rarely used today except as a slang term. The term “*Frau*” is the typical everyday term. “*Weib*” used to be the common term for woman, but some time before the nineteenth century the term took on negative connotations. At that point, “*Frau*” instead became the common term for woman. Even in Nietzsche’s time the term “*Weib*” would have been considered archaic.

But Nietzsche uses both terms-- “*Weib*” and “*Frau*,” though he uses “*Weib*” much more frequently. The difference between the two terms (“*Frau*” and “*Weib*”) is initially unclear. His discussion appears to be unsystematic and his use of these two terms seems to be even more random. But Nietzsche is too careful to alternate randomly between two terms for the same concept. There must be some deliberate reason for his distinguishing between “*Weib*” and “*Frau*.” Although a cognate of the English word “wife,” “*Weib*” is most frequently translated as woman or female. The term “*Weib*” is still commonly used in certain expressions, like the phrase “*Weib und Kind*” which translates as “Woman and

<sup>39</sup>See the section “Has There Ever Been an *Übermensch*” in chapter 3 for a more complete discussion of the sex of the *Übermensch*.

Child.” Nietzsche may employ the term “Weib” instead of “Frau” to point to the maternal quality of woman. After all, Nietzsche titled a section of *Human-All-Too-Human* “Weib und Kind” (HAH I: 377-437), which provides a stark contrast to his sections on man (“Mann”) entitled “Man in Society” (HAH I: 293-376) and “Man Alone With Himself” (HAH I: 483-638). Unlike woman, man is to be active in society (business, politics, and industry) or by himself (artist, poet, or philosopher). Nietzsche dedicates a great deal of discussion to the crucial importance of woman’s ability to give birth. Perhaps Nietzsche uses the term “Weib” to highlight the importance of this traditional maternal role, a role which ties woman to man. He may intend to stress that woman should understand herself to be intimately connected to this role. The term “Weib” implicitly challenges those women seeking emancipation--women whom Nietzsche would consider to be incomplete females.

Nietzsche also frequently uses the diminutives “Weibchen” and “Weiblein” which are diminutive terms for “Weib”. In some contexts these diminutives are generally meant to be condescending terms. “Weibchen” is the typical term for a female animal and “Weiblein” may also be translated as such. One way to attempt to capture the connotations of these terms is by using the adjectives “little” or “small.” Often these diminutives refer to women who are no longer able to give birth (like the old lady in *Zarathustra*).

The other term Nietzsche uses for woman, “Frau,” signifies woman, wife, or lady. This is the term usually used to refer to woman today. One might say that “Frau” is the opposite of “Mann.” As Nietzsche uses the term, “Frau” seems to carry the implication of a lady, or a woman tied to society. Perhaps a woman characterized by a noble upbringing. But this is a bit of an oversimplification because German has a separate term, “Dame,” which connotes a lady. In contrast to “Frau” and “Dame,” “Weib” seems to connote the brute, animal, sexual, passionate, instincts of woman. A Weib would embody the unpredictable aspects of woman that Nietzsche hopes to promote--her changeability, mysteriousness, and animality (cf. BGE, 239; Z, 220). On the other hand, a “Frau” would be more refined than the “Weib.” The Frau’s sensibilities are too refined to accord

with the vulgarity of modern science (BGE, 127, 207).

Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche's use of the term "Weib" follows the lead of Schopenhauer's use in his essay "*Ueber die Weiber*" (GS, 71, n. 7). Kaufmann notes Schopenhauer's suggestion that the more respectful term "Frau" ought only be used in the sense of "wife." Kaufmann suggests that Schopenhauer was aware that "Weib" sounded disrespectful and this was his motivation for the selection of the term. Nietzsche too may intend to carry a tinge of disrespect in his voice. Much of his writing of women consists of an attack of modern women. Initially, Nietzsche does not seem to respect so-called "liberated" or "enlightened" woman. Perhaps he reserves the term "Frau" for the more traditional woman who fulfills the traditionally feminine roles like wife and mother.

The very term Nietzsche selects to signify the goal of the future begs the question of whether the Übermensch is masculine, feminine, or both. Establishing what sex the Übermensch is will shed light on the Übermensch itself. The sex of the Übermensch may be a central component of what the Übermensch is. Given Nietzsche's focus on sexuality, lust, and love, transcending humanity does not mean eliminating sexual difference. Even if transcending sexuality were possible, it would not be desirable.

To see that the erosion of sexual differences is not part of Nietzsche's project, one need only consider the antithesis of the Übermensch. The term Nietzsche uses for the antithesis of the Übermensch is the last Mensch. The last Mensch is also of an ambiguous sexuality. Nietzsche never speaks of a "last Frau," "last Weib," or "last Mann." His use of the term "Mensch" here indicates the sterility of the "human-all-too-human." The last Mensch represents the erosion of sexuality, lust, passion, love, and both the masculine and the feminine perspectives. Nietzsche's description of the last Mensch (Z, 129-130) sheds light on why Nietzsche does not use the terms "last woman" or "last man." The terms "Frau," "Weib" and "Mann" indicate a degree of sexuality that is absent from the last Mensch. Maleness or femaleness does not define the last Mensch--it is a mere (sexually neutral) human being. Nietzsche finds it unnecessary to express a sexuality of the last



Mensch because he intends the term “Mensch” to capture something akin to objectivity or neutrality--the denial of both masculine and feminine sexuality. Although the last Mensch may have either female, male, hermaphroditic, or the absence of sex organs, the last Mensch is in no way a man or a woman--nor is the last Mensch manly or feminine.

Because the term “Mensch” as employed in the concept “letzte Mensch” indicates sterility of the soul, translating the term does not pose the same difficulties as the term “Übermensch” does. Since it is not necessary to determine the sexuality of the last Mensch (the sexuality of the last Mensch does not bear witness to who the last Mensch is), the appropriate translation of this term is “last man.” The alternative, “last human being,” simply sounds too awkward. So the threat Nietzsche sees is that the distinct male and female perspectives will be wiped away and the last man will be the result.

### ***Will to Power***

There is no guarantee that the Übermensch will be created; Nietzsche must teach individuals how to will consciously so that the Übermensch can be actualized. Consequently, Nietzsche teaches that the basic characteristic of life is the will to power. He explains this in a most definitive statement: “A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength--life itself is *will to power*” (BGE, 13). The most fundamental, universal fact, says Nietzsche, is that all life is a striving for power, a craving to alter the world. Consideration of what the will to power is leads to the question of whether man and woman possess essentially different wills from each other. The initial answer seems to be no. If there is no fundamental distinction between human beings and animals because *all life* is characterized by the will to power, it is unlikely that man and woman would have different wills. But in describing what ought to be woman’s role, Nietzsche indicates that women will experience an accumulation of power from different objects than men, that her will is essentially different than his.

Nietzsche’s discussion of separate masculine and feminine wills may indicate that man and woman are different *by nature*. Nietzsche may be employing the traditional Greek

understanding of nature as *physis*--a fixed unchanging essence that is not altered by conventions. But employing nature (or *physis*) as a fixed standard to distinguish the essence of man from woman is problematic in light of Nietzsche's assertion that all gods are dead. The death of God means that nature as a fixed standard has been devalued. Nietzsche's two notions, the death of God (which implies the impossibility of an absolute or fixed truth) and his apparent use of a natural standard (which seems to mean a presumption of an absolute truth), taken together are problematic. On the surface the Nietzschean system appears inherently contradictory. This is why any careful study of Nietzsche's thought requires an examination of this tension. A close scrutiny of Nietzsche's perspectives toward man and woman, respectively, can help resolve this tension.

### ***Eternal Return of the Same***

The problem of Nietzsche's use of nature as a standard is intensified further by his doctrine of the eternal return of the same. Next to nothing has been written on Nietzsche's eternal recurrence doctrine as it relates to his promotion of sexual dichotomy. The Nietzschean system is incomprehensible without considering the doctrine of the eternal return of the same. If nature as a standard has been devalued, it is not clear *why* Nietzsche insists that it is necessary to preserve man and woman as distinct types. It is also not clear *how* Nietzsche can preserve the fundamental distinction between man and woman and the masculine and the feminine perspectives. Moreover, Nietzsche's rejection of the last man in favor of a completely new type of ideal, the *Übermensch*, seems to be arbitrary as well. The eternal return of the same is Nietzsche's solution to these and other problems. In a nutshell, the eternal recurrence means:

Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of being. Everything dies, everything blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity. (Z, 329-330).

This teaching that everything recurs an infinite number of times assures the eternal existence of man and woman as fundamental types. But this doctrine also means that the “eunuch” historians whom Nietzsche condemns will recur eternally. Analyzing the eternal recurrence can help explain how the preservation of the two distinct sexes and their separate types of willing relate to his rejection of the last man.

Moreover, there also seems to be a tension between Nietzsche’s characterization of life as will to power and his characterization of the world as recurring eternally. The will to power means that all living things strive to leave an imprint on the world. The eternal recurrence means that whether individuals accept it or not, all past events will recur infinitely. Since everything that has happened will happen again an infinite number of times, all willing seems to be in vain. Affirming the eternal recurrence means that one is able to accept everything that has happened so far. Acceptance of this fundamental fact is the sign of a strong soul according to Nietzsche. But Nietzsche’s indignant condemnations of the last man indicate that he does not simply affirm all that was and is. Nietzsche has some unarticulated standard of evaluation that distinguishes the high (what he wants to promote) and the low. Considering why Nietzsche must preserve those things against which he rebels will shed light on the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche’s description of the idea of eternal recurrence can help clarify the status of the will to power and the masculine and feminine types of willing.

Nietzsche’s frequent use of feminine metaphors also indicates a connection between his man/ woman teaching and the eternal return doctrine. The eternal return assures that the masculine and feminine perspectives will recur through eternity. This explains why Nietzsche speaks of the “Eternal Feminine,” the “Eternally Masculine” and the “Eternally Objective” perspectives. A complete understanding of the eternal recurrence must account for why Nietzsche deems it necessary that both the masculine and the feminine perspectives recur eternally. If the distinctions between man and woman were fixed truths (or biological inevitabilities), Nietzsche would not need to insist on preserving these two distinct types.

### **Is Nietzsche Guilty of a Metaphysical Relapse?**

Heidegger accuses Nietzsche of making the same mistakes with which Nietzsche charges previous philosophers; he charges Nietzsche with creating a new metaphysical system. Heidegger defines metaphysics as “the truth of beings as such and as a whole” (Heidegger, III: 187).<sup>40</sup> He argues that Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence doctrine describes the character of all being. Nietzsche’s presentation of the eternal return of the same, according to Heidegger, explains “the way in which beings as a whole are, the existentia of beings,” that is, the fixed order of beings as a whole (ibid.). He similarly understands Nietzsche’s term “will to power” as “the word for the being of beings as such, the essentia of beings” (ibid.). Heidegger argues that by positing the eternal recurrence and the will to power, Nietzsche stamps becoming (willing) with the character of Being (a fixed, unchangeable essence). In other words, Heidegger understands the will to power as Nietzsche’s description of the nature of living beings, a nature which cannot and will not be altered. This means that Nietzsche, too, bows down to a fixed standard or eternal truth by which he judges humanity. If Heidegger is correct, Nietzsche’s project may have been a failure since Nietzsche’s perspective simply cannot logically include a fixed absolute truth. This is perplexing because it seems impossible to have something “fixed” or unchangeable in a world that is characterized by will to power and the absence of all gods. Heidegger therefore charges him with being no different from the other metaphysicians Nietzsche berates.

Nietzsche intends to preserve the masculine/feminine dichotomy, i.e., the separation of the sexes into two distinct types. This seems to indicate separate masculine and feminine natures. Likewise, Nietzsche distinguishes between high and low individuals, noble and base, or masters and slaves. Again, Nietzsche does not clarify the basis for drawing such distinctions. Nietzsche hopes to maintain the fundamental

<sup>40</sup>All subsequent references to Heidegger’s four volumes on Nietzsche will cite the volume and page number. References to his essay “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is dead’” will cite page number only.

distinctions between high and low, and the masculine and feminine, in order to keep humanity from deteriorating into a race of last men who draw no distinctions. That Nietzsche maintains these two dichotomies suggests a connection between the masculine/feminine and the master/ slave dichotomies. Correlating woman with the slave and man with the master is oversimplified. First, most men and women are currently weak, according to Nietzsche's analysis. If both man and woman can be weakened by slave morality, might the opposite not be possible in the case of a master morality? Second, the assumption that women are to be slaves also seems inaccurate, given the reverence Nietzsche has for certain traits that woman possesses. Nietzsche may admire some of the slaves' traits (such as loyalty or reverence toward those who are their obvious superiors) while still relegating them to the rank of slave. Still, Nietzsche does not explain whether conventional slavery is merely desirable temporarily, necessary perpetually, or warranted because it is natural. Before one assumes that "woman" is synonymous with "slave," such ambiguities must be considered. Articulating Nietzsche's foundation for distinguishing the proper roles of man and woman should illuminate the basis upon which Nietzsche distinguishes between the high and the low.

If Nietzsche is not a metaphysician as Heidegger charges, perhaps he is a radical relativist. But if Nietzsche were a true relativist, the elimination of sexual differentiation should not pose a problem for him. However, his condemnation of sterility, objectivity, emasculation, and defeminization indicate that the masculine/ feminine dichotomy ought not be eliminated. Since all goals or ideals are temporary human creations, Nietzsche's horizon must be as well. So Nietzsche's perspective does not seem to take precedence over any others. The Nietzschean standard of evaluation may be a radical new frame of reference which transcends both absolute and relative truths, or simply a position that cannot be sustained logically. Since it initially appears to rest on nothing more than his own personal preference, Nietzsche's project almost appears as a game that Nietzsche's playful will sets in motion for the sake of his own amusement. But a thorough understanding of

Nietzsche's perspectives toward man and woman, respectively, can help reveal the relationship he sees between absolute and relative truth. His discussions of man and woman call Nietzsche's so-called "relativism" into question. Nietzsche claims to have found a way of transcending nihilism. Any examination of Nietzsche's confrontation with nihilism and his rejection of the various forms of modern morality is incomplete without opening the issues of the sexes.

## CHAPTER 3: NIETZSCHE'S REVALUATION OF NIHILISM

### The Fundamental Fact of Modernity

Nietzsche begins his project with the assertion "*God is dead!*" (Z, 124). A root of the contemporary misreading of Nietzsche is a misunderstanding of his perspectivism, which stems from Nietzsche's realization that God has died. Contemporary scholars go astray because they fail to accept the consequences that the death of God imposes on liberalism, egalitarianism, Judeo-Christian beliefs, and feminism. Nietzsche's interpretation of death of God<sup>41</sup> opens up the possibility of creating a new *human* ideal as opposed to a divine one. According to Nietzsche, the death of God is a culmination of a variety of factors, one of which is an excess of scientific research. Consequently, Nietzsche's task involves the rejection of the sterility and objectivity characteristic of modern scholars and a revival of masculinity, femininity and man and woman as distinct perspectives and types. For Nietzsche, the death of God announces the importance of subjective interpretations of the world. Because God's death reveals the implausibility of any absolute "truth," Nietzsche sees the creation of subjective truths, the only possible kinds of truth, as the most fruitful way to cultivate human life. He rejects the objective perspective in favor of viewing history from a masculine and/ or a feminine perspective. Nietzsche's insistence that the death of God must not result in sterility and objectivity is puzzling. His explanation of what the death of God means to him illuminates why the masculine and feminine perspectives are preferable to an objective one.

Nietzsche presents the death of God as a discovered fact rather than as an argument, proposition, or theory. Unlike a theory, which suggests what *may* be or is *likely* to be the case, this fact is a real event that Nietzsche does not need to prove. Nietzsche asserts that

<sup>41</sup>Kaufmann capitalizes the term "God" in the phrase "God is dead." For the sake of clarity, I follow this practice in such phrases as "God is dead," "the death of God," and "God's death." I also capitalize the term "God" when it specifically refers to the Christian God. I do not capitalize the term when referring to a type of god other than the Christian God or the idea of a god as a type of ideal that is no longer possible for human beings. This procedure is appropriate because the death of God also means the death of *all* gods. In German, all nouns are capitalized so Nietzsche obviously does not make this distinction.

God is dead without providing proof because his main concern is to assess its consequences. Nietzsche expects that some individuals already know that God has died, while others soon will become aware of this fact. In the “Prologue” of *Zarathustra*, the fact that the saint has not yet realized that God has died surprises Zarathustra because he expects that religious people like the saint already know this has happened. Ultimately all of humanity will be effected by the fact that God is dead and will need to come to terms with this event as a fundamental fact of modernity. Zarathustra therefore does not teach anyone of the death of God, for the free spirits already know this and others soon will; rather, he teaches the *implications* of the death of God.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche’s task begins with teaching others who recognize the seriousness and meaning of the death of God. Nietzsche’s goal is to interpret this fact in such a way that it will promote what *he* considers to be an ascending type of life. Nietzsche’s goal is not to “empower” everyone equally, but to breed a certain type of extraordinary individual who is most assuredly *not* liberal democrat. Nietzsche attempts to turn God’s death, a potentially devastating event, into a meaningful opportunity for creative spirits like himself.

According to Nietzsche, the importance of any fact (including the death of God) does not lay in the so-called fact itself, but in the interpretation of it. Facts are necessarily tied to values and to the human beings who interpret them. All facts (including the fact that God is dead) are eternally open to an infinite number of interpretations. Although ultimately everyone will discover that God has died, this event will mean different things to different people. Those who are strong enough (like Nietzsche and Zarathustra) will experience the death of God as liberating, while others (like the madman) will feel enslaved by the news. How one interprets the death of God depends on one’s courage and strength, on the individual’s profundity and nobility (cf. BGE, 39). Only other free spirits like Nietzsche will understand his interpretation of the death of God. It may be possible for

<sup>42</sup>Lampert also stresses the point that Zarathustra does not teach others that God has died—only the significance of the event (Lampert, 17).



Nietzsche or other creative spirits, however, to influence the masses in other ways. According to Nietzsche, the common man will only be able to interpret the death of God from a shallow, sterile perspective. This is precisely why Nietzsche sees the modern condition as a crisis: it is extremely likely that when the knowledge that God has died becomes universal, most people (if not all) will interpret it as an indication that life has no meaning at all. And given the prevalence of shallow relativism in democratic societies nowadays, Nietzsche may simply be correct here. Modern scholarship is merely the reflection (and the promotion of) the shallow, nihilistic perspective of most people. Nietzsche rejects the so-called objective perspective as reductionistic and deadly.

Although Nietzsche spoke the phrase “God is dead” first in *The Gay Science* (cf. GS, 125),<sup>43</sup> the most complete presentation of the death of God occurs in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*--“A Book For All and None.” Nietzsche’s (Zarathustra’s) interpretation of the death of God is first offered to all of humanity, then to a few disciples, and ultimately to no one but himself. Presenting a teaching both for *all* and for *no one* seems paradoxical, but this title does make some sense. Nietzsche’s teachings are for all because he is interpreting the facts of modernity that touch the lives of everyone. With his books, Nietzsche intends to posit a goal that will shape all of humanity--all men and women. If his readers take his teachings to heart and carry out his suggestions, humanity will be ennobled. Of course, Nietzsche has a unique understanding of what it would mean to ennoble humanity. He does not mean to protect and preserve all human beings; instead, he means to create conditions that are conducive to the production of self-sufficient, authoritative, creative individuals (cf. BGE, 206). Those who understand Nietzsche’s (Zarathustra’s) concerns will turn toward the goal of creating the *Übermensch* instead of becoming last men.

<sup>43</sup>Nietzsche is not the first to speak of a dying god. In Christianity, God dies. In his essay “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is dead,’” Heidegger traces Nietzsche’s notion of gods that can die back to the time of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Heidegger quotes one of Nietzsche’s notes in which he states, “I believe in the ancient German saying: ‘All gods must die.’” Moreover, the death of gods was familiar to Nietzsche in youth from reading Hegel although Nietzsche indicates that his understanding of dying gods is different than Hegel’s (Heidegger, 58-59).

Nietzsche also addresses his teaching to no one. Although he means to transform all of humanity with his teaching, as Zarathustra learns in the “Prologue,” the multitude will not understand or accept it (Z, 130; cf. GM: preface, 8; EH, 259). Moderns are so decadent that they lack the courage to dedicate themselves to the type of ideal Zarathustra heralds. He addresses his teaching to no one because no one yet exists who can comprehend the book or Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche’s writings express his radical individuality that no other individual shares (or *can* share) with him. He explains, “nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows. For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear” (EH, 261; cf. BGE, 231). He also notes that “in the end, one experiences only oneself” (Z, 264). No other person can completely understand (the experiences, values, or goals of) another. Nietzsche’s experience of the death of God and its consequences is so personal that he expects them to be incomprehensible to anyone else--and perhaps even to himself. Indeed, the most difficult task for Nietzsche may be understanding his own thoughts and attaining self-knowledge: “For whatever is his own is well concealed from the owner; and of all treasures, it is our own that we dig up last” (Z, 305). *Zarathustra* tells the story of Zarathustra’s path toward his own ideal just as Nietzsche’s books taken together tell Nietzsche’s story. All individuals must find their *own* way to cope with God’s death since “*the* way... does not exist” (Z, 307).

### **Problem of Communicating and Communicability**

The subtitle of *Zarathustra* introduces a problem of communicating and communicability as such. Nietzsche introduces this issue by stressing that his writings contain only *his* truths (BGE, 231). Nietzsche’s disclaimer indicates a problem of communicability, a problem which has two dimensions. First, Nietzsche’s disclaimer indicates the limitation of language, dialectics, and conversation. Very few individuals, if any, can grasp Nietzsche’s truths in the sense that he means them because he submits to language, a universal phenomenon, in order to communicate them. Nietzsche explains the

limit of discussing one's ideas: "One no longer loves one's insight enough once one communicates it" because the thought is altered in the process of communication (BGE 160). To put ideas into words is to force them to submit to the rules of grammar and language--rules that tend to distort the ideas. Words themselves are generalizations. Once one puts one's thoughts into language, the thoughts look almost perverted. For example, consider the word "Gleich." The word "Gleich" means both "equal" and "same." As noted in chapter two, that this word has these two meanings can easily lead one to confound the two significations. Equality means sameness in part due to the language. Equality could certainly be interpreted differently, but German speakers would unlikely understand equality to be a separate idea from sameness. Just as language itself can lead one to confound these two meanings, communication can lead to similar confusions. What one individual understands a word to mean, another may interpret in a different way.

Second, the death of God means that there is no one "truth" applicable to all, but rather innumerable truths. Throughout his works, Nietzsche stresses the fact that these are only *his* truths to highlight the difference between truths of noble origin (such as Nietzsche's) and slavish truths. He contrasts his truths with modern democratic morality which professes to be "unegoistic":

Every unegoistic morality that takes itself for unconditional and addresses itself to all does not only sin against taste: it is a provocation to sins of omission, one *more* seduction under the mask of philanthropy--and precisely a seduction and injury for the higher, rarer, privileged. Moralities must be forced to bow first of all before the *order of rank*; their presumption must be brought home to their conscience--until they finally reach agreement that it is *immoral* to say: "what is right for one is fair for the other" (BGE, 221).

Nietzsche's truths are distinguished from modern "truths" because they are untimely, life-affirming, and above all, noble. He shares his truths only with others who are like him, whom he describes as "We Europeans of the day after tomorrow, we firstborn of the twentieth century....we last Europeans with a good conscience" (BGE, 214). A truth that is intended for everyone is necessarily low. Nietzsche's truths are untimely and will not be embraced by the masses because "the vast majority of the things that interest and attract

choosier and more refined tastes and every higher nature seem to the average man totally ‘uninteresting’” (BGE, 220). Nietzsche expects that most would try to turn him into an advocate of universal truth. The authentic individual does not seek dogmatic truths for the whole world; instead he should love his truths as uniquely his own. Zarathustra explains: “if you have a virtue and she is your virtue, then you have her in common with nobody” (Z, 148). This notion is in direct opposition to conventional democratic wisdom which says that if the majority believes it, most likely it is correct. Nietzsche is inclined in the opposite direction. The authentic individual should love his truths as he loves a woman whom he would never want to share with anyone else. Zarathustra continues:

May your virtue be too exalted for the familiarity of names: and if you must speak of her,<sup>44</sup> then do not be ashamed to stammer of her. Then speak and stammer, “This is *my* good; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the good. I do not want it as divine law; I do not want it as human statute and need: it shall not be a signpost for me to overearths and paradises. It is an earthly virtue that I love: there is little prudence in it, and least of all the reason of all men. But this bird built its nest with me: therefore I love and caress it; now it dwells with me, sitting on its golden eggs.” Thus you shall stammer and praise your virtue (Z, 148).

No one could respect, love, or revere a woman who all men share and this is also the case with virtue and truths. Others may see his woman, but no other can really understand her as he does. To communicate one’s insights is to degrade one’s thoughts into something common and ordinary. Liberal democratic scholars cannot accept Nietzsche’s notion of the exclusive virtue and, therefore, insist on pushing it into a universal egalitarian framework. Nietzsche suggests that understanding truth as a woman can help break this pattern.

### **Truth as Woman**

Recognition of this problem of communicability and the subjectivity of truth helps explain why Nietzsche suggests that it is appropriate to consider truth as a woman.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>The German word for virtue (die Tugend) is a feminine noun. This is the reason Kaufmann translates as “her” instead of “it.”

<sup>45</sup>The German word for truth (die Wahrheit) is also a feminine noun. Nietzsche’s metaphor of truth as a woman is rooted in the German language just as is his interpretation of equality (Gleichheit) as synonymous with sameness.

*Beyond Good and Evil* opens with the supposition: "Supposing truth is a woman--what then?" (BGE, preface). This is a supposition, a metaphor Nietzsche uses to demonstrate the wrong manner in which dogmatic philosophers have approached truth so far. These males look for truth without regard for whether the truth is ugly or not. They prostrate themselves to the truth and force the truth on everyone (including themselves) even if it is painful or dangerous. The final mistake is that they attempt to make this truth accessible to all and applicable to all. Instead, truth should be intimate testimony of who the individual alone is. Nietzsche suggests that "One should have more respect for the bashfulness with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties. Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is--to speak Greek--*Baubo*?" (GS, preface, 38). Nietzsche contends that a modest woman is more beautiful than an outspoken one, and the same can be said of the truth when stripped of all illusions and veils. Unlimited access to the truth may be dangerous or deadly; it may lead one to nihilism.

The philosopher should chase after truth as he does a beautiful woman, win her heart, and make her a possession that is uniquely his own. Truth is therefore a kind of extension of the philosopher--his beloved. Once in his possession, he should shape his own truth just as he would like to mold woman to suit himself.<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche's metaphor makes sense in a world in which God is dead. The philosopher should desire to have his very own woman whom he will share with no one else. While different men have a different understanding of what it means to possess truth or whatever particular good the man seeks, when a man loves a woman, he seeks sole possession of her (cf. BGE, 194; GS, 14). Nietzsche explains:

The difference among men becomes manifest not only in the difference between their tablets of goods--in the fact that they consider different goods worth striving for and also disagree about what is more and less valuable, about the order of rank of the goods they recognize in

<sup>46</sup>See the section entitled "Will and Willingness" in chapter 5 for a discussion of the extent to which man molds woman and woman molds herself.

common--it becomes manifest even more in what they take for really *having* and *possessing* something good.

Regarding a woman, for example, those men who are more modest consider the mere use of the body and sexual gratification a sufficient and satisfying sign of "having," of possession. Another type, with a more suspicious and demanding thirst for possession, sees the "question mark," the illusory quality of such "having" and wants subtler tests, above all in order to know whether the woman does not only give herself to him but also gives up for his sake what she has or would like to have: only then does she seem to him "possessed." A third type, however, does not reach the end of his mistrust and desire for having even so: he asks himself whether the woman, when she gives up everything for him, does not possibly do this for a phantom of him. He wants to be known deep down, abysmally deep down, before he is capable of being loved at all; he dares to let himself be fathomed. He feels that his beloved is fully in his possession only when she no longer deceives herself about him, when she loves him just as much for his devilry and hidden insatiability as for his graciousness, patience, and spirituality (BGE, 194).

Different types of men lust after different types of women (i.e., have different tablets of goods) and have different conceptions of what it means to possess a woman (possesses the truth). The philosopher should be in command of the truth instead of laying prostrate before it. Dogmatic, universal, democratic truths no longer have any power to improve human life. Nietzsche's metaphor means that unlike those sterile, dead truths, the truth should be beautiful, feisty, passionate, dangerous, but also life-affirming. Truth should be so personal that it is not intended for and could not be apprehended by everyone. Truth should also be fertile; it should inspire human creativity. Finally, the path to creating the truth is not a passive, easy search, but an intense, dangerous struggle. The philosopher should lust for his truth just as man lusts for his woman.

Picart interprets the metaphor of truth as a woman not yet won by dogmatic philosophers as a positive conception of woman and the feminine (Picart, 145). But Nietzsche is criticizing dogmatists, not necessarily praising woman or the feminine in the passage. To characterize the metaphor as "good" or "bad" for women is to step out of its context. The metaphor itself is neither clearly positive nor clearly negative. Picart continues: "In the figure of the will-to-truth as a Sphinx, the 'feminine' is ambiguous. In the figure of the Sphinx-Circe that the skeptic worships, the 'feminine' is negative. Yet the overall trend seems to be an increasingly negative valuation of 'woman' and the 'feminine'".

in Nietzsche's political world" (ibid.). Picart's analysis goes beyond the surface meaning of Nietzsche's argument because she misconstrues the role of the sphinx/ Circe metaphor.<sup>47</sup> It is not so clear that Circe represents a negative image of woman to Nietzsche. He also associates Circe with "cruelty," the virtue of the free, very free spirits (BGE, 229). In the two passages in which he cites Circe, Nietzsche speaks of the desire to revel in uncertainty, masks, and seduction. Again, the drive to uncertainty, ignorance, and masks is not so clearly positive or negative--but one that is a manifestation of the will to power. Nietzsche also mentions that every courageous thinker will recognize this drive in himself (BGE, 229). Of course, the courageous thinker attempts to push down that drive; but, nonetheless, the drive exists in him. Skeptics may conceive of the will to truth wrongly, but this does not constitute a negative assessment of woman, but a negative assessment of the skeptics.

Truth understood as a woman may be *either* positive or negative because the truth may be ugly to one but beautiful to another. However, one should not embrace an ugly truth, according to Nietzsche. Thus it would seem that the metaphor of truth as a woman means that woman should be beautiful. Whether the metaphor is positive or negative, in constructing this image, Nietzsche maintains a separate concept of woman from man. This metaphor of truth as a woman is only meaningful in a world in which sex difference still exists. Regardless of whether Nietzsche sees the image as ugly, old, and sterile, or young, beautiful, and vibrant, if Nietzsche's concerns are not heeded, this metaphor may soon have no meaning whatsoever.

This image of woman as a metaphor for truth comes from a man's perspective. Women do not generally seek to possess other women. Nietzsche's metaphor places woman as the object rather than the subject of the pursuit. Since Nietzsche portrays

<sup>47</sup>In Homer, Circe seduces Odysseus' men and her powerful magic to turn them into swine. The sphinx was originally a mythological monster with a lion's body and a human head. It was originally known as a king to Syrians, Phoenicians, and Mycenaean Greeks. In the Near East and in Greek literature, it was known as a female. The sphinx is known, especially in Greek literature, for posing riddles and killing those who cannot answer (Hammond and Scullard, 1009).

woman as the object of the philosopher's pursuit, Nietzsche's metaphor initially seems to take for granted that the philosophical dogmatists to which he refers in the Preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* are male. Nietzsche addresses this particular comment to past philosophers to condemn them for their inability to understand the truth properly. Nietzsche is speaking to men because men have made the error of depersonalizing the truth. Oliver neglects to mention the problem that Nietzsche's image does not seem to imply woman seeking woman (Oliver, 1998, 68-72).<sup>48</sup> It is unlikely that Nietzsche recommends a lesbian pursuit with this metaphor. Nietzsche does not say anything of homosexual love in his texts, and the absence is striking. He may leave out a consideration of homosexuality as a choice because his first concern is to promote the further dichotomization of the sexes. But because Nietzsche did not say anything explicit on the topic of homosexuality, one can only make inferences from the conspicuous absence.

Although much of the evidence suggests that the philosophers to which Nietzsche refers are male, he also mentions two potential female philosophers in the passage to which Picart refers above (BGE, 208). Nietzsche states the skeptic's belief that the "uncertain has its charms, too; the sphinx, too, is a Circe; Circe, too, was a philosopher." Since these are the words of a skeptic, it is possible that Nietzsche does not understand Circe as a philosopher. Nevertheless, Nietzsche recognizes that he was at one point a skeptic and that he may remain one (BGE, 211). Nietzsche does not say that the sphinx was a philosopher herself, though the passage can be interpreted to include her. Still, both potential references to female philosophers are questionable. The significance of the characterization of Circe as a philosopher is also ambiguous since Circe is a mythological goddess. Circe, it should also be noted, bore Odysseus two sons (Hammond and Scullard, 242). Not only does Nietzsche characterize her as a philosopher, but according to mythology, she was fertile in the physical sense as well. Nietzsche recognizes the *possibility* of a female

<sup>48</sup>Oliver's title "Woman as Truth in Nietzsche's Writings" is a misnomer because she does not actually examine the meaning of the metaphor of truth as woman. She focuses on woman as the pursuer, not the pursued.



philosopher, though these two references do not constitute proof that Nietzsche believes there will be female philosophers in the future.

Nietzsche's perspective is primarily a masculine one, but this does not mean that he has no feminine traits, nor does it rule out the possibility that Nietzsche may speak to an extraordinary type of women as well. His teaching is a "prelude to a philosophy of the future,"<sup>49</sup> which means that he calls for an entirely new type of philosopher. Since all philosophers (in fact) have been males, the call for a new type of philosopher may leave open the possibility of a female philosopher. Perhaps a woman seeking the truth would not make the same mistake that sterile scholars and dogmatists have made. But one wonders what the corresponding image for truth would be for a woman. One would expect Nietzsche to say that a woman should love truth as her child whom she molds to suit her. That the world has not yet seen a female philosopher does not necessarily imply that a woman could not become one; yet, it might mean that a female philosopher is extremely rare (or perhaps even impossible), or that a female philosopher would consist of an entirely different contemplative type than a male one. Because Nietzsche praises various aspects of femininity, traits which fit best with woman, it is conceivable that an extraordinary woman of unique ability may be up to the task. Granted, it is unlikely that a woman would be similarly conditioned as Nietzsche, one must note the unlikelihood that *anyone* (man or woman) could understand Nietzsche and carry out his task. Because both man and woman are affected by the death of God, both have the possibility of interpreting the death of God properly (i.e., in the manner that Nietzsche does).

Understanding truth as a woman sheds light on Nietzsche's perspective, perspectivism, and the death of God. The metaphor maintains the man/ woman (lover/ beloved) dichotomy. The perspective of the seeker after knowledge should be the perspective of a lover who attempts to win the heart of his truth (woman). Finally, that truth is to be understood as a woman influences the manner in which one should

<sup>49</sup>This is the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

understand the death of God. The death of God should not be an ugly truth, but should be molded in a manner that makes it beautiful. The death of God can be a potentially devastating truth. Nietzsche insists on making it beautiful and life-affirming. That individuals can interpret the death of God in a variety of ways also begs the question of whether man and woman interpret God's death in fundamentally different ways. One might suspect that one's sex would influence the type of experiences and social conditioning that one receives, yet sex in and of itself does not determine one's ability to understand Nietzsche. Nietzsche never rules out the possibility that a woman may be able to understand him. The higher type of individuals to whom Nietzsche's truths resonate may be either male or female.

Nietzsche's critique of objectivity and sterility suggests that *erosion of sexuality* only occurs in a defective human being. This means that a sterile human being could not understand Nietzsche. At the very least, a masculine or feminine understanding of the death of God would have to be more life-promoting than the sterile, objective perspective offered by modern scholars and historians. Since Nietzsche rejects objectivity, it is worth considering whether Nietzsche understands his own perspective to be masculine, feminine, or some combination of the two. Nietzsche is a man, so it seems likely that the masculine perspective resonates closely with his own. His description of himself as the annihilator of morality, his philosophic interests, and his love of knowledge indicate a kinship with the masculine perspective. He calls himself a new type of philosopher, and all of the previous philosophers and philosophical laborers that he cites are men (cf. BGE, 204, 211). Nevertheless, he also indicates an affinity with the feminine in the several metaphors he employs to describe himself. The contemplative type like himself is "closely related to the feminine character: it consists of male mothers" (GS, 72). This passage suggests that the sex of the contemplative type is male. But Nietzsche also compares himself to a pregnant elephant (EH, 295) and his own mother (EH, 222). These two passages suggest that he is "related to" or has much in common with the feminine perspective. If the future creative

geniuses are male, they must possess the highest aspects of the feminine character as well. And this fact opens up another possibility. Since the future creators are to have these feminine qualities, perhaps a woman could acquire the requisite masculine traits needed. She would then be a combination of the highest aspects of both perspectives. Nietzsche himself imagines this possibility (cf. GS, 70).

All human beings interpret the world from a limited perspective, but some perspectives are life-enhancing while others are life-denying. Interpreting the death of God from an objective perspective (which as we will see below is merely a democratic or utilitarian perspective), as opposed to a masculine or feminine one, leads to nihilism. The meaning that Nietzsche attributes to the death of God comes from his own unique perspective, which combines both the masculine and feminine traits. Nietzsche's concern with annihilating all remnants of metaphysics reflects his masculine nature, his courageous lion that wants to destroy. Nietzsche's concern with interpreting the death of God in a way that serves life, however, reflects a feminine aspect of his nature. These two perspectives are in continual tension with one another. The first forces Nietzsche to acknowledge the destruction of meaning (and thus the threat of nihilism) inherent in the death of God, while the latter impels him to serve life (i.e., give birth to something that will replace God).

### **The Substantive Meaning of the Death of God**

Nietzsche is no typical atheist who believes that God never existed; rather, God *actually did exist* until the historical sense killed him. The Christian God existed to the *extent that humans* believed in him and modeled their lives on the basis of their belief in *him*. The phrase "God is dead" signifies first and foremost, "that the belief in the Christian *god has become unbelievable*" (GS, 343). Nietzsche is indicating that the attachment to *God has become* weak and sterile. This is not to say that there are no more believers; in *fact, most people* still believe in God (or a god) (GS, 343; cf. GS, 125). But now that

God is dead, no intellectually honest <sup>50</sup> human being can continue to believe in the traditional Christian god any longer (GS, 357). Intellectual honesty forces the recognition that the Christian God is nothing other than a transient illusion created by humans (cf. TI, 467). The fact that “God is dead” reveals that God was never what humans thought him to be, namely immortal. God once had been a powerful, life-giving force that directed humanity until the historical moment when he died. God gave humans “ways of affirming their lives, or finding them worth living, when no alternative was available” (Clark, 1990, 163). The death of this ideal means that the Christian God has lost the power to shape the lives of most people.

The inability to render unconditioned faith in the Christian God is only the surface meaning of the death of God. When Nietzsche declares that “*God is dead*” he is also indicating the *death of all gods*, including the death of “nature,” the death of modern science, the death of history, and the death of liberalism (Z, 191). Truths, ideals, and gods are historically determined, and as such, are inherently relative. In “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is dead,’” Heidegger explains the full meaning of the death of God: “the terms ‘God’ and ‘Christian god’ in Nietzsche’s thinking are used to designate the suprasensory world in general. God is the name for the realm of Ideas and ideals” (Heidegger, 61). A god is an ideal that limits one’s perspective by providing a world view *within which humans can orient their lives*. All previous ideals set up a “pure” or “true” or “real” world by which to judge the inferiority of the world given to humans by their senses. *These ideals or gods have provided humans with a horizon, an anchor by which to judge their lives*. Humans have believed in many different types of gods; in fact, a thousand *varieties of gods* have existed thus far (Z, 170-172). What makes a horizon powerful (or *meaningful*) is the fact that people accept the assumptions that form its foundation as the *absolute, unquestionable truth* (cf. Dannhauser, 1972, 831). A horizon is only powerful if

<sup>50</sup>According to Nietzsche, most human beings are neither intellectual nor honest. Those who tend to be intellectual do not tend to be honest because their own work biases them (cf. GS, 366 and 373). Likewise, those who tend to be honest (or believe in honesty) are not intellectual.

the organism is unaware of its historical origins and limitations. When God dies, the foundation for such horizons dies with him.

So when Nietzsche's Zarathustra declares "God is dead," he implicitly states not only that the Christian God has been devalued, but also that all transcendent ideals have died (Z, 191). Christianity is merely the culmination of the historical process that began when Plato invented the "pure spirit," that is, the belief in unchanging "Ideas." Nietzsche explains: "that Christian faith ...was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine" (GS, 344). Since Plato's creation, humans have turned to a variety of fixed "otherworldly" ideals from which they have evaluated the real world. Christianity vulgarized Plato's teaching; it is "Platonism for 'the people'" (BGE, preface). Following Plato's erroneous creation of the "pure spirit" and the "good as such," Christianity offers an omnipotent God in order to justify all that is mysterious, unjust, and unintelligible in the world. The Christian God is accessible to all and intends to serve (i.e., protect) all of humanity.

Nietzsche argues that even liberalism and modern science are forms of the Christian tradition. In other words, both liberalism and modern science are secularized forms of Christianity (BGE, 202).<sup>51</sup> Whereas Plato had faith in the "pure spirit" and the Christian had faith in God, the liberal turns to faith in rationality while the scientist has faith that the "truth" is graspable by all and applicable to all (cf. BGE, 186). For both liberalism and modern science, reason becomes a new god that can alleviate all human suffering. But Nietzsche recognizes that the death of God uproots even this faith in reason. The universality of Christianity, modern science, and liberalism makes the death of God so catastrophic. As Dannhauser explains, "with the death of the Christian God all other gods die also. With the exposure of man's most universal horizon as mere horizon, all belief in eternal truths and beings becomes impossible" (Dannhauser, 1972, 839).

<sup>51</sup>See *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative* for a discussion of the democratic and socialist movements as secularized Christianity (Magnus, 17-21).

## **The Implications of the Death of God**

The death of God signifies the end of all metaphysics, the death of the belief in a suprasensory or “ideal” world. Human history comes to light as the history of metaphysics--the dedication to suprasensory gods that do not exist. Although there have been a thousand gods so far, all of these gods have been one form or another of what Nietzsche terms “the ascetic ideal,” the “belief that the best human life is one of self-denial” (Clark, 1990, 160). Humans have learned to deny the only world there is for the sake of some “god” or “ideal” that does not really exist. This means that humans have denied who they are by trying to emulate some illusory “god” or “ideal.” But as weak as the ascetic ideal is, it is still an ideal. The death of God removes even the ascetic ideal as a source of meaning. The result of this ideal of self-denial is that man has learned to turn away from his wants, desires, and needs for the sake of serving the “nothing.” Humans ultimately force themselves to embrace the ugly truth that there is no transcendent ideal, that there is nothing worth striving to achieve. This is why Nietzsche characterizes the ascetic ideal as “the *harmful* ideal *par excellence*, a will to the end, an ideal of decadence” (EH, 312).<sup>52</sup> The consequence of Man’s self denial is that Man is left aimless, in need of something worthy of his dedication, but unable to find anything worth esteeming.

Therefore, the death of God is a fact which means “Nihilism stands at the door” (WP, 1). That is, Man experiences what Heidegger describes as the “absence of a suprasensory, obligatory world” (Heidegger, 61-62). If there is no God, there is no basis upon which the individual is obligated to do anything, nor is there any answer to Man’s question of why. As Dannhauser explains, “The formula for nihilism is: nothing is true, everything is permitted. Since all aspirations and ideals have proved meaningless, men cannot devote themselves to a cause: they have no future to will” (Dannhauser, 1972, 842). Human dedication appears to be mere stupidity; esteeming seems to be pointless and all

<sup>52</sup>See chapter 6 of Clark’s *Nietzsche On Truth and Philosophy* for a helpful discussion of what the ascetic ideal is and the purposes that the ascetic ideal has provided for humanity.

human history seems to be in vain. This is the condition of the passive last man who fills Nietzsche with revulsion. But most egalitarians view the last man as an ideal type (Z, 130; BGE, 203). Nietzsche sees the likelihood of becoming the last man to be a result of a sickly and shallow reaction to the death of God. The prospect of a nihilistic humanity, a humanity without the possibility of producing even one creative spirit, fills Nietzsche with disgust. Nietzsche protests the advent of the last man by creating a way that leads not only himself, but other free spirits, and, potentially, all of humanity, out of the abyss of nihilism.

To transform the death of God from a life-ennervating truth into a life-affirming truth, Nietzsche first must become the annihilator who destroys all remnants of the slavish morality that has led to God's death (including Christianity, utilitarianism, and egalitarianism). Here he demonstrates that democratic morality is the morality of a sick type. The culmination of this sickness takes place when the sterile historian kills God. These scholars who claim to understand everything that has ever happened do not even understand themselves. Finally, Nietzsche uses the news of God's death as a springboard for a new type of life-affirming truth. In sum, the death of God should be understood as an opportunity to pave a new path for humanity.

### **How the Historical Sense Killed God**

Nietzsche's most explicit attacks on modern scholarship occur in his essay *The Use and Abuse of History*, in the section "On Scholars" in *Zarathustra*, and in part six of *Beyond Good and Evil* entitled "We Scholars." The heading "We Scholars" indicates that Nietzsche includes himself among these scholars; he is familiar with their type. Nietzsche feels a kinship with the scientific scholars' quest for knowledge. The most bitter pill to swallow regarding God's death is that individuals who are not much different from himself are responsible for the death of God. The madman declares: "All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this?" (GS, 125). The madman is not referring to scholars nowadays--we merely help pound the final nail in the already dead God's coffin. God began dying

when the Enlightenment took hold. Ultimately, the Christian faith in honesty combined with the “will to truth” of historians and scientists, killed God. These scholars suffered from having accumulated too much knowledge.

Modern historians turn the study of history into a science. They want to discover everything that has ever happened and continue accumulating knowledge regardless of what the consequences of that knowledge will be. Lacking any real connection to life, these sterile historicists unwillingly “discover” the most dangerous knowledge of all: the origin of the belief in God. They uncover the fact that human beings created all “gods,” “truths,” “ideals,” and “Ideas.” As they examine the history of humans, they find that there is no divine order or purpose that dictates human life. Instead, the particular needs and cultural circumstances of a people determine the kind of God (or ideal) that a people will revere as good, noble, and just. History (one’s time and place) overwhelmingly determines the type of god in which one believes. That is, a god is only relevant from the perspective of the particular needs and circumstances that gave birth to it. Their historical knowledge destroys the possibility of unconditional faith in a divine being or ideal.

The following passage from *The Use and Abuse of History* helps explain the manner in which scholars and historians killed God.

A historical phenomenon, completely understood and reduced to an item of knowledge, is, in relation to the man who knows it, dead; for he has found out its madness, its injustice, its blind passion, and especially the earthly and darkened horizon that was the source of its power for history. This power has now become, for him who has recognized it, powerless; not yet, perhaps, for him who is alive (H, 11-12).

When they unveil all divine ideals as groundless illusions, they destroy the power of those ideals to bring meaning to human life. Historical scholars did not literally kill God, but by “discovering” too much about God they killed the idea of God as an ideal. They have reduced God to a mere “item of knowledge.” Once one reduces anything to a historical fact in such a manner, that fact has little value for human life. Since anything can, in principle,



be reduced in such a manner, historicism erases the possibility of any permanent ideals.<sup>53</sup> In other words, modern scholars and historians have eliminated the possibility of belief in *any* transcendent ideals.

The awareness that arbitrary circumstances or tastes are the root of all ideals creates a sickness in humans that makes whole-hearted devotion virtually impossible. Nietzsche explains: "This can be studied in everything that has life. For it ceases to have life if it be perfectly dissected, and lives in pain and anguish as soon as the historical dissection begins" (H, 43). Man is the esteemer who needs to believe in absolute ideals, but as "the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems 'meaningless'" (WP, 7). Their "malignant historical fever" destroys the ability to esteem anything (H, 4). This is the reason Nietzsche considers the moderns to be the most decadent humans who ever lived. If humanity cannot find a way to believe in some impermanent ideal as if it were permanent, Nietzsche predicts the time will come when "man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man" (Z, 129; cf. BGE, preface). As the unconditional faith in absolute truths disappears from the human experience, so too does the possibility of a noble life dedicated to something beyond petty pleasures and physical security.

Nietzsche describes the murder of God as a great stupidity because the historicist willingly sacrifices God for the sake of nothingness. Nietzsche believes that this knowledge of God's death can and must be used to enrich life, to make man's future the foundation of a "higher history than all history hitherto" (GS, 125). Although all gods are dead, Nietzsche insists that he must transcend nihilism instead of embracing it.

<sup>53</sup>This is the manner in which scholars like Kofman ("A Fantastical Genealogy") and Oliver ("Nietzsche's Abjection") attempt to undermine Nietzsche's understanding of women. They reduce his comments on women to the reaction of frustrated child against his mother. Consequently, Nietzsche's insights are killed; they have no power left to influence those who subscribe to this type of analysis.

### **Is All Truth Perspectival?**

Nietzsche's rejection of nihilism might mean that he understands there may be some fixed standard by which he determines that he can transcend nihilism. Either there is nothing in which to believe (nihilism) or there is something. Since Nietzsche does not understand himself to be a nihilist, Heidegger might be correct to call Nietzsche a metaphysician. But Nietzsche also suggests that *all* truth is relative, that *all* knowledge is perspectival. By proclaiming "God is dead" Nietzsche posits the impossibility of absolute truth; he implicitly teaches that "[a]ll the permanent...is only a parable" (Z, 198). In other words, the assertion "God is dead" implies the absence of any fixed truth or universal perspective that is applicable to all. The death of God means that all knowledge is perspectival, that is, one's perspective (one's character, one's historical, or social conditions) necessarily colors one's interpretation of reality. Different circumstances produce different truths and different types of people will devote themselves to different truths. This perspectivism also means that masculine truths are fundamentally distinct from feminine truths.

But the assertion that *all* knowledge is perspectival is itself problematic because it leaves unclear what the status of Nietzsche's assertion that "God is dead" is. If the assertion "God is dead" (which implies that all knowledge is perspectival) is an absolute truth, this means that all truth is relative including *this* truth. Therefore the fact of God's death cannot be an objective truth the way that previous philosophers and metaphysicians understood "truth." Considering that Nietzsche admits God existed as a transcendent ideal in previous times, the assertion "God is dead" cannot be true in all times and places: it is a historical fact in the sense that it happened at a particular historical moment. And yet, Nietzsche implies that the truth of perspectivism is universal (i.e., applicable to all and significant for all of humanity). But if Nietzsche understands perspectivism or relativism to be a fixed truth about the world, why does he insist that *all* gods are dead, that there is no fixed "truth?"

Maudmarie Clark gives a helpful explanation of the paradox of Nietzsche's perspectivism.<sup>54</sup> She suggests that Nietzsche concedes the possibility of facts, but that all knowledge of these facts is necessarily perspectival.

Calling knowing perspectival suggests that how things will look to us intellectually in any situation--how we are justified in interpreting them--depends on "where we're at," that is, on what we already believe. To consider knowledge nonperspectival would be to insist that it must be grounded in a set of foundational beliefs, beliefs all rational beings must accept no matter what else they believe, beliefs that could therefore constitute a neutral corner from which the justifiability of other beliefs might be assessed. In calling nonperspectival knowledge "an absurdity and a nonsense," Nietzsche suggests the impossibility of such self-justifying foundations for knowledge (Clark, 1990, 130; cf. GM III, 12).

Nietzsche denies the possibility of foundational beliefs accepted by all rational beings. Besides the fact that the human is not simply a rational being, an individual's beliefs result from his limited perspective. Thus, according to Nietzsche, there is no such thing as nonperspectival knowledge. As Nietzsche explicitly states, "facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (WP, 481). It is nonsensical to speak of fixed "truth," or a completely objective perspective apart from the human beings who apprehend the knowledge (GM III: 12). This means that Nietzsche sees no fundamental distinction between facts and values. One's perspective determines the value of the fact, and the facts exist and have power only to the extent to which human beings value them. Therefore, "God is dead" is not purely an objective, graspable fact. The significance of God's death lies in its interpretation. Nietzsche interprets the death of God as a liberating opportunity to create a subjective, personal goal for himself--an opportunity to create new truths.

Nietzsche's truths are experimental; they are intended for the future. He is the great attempter who intends to produce a "life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" goal for humanity (BGE, 4). Nietzsche attempts to make

<sup>54</sup>The fact that Clark understands some crucial aspects of Nietzsche's perspectivism makes her faulty reading of Nietzsche's "misogyny" unusual and interesting. She recognizes that Nietzsche is not a nihilist and that he thus does not embrace all perspectives. However when it comes to his view of women, she wrongly forces him into the liberal democratic notion of virtue, mainly honesty. Doing so allows Clark to reconcile her faith that a profound thinker like Nietzsche could not believe such nasty things about women with her reverence for his genius in diagnosing the crisis of modernity.

his interpretation *become* true. That is, he hopes to make his interpretation of the death of God the most influential one in order that the most promising individuals, and humanity as a whole, will not become a race of last men. Because Nietzsche's truths are future-directed, they are, in a sense, fixed. If people accept his truths and his truths consequently alter human life in the future, there is some truth to them (or more importantly, some value to them). Thus, the pronouncement "God is dead" is a truth *for the future*, but not the past. Insofar as it is applicable to and will mold future generations, the assertion is true. The assertion is not true for the past, which cannot be altered. One can, however, interpret past events in light of the news of God's death. In other words, the truth of the assertion "God is dead" is determined by whether it fundamentally alters human life (for better or for worse). Moreover, the truth of this assertion may not be true for all future generations. It will be true within the horizon in which it is posited (the horizon of the *Übermensch*) for as long as that horizon influences human life.

Nietzsche promotes an interpretation of the death of God which affirms life as it is. But it is only possible to affirm life in this manner if one knows what life is really like.<sup>55</sup> Nietzsche explains, "the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure--or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified" (BGE, 39). The extent to which one is able to affirm life (instead of continuing to believe in false gods) determines not only how strong the individual is, but also how noble the individual is (BGE, 287). But how is Nietzsche's impure will able to recognize life as it is? How is he able to grasp the truth of perspectivism without being colored by his own perspective or historical circumstances? He cannot. This is why Nietzsche continually stresses that his books contain nothing more than "my written and painted thoughts, for which alone I have colors, ...you sudden sparks and wonders of my solitude, you my old beloved--*wicked*

<sup>55</sup>Clark claims that John Wilcox (Wilcox, 190) makes this point quite forcefully (Clark, 1990, 200).

thoughts!” (BGE, 296).

Nietzsche’s perspectivism does not mean that all interpretations are equal. To judge the truth (or power) of a particular interpretation of perspectivism, one needs to examine the life that posited (i.e., created) it. Thus far, the most prevalent and dangerous interpretation of God’s death has been that of the objective historians and scientific scholars. Their disinterested accumulation of “knowledge” killed God and ultimately put humanity in its dangerous position. Nietzsche hopes to keep humanity from degenerating further. Although Nietzsche admits that he is also a scholar,<sup>56</sup> he rejects the historicist’s sterile perspective because it helps create the probability of the last man. The ultimate test of Nietzsche’s perspective is to see whether his predictions resonate with reality. The homogenization of democracies (the erosion of the distinction between all types of individuals) against which he fights, appears to be happening before our eyes.

### **Critique of Sterile Historians, Objectivity, and Modern Scholars**

Nietzsche’s philosophic project is an attempt to transcend the limited perspective of the historicist who killed God. Nietzsche teaches that the deadly truth of perspectivism need not result in universal nihilism. He finds serious reasons to doubt whether modern scientists understand life at all. His analysis of them contains essentially three criticisms. Nietzsche’s first criticism is that these objective scientists are not really objective at all. They are shallow democrats who are afraid of suffering. Secondly, he argues that even if they were able to succeed in achieving complete objectivity (which is impossible), such a perspective would not be desirable. Finally, he suggests that their sterile perspective not only degrades the scholars themselves, but also promotes the shallow nihilism that may make humanity as a whole sterile and weak.

Historians instead attempt to “discover” everything that has ever happened by attempting to grasp history “objectively.” By “objective,” Nietzsche means “a certain standpoint in the historian who sees the procession of motive and consequence too clearly

<sup>56</sup>Part six of *Beyond Good and Evil* is titled “We Scholars.”

for it to have an effect on his own personality” (H, 37). It is a “detachment from all personal concern” (ibid.). These academics do not have privileged access to truth, according to Nietzsche. Instead, their concern with truth is disconnected, shallow, and dispassionate. Because they know so many facts, they harbor the misconception that they have learned everything. “One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there is no end of derision” (Z, 130). Some of these scholars may know which events have happened and what previous thinkers have said, but they do not understand history or the men who have made history. The “pursuit” (actually the creation) of knowledge is anything but an impersonal matter and should be celebrated as perspectival and experimental. Nietzsche explains:

How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without “sense,” does not become “nonsense”; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially actively engaged in *interpretation*--that cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these (GS, 374).

The belief that one can be a neutral observer of the truth is a fallacy. Since all knowledge is perspectival, the perspective of the objective historians is limited as well. These so-called “objective” scientists delude themselves by thinking that they can be completely objective or nonperspectival themselves.

According to Nietzsche, the particular historical and social conditions of the time mold all human beings, and scholars are not exceptions to this rule. But today’s scholars lack self-awareness; in particular, they take the goodness of democratic, Christian, and utilitarian principals for granted. Essentially, Nietzsche demonstrates that today’s scholars do not seek serious intellectual inquiry; they seek universal equal rights and “Freedom from all masters!” They attain this freedom by debunking the greatest philosophers. Molded by their democratic prejudices, these scholars seek nothing higher than comfort and security. Nietzsche explains the root of the mediocrity of modern scientists:

The scholar’s declaration of independence, his emancipation from

philosophy, is one of the more refined effects of the democratic order--and disorder: the self-glorification and self-exaltation of scholars now stand in full bloom, in their finest spring, everywhere--which is not meant to imply that in this case self-praise smells pleasant. "Freedom from all masters!" that is what the instinct of the rabble wants in this case, too; and after science has most happily rid itself of theology whose "handmaid" it was too long, it now aims with an excess of high spirits and a lack of understanding to lay down laws for philosophy and to play the "master" herself--what am I saying? the *philosopher* (BGE, 204).

Today's scholars reflect the "softhearted and effeminate taste of a democratic century"

(BGE, 210). To be effeminate is to have the manly or courageous qualities torn away.

The attempt to turn scholarship into a science is nothing more than an effeminate attempt to free them from any masters. Nietzsche elaborates:

What they would like to strive for with all their powers is the universal green-pasture happiness of the herd, with security, lack of danger, comfort, and an easier life for everyone; the two songs and doctrines which they repeat most often are "equality of rights" and "sympathy for all that suffers"--and suffering itself they take for something that must be *abolished* (BGE, 44).

Objectivity is the tool they use to achieve this goal. If they succeed in uprooting the greatest minds that ever lived by reducing their creations to reflections of time and circumstance, they may succeed in sterilizing all potentially great minds in the future as well. But their objectivity is a sham used to cover their secret hope and desire motivated by the recognition of their own mediocrity. Because the scholar recognizes his own limitations, his vanity impels him to stifle "the uncommon man" who dares to challenge democratic prejudices (BGE, 206). Their purpose is to make the world safe and comfortable by making humans equal (the same). They are only weak souls who are afraid that the talented few will enslave them.

Complete objectivity (in a man or a woman) would amount to a castration of the intellect (GM III: 12). As Nietzsche advises, if "the personality is once emptied of its subjectivity, and comes to what men call an 'objective' condition, nothing can have any more effect on it. Something good and true may be done, in action, poetry or music; but the hollow culture of the day will look beyond the work and ask the history of the author" (H, 33). Determining the fashion sense, dietary habits, shoe size, upbringing, dating or

sleeping patterns of a man is not going to reveal the deep mysterious passion that stimulated his work. These trivial details will never capture the profundity of his genius. Being shallow themselves, historicists are unable to understand genius. By degrading the inexplicable, mysterious nature of these geniuses' work, the historian drains the life-enhancing force inherent in great philosophy, art, or poetry.

Nietzsche uses metaphors of sterility to indicate the historians' lack of genuine concern with their object of study and their inability to create history themselves; instead they read, reorganize, and codify the actions and thoughts of others. These "objective" historians are eunuchs who "are themselves neither man nor woman, nor even hermaphrodite, but mere neuters, or, in more philosophic language, the Eternal Objective" (H, 33). There is something flat about the souls of these historians who are not genuinely devoted to anything. Such a detached observation could never understand the impulses that move the philosopher's thoughts, the painter's brush, the sculptor's hands, or the composer's pen. As neuters, they see only the shallow shell of the life rather than the heart of life. But according to Nietzsche, "it is only a superstition to say that the picture given to such a man by the object really shows the truth of things. Unless it be that objects are expected in such moments to paint or photograph themselves by their own activity on a purely passive medium!" (H, 37). No fact can be grasped in a purely objective manner, as human beings are the subjects who decipher and communicate these facts. Colored by their shallow perspective, scientific scholars try to make the world objective, ordered, and safe when it is really a dangerous, questionable, subjective, perspectival world.

Because they focus on the trivial, ordinary aspects of history (being unable to see anything other than those since they are ordinary themselves), Nietzsche characterizes these scholars as incomplete (castrated) males. Not only do these "objective" historians fail to understand the great geniuses who drove the historical process thus far, but they are also neuters. They "are a race of eunuchs; and to the eunuch one woman is the same as another, merely a woman, 'woman in herself,' the Ever-unapproachable." (H, 32). To the eunuch



who lacks experience with women, all women are alike and any woman is as good as the next. Similarly for scientific scholars, “it is indifferent what they study, if history itself always remains beautifully ‘objective’ to them, as men, in fact, who could never make history themselves. And since the Eternal Feminine<sup>57</sup> could never ‘draw you upward,’ you draw it down to you and, being neuter yourselves, regard history as neuter also” (H, 32). The “Eternal Feminine” is higher than the neutral or neutered perspective. Having had no experience with women himself, the eunuch cannot possibly understand the exalted experience of love. The eunuch reduces love to physiological drives and hormones, the biological processes, the psychological stimuli which cannot touch on what it means to be enveloped by love, consumed by it, and fundamentally changed by it. And because he does not know what it means to be in love, he cannot inspire the love of others, which means that he is incapable of creating anything profound. Since he lacks a sex drive, the eunuch scholar is indifferent about woman. And because the eunuch lacks the sexual appetites and drives that produce great passion, he simply does not experience an exalted sense of longing. Nietzsche explains;

If love and hatred are wanted from him--I mean love and hatred as God, woman, and animal understand them--he will do what he can and give what he can. But one should not be surprised if it is not much--if just here he proves inauthentic, fragile, questionable, and worm-eaten. His love is forced, his hatred artificial and rather *un tour de force*, a little vanity and exaggeration. After all, he is genuine only insofar as he may be objective: only in his cheerful “totalism” he is still “nature” and “natural.” His mirror soul, eternally smoothing itself out, no longer knows how to affirm or negate; he does not command, neither does he destroy” (BGE, 207).

These eunuch historians approach their subjects from the outside; therefore, they miss the fundamental experience altogether. The eunuch will never make history himself.

In the above passage, Nietzsche notes a kinship in the respective understandings that God, woman, and animal have of love. They experience something that the scientific

<sup>57</sup>Kaufmann notes that Nietzsche’s use of the concept “Eternal Feminine” is an allusion to Goethe’s reference to the Eternal Feminine in the penultimate line of *Faust* (BGE, 232, n. 22). In the play, the Eternal Feminine is the salvation of man--it is what redeems Faust. Nietzsche’s argument above resembles Goethe’s in the sense that man needs woman to be feminine in order to be inspired himself.

scholar cannot comprehend. All three expect complete devotion, reckless abandon, and complete consumption from love (cf. BGE, 67, 139). The extraordinary expectations inherent in woman's love make her love more genuine and real than is the scholar's, which is forced and feigned. Scholars would do well to recapture the blind passion that a woman experiences and expects from another when she loves. The great male philosophers experienced a great deal of sublimated sexual passion that the eunuch scholar lacks (cf. GM: III, 8). But the scholar is neither erotic himself, nor is he passionate about his work. Nietzsche prefers the barbarous love of womanly types and the daring creativity of the male philosophers to the objective perspective (produced by males), which is incapable of both love and creativity. Because woman experiences what love is, she may have a greater potential to understand life's most serious problems than does the objective scholar. This is because

All great problems demand great love, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grip on themselves are capable. It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an 'impersonal' one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought (GS, 345).

The scientific scholar can only study the effect of love from a distance. But because he is unable to experience love first-hand, he cannot grasp the fundamental problems of human life.

But Nietzsche's most serious criticism of modern scholars is not that they are neuter themselves, but that they sterilize other human beings. They teach that nothing is worth genuine devotion and affection. Since they only see the world through the lens of a limited, "objective" perspective, they do not understand how to inspire others, nor can they be inspired by others. Nietzsche suggests that the reaction of the most inspired individuals is anything but objective:

[I]magine a man swayed and driven by a strong passion, whether for a woman or a theory. His world is quite altered. He is blind to everything behind him, new sounds are muffled and meaningless though his perceptions were never so intimately felt in all their color, light, and music,

and he seems to grasp them with his five senses together. All his judgements of value are changed for the worse; there is much he can no longer value, as he can scarcely feel it: he wonders that he has so long been the sport of strange words and opinions, that his recollections have run round in one unwearying circle and are yet too weak and weary to make a single step away from it (H, 8-9).

Passionate frenzy is simply alien to the neuter's world and so his analyses of world history is as defective and incomplete as the eunuch's experience with women. Although woman has an amazing power to evoke strong passion in man and to alter his world, the eunuch scholar is unmoved by her or anything else. In his attempt to be objective, he misses the fact that the greatest individuals have always been anything but objective. Individuals who believed in the nobility and eternal truth of their ideas are responsible for the greatest events. As one without any real purpose except dissection, the scholar reduces all nobility to the superficiality with which he is familiar. In so doing, the scholar helps create the conditions so that the production of a creative philosopher is close to impossible. Those free spirits who might be inclined in this direction are told again and again that nothing is worth their reverence.

The dangerous truth of historical relativism is nothing more than a eunuch's truth, a "base, impoverished interpretation of the past" (Dannhauser, 1972, 834). Historical relativism "robs existing things of the only atmosphere in which they can live" and it destroys the "mysterious mist" needed to inspire belief in transcendent ideals (H, 42). And like the eunuch, this perspective is sterile because it takes away from humans the ability (the will) to create new truths. Nietzsche explains: "For man is creative only through love and in the shadow of love's illusions, only through the unconditional belief in perfection and righteousness" (H, 42). The scholar shows us the error of the belief in unconditional truth. Nietzsche intentionally chooses the analogy of the eunuch, since creating is very close to loving (cf. BGE, 206; Z, 176). Interpreting history should be understood as a creative act. Motivated by a desire to make the world safe, i.e., free from anything distressful, the eunuch scholar promotes an understanding of life that impoverishes human beings. Historical scholars destroy the forces that gave birth to the highest values hitherto.

They almost completely strip humans of the ability to esteem and to create goals. They do not free humans from suffering, but create a more insidious form of suffering.

### **The Tension Between Life and Knowledge**

Nietzsche's criticism of the historical sense and modern scholarship reveals an "opposition between life and wisdom" (H, 11). Knowledge has the power to alter life for the better (toward the invention of the *Übermensch*) or worse (in the direction of the last man), but the modern scholar is a martyr for knowledge at all costs.<sup>58</sup> Improving life would mean creating conditions that make the production and the survival of the last man difficult, or ideally, impossible. But the scholars' desire to uncover life-promoting illusions as mere illusions makes these scholars guilty of "preparing poison" for the rest of humanity (Z, 237). Nietzsche cautions that providing too much information about reality has the potential to destroy life: "Something might be true while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree. Indeed, it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish" (BGE, 39). Living requires a limited understanding of the world. A fundamental fact about human beings is that they simply need illusions if they are going to thrive. Nietzsche explains:

This is a universal law: a living thing can only be healthy, strong, and productive within a certain horizon; if it is incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end. Cheerfulness, a good conscience, belief in the future, the joyful deed—all depend, in the individual as well as the nation, on there being a line that divides the visible and clear from the vague and shadowy; we must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember, and instinctively see when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically. (H, 7-8)

The crisis of modernity is in part a result of too much knowledge. Without a "veil of illusion" humanity fails to revere anything. Nietzsche explains;

Every people, every man even, who would become ripe, needs such a veil of illusion, such a protecting cloud. But now men hate to become ripe, for

<sup>58</sup>Singer claims that Nietzsche discredits woman because in her he recognizes "the will to untruth" (Singer, 1998, 178). This is an oversimplified interpretation given the opposition of life and wisdom. If the truth is ugly or deadly, woman should be praised for her aversion to the truth. Likewise, the eunuch scholars are blamed for embracing an ugly, deadly truth.

they honor history above life. They cry in triumph that “science is now beginning to rule life.” Possibly it might; but a life thus ruled is not of much value. It is not such true life, and promises much less for the future than the life that used to be guided not by science, but by instincts and powerful illusions (H, 44).

Modern scholars, however, “honor history above life” (H, 44). They have attempted to make the world thinkable and in doing so they have reduced all mystery, beauty, and divinity to small, explainable, “human-all-too-human” facts. They remove the masks that humanity needs if it is to ascend rather than degenerate.

For Nietzsche, the only worthwhile kind of knowledge is the type that promotes ascending life. But these objective scholars lack any concern with the future of humanity. Their disconnected, shallow interpretation of the past makes it virtually impossible for others to create new horizons and reinstate that “veil of illusion” needed by thriving individuals. Nietzsche characterizes these scholars and historians as both neuter (as opposed to masculine or feminine) and sterile (rather than fertile). By neuter, Nietzsche refers to their inability to be inspired, moved, or driven by a passion. Nietzsche has a double meaning in mind when he describes scholars as sterile. First, like physical sterility, there is metaphorical sterility which is an inability to beget or give birth to ideas. Metaphorical sterility is also an inability to create goals for oneself or to inspire others to create. Because sterile scholars cannot create ideas, they expose the entrails of the most mysterious phenomena to make them thinkable. They sterilize ideals which were once life-giving and inspirational. And second, those who are most devoted to this kind of knowledge are least likely to devote themselves to the other type of fertility--creating human beings. So a physical sterility is linked to the metaphorical sterility. These eunuch scholars cling to their work, which is really the work of others. If they produce children, they will likely exhibit a similar detached concern regarding their rearing.

### **The Fertile Genius**

Nietzsche characterizes the sterile scholar as a eunuch to provide a stark contrast with the fertile philosopher. The eunuch is not a feminine male, but a human stripped of

masculinity. A man (unlike a eunuch) does not have a disconnected concern for woman, but a passionate drive to win, possess, and mold her. As discussed above in the case of the philosophers, Nietzsche's analogy seems to indicate that the scholarly asses he criticizes are male. He notes that these sterile scholars are "nothing for women" (BGE, 207). But Nietzsche also compares the scientific average man to an infertile woman, more specifically, to an old maid:

Compared to a genius--that is, to one who either *begets* or *gives birth*, taking both terms in their most elevated sense--the scholar, the scientific average man, always rather resembles an old maid: like her he is not conversant with the two most valuable functions of man. Indeed, one even concedes to both, to the scholars and to old maids, as it were by way of a compensation, that they are respectable--one stresses their respectability--and yet feels annoyed all over at having to make this concession" (BGE, 206).

Nietzsche employs a masculine and a feminine metaphor for sterile scholars which means that they may be either men or women--but in both cases they are sterile (emasculated/ castrated men or defeminized/ infertile women). The sterile woman is not castrated in the sense of missing a penis: she is castrated in the sense of failing to embrace the highest aspects of her femininity.

Similarly, Nietzsche describes a masculine and a feminine type of genius. A genius is never objective, nor does he or she strive to be. Fertility describes the creative genius just as sterility characterizes the shallow scholars. Nietzsche elaborates:

There are two types of genius: one which above all begets and wants to beget, and another which prefers being fertilized and giving birth. Just so, there are among peoples of genius those to whom the woman's problem of pregnancy and the secret task of forming, maturing, and perfecting has been allotted--the Greeks, for example, were a people of this type; also the French--and others who must fertilize and become the causes of new orders of life--like the Jews, the Romans, and, asking this in all modesty, the Germans? Peoples, tormented and enchanted by unknown fevers and irresistibly pressed beyond themselves, in love and lusting after foreign races (after those who like "being fertilized"), and at the same time domineering like all that knows itself to be full of creative powers and hence "by the grace of God." These two types of genius seek each other, like man and woman; but they also misunderstand each other--like man and woman (BGE, 248).

Nietzsche hopes to promote two types of genius and two types of creating----a masculine

begetting (providing inspiration) and a feminine giving birth (creating). The “elevated sense” of these functions is a metaphorical begetting and giving birth, that is, causing and actually creating goals, truths, and value systems. Like an artist who uses his wisdom to mold human beings, the creative genius enhances life; he does not denigrate it.

That Nietzsche highlights both begetting and giving birth as serious types of creating indicates that Nietzsche recognizes the need for both the masculine and feminine perspectives. Because man cannot give birth, nothing is created without woman. But Nietzsche also realizes that woman cannot give birth without a fertile man. The feminine perspective without the masculine is like the perspective of the old maid, while the masculine perspective without the feminine perspective is like the eunuch’s. If the distinction between masculine and feminine ways of creating is not maintained and cultivated, humanity moves closer to becoming a race of eunuchs and old maids, or, to use Nietzschean terminology, last men. With these analogies of sterility and fertility, Nietzsche indicates that since sexuality is a crucial instinct, perhaps the most important instinct; hence, the creation of knowledge is directly linked to one’s sexuality. This is why Nietzsche characterizes historians as eunuchs who are incomplete sexually--their dulled sexual drive makes them unable to create or understand anything worth revering.

### ***The Female Scholar: A Paradox***

Similarly, a female scholar appears to Nietzsche as a paradox: “When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is usually something wrong with her sexually. Sterility itself disposes one toward a certain masculinity of taste; for man is, if I may say so, ‘the sterile animal’” (BGE, 144). Nietzsche states that man is more inclined toward sterility than is woman. The feminine perspective may be more fertile and life-enhancing than the masculine perspective because “women are so much more personal than they are objective” (HAH I: 419). Woman has within her body an intrinsic connection to the life process since human life springs forth from her. Women “are so accustomed to loving” that “they are less interested in causes, more interested in persons” (HAH I: 416). Indeed, according

to Nietzsche, in woman there is (and should be) an innate antipathy to scholarly pursuits which is connected to her sexuality, her femininity. Thus, when she turns away from her feminine instincts for the sake of scholarship, it seems strange, unnatural, and ugly. Choosing to be a scholar means that her most feminine instincts have degenerated. That is, her maternal instinct, her instinct to procreate, her instinct to give birth have all eroded. Nietzsche means this both metaphorically and literally. A female scholar ceases to be creative by blindly increasing the stockpile of knowledge, information which may be dangerous to life. Also, when woman devotes herself to science or knowledge, she turns away from the goal of producing strong offspring. Nietzsche would not expect to see a vibrant, fertile woman clothed in the sterile white garb of the scientist.

But one should also compare this aphorism (BGE, 144) with section 894 of *Will to Power* where Nietzsche states: "What I fight against: that an exceptional type should make war on the rule--instead of grasping that the continued existence of the rule is the precondition for the value of the exception. For example, the ladies who, instead of feeling their abnormal thirst for scholarship as a distinction, want to disrupt the status of woman in general." Here Nietzsche indicates that while a woman's thirst for scholarship may be uncommon and degenerative in *most* cases, a scholarly inclination in woman is not necessarily indicative that something is awry sexually. An individual woman who enjoys scholarly pursuits should consider herself to be an exceptional type. Most often Nietzsche would consider the female scholar sterile, just as most male scholars are sterile; however, in a few instances the female scholar may actually be extraordinary. Nietzsche only says that female scholars *usually* have something wrong with them sexually--not always. Nietzsche would argue that many female scholars have also demonstrated that women can become as sterile and degenerate as male scholars can. Nietzsche therefore challenges the attempt of feminists and advocates of affirmative action to make *all* women scholars, even those who do not experience the thirst for scholarship (which would be most of them). Women improve themselves when set against amazing constraints and forces, not when



granted rights protection. More desirable, is a woman who must overcome obstacles on the way to her scholarship. If she still finds her thirst for scholarship unquenchable, and understands herself to be an exception, perhaps Nietzsche would not consider her to be sexually defective.

To be sure, many female scholars are *not* sexually defective, yet some sense can still be made of Nietzsche's assessment of female scholars. When Nietzsche asserts that most female scholars are sexually defective, he means that women who are fertile and (desire to) bear children are not likely to have the same thirst for scholarship as men generally do. Because they have the possibility of giving birth, women must decide whether to take advantage of this capacity or not. In contrast, a woman who cannot bear children (either because she is infertile, or cannot find a man by whom she would like to be impregnated) may turn outside of herself for fulfillment.

Because the rearing of children is anything but objective, the maternal/ fertile woman generally wants nothing to do with scientific objectivity or "truth." Nietzsche highlights the tension between women and science by saying, "Science offends the modesty of all real women. It makes them feel as if one wanted to peep under their skin-- yet worse, under their dress and finery" (BGE, 127). The best women "even harbour in their bosom a secret contempt for it, as though they were in some way superior to it" (HAH I: 416). This passage could indicate a superiority of woman's abilities over scientific pursuits. Nietzsche does not believe that women should become scientists because their feminine instincts and embarrassment impel them to reject science: "'Oh, this dreadful science!' sigh their [Frauen] instinct and embarrassment; 'it always gets to the *bottom* of things!'" (BGE, 204). This aphorism is the first aphorism in the section "We Scholars." Nietzsche contrasts "we scholars" to the Frauen who reject science. The womanly instinct is to be embarrassed in the face of science. Nietzsche considers this embarrassment to be a feminine instinct instead of a masculine one for several reasons. First, science undermines the mystery behind feminine modesty and womanly abilities. For instance, consider what

scientific knowledge has done to the idea of woman as birth-giver. Science has reduced pregnancy to a biological function. Scientists teach that the changes in her body are due to hormones that can be manipulated with medicine and surgical procedures. Nietzsche's argument, that too much scientific knowledge undermines woman's modesty and can be embarrassing to her, is quite plausible. Modesty is difficult to maintain in a medicalized society that advertises remedy upon remedy for woman's biological functions--functions that scientists generally consider problems and inconveniences.

Nietzsche's suggestion that woman has an antipathy to science may have some merit if a close connection to life would make one apathetic to science. Nietzsche explains that some women may choose science because women generally have mixed feelings about science-- "something compounded of envy and sentimentality" (HAH II: 265). Woman's sentimentality arises from the fact that she has the potential to give birth. Indeed, even women who engage in scientific pursuits tend to connect their pursuit to life in one way or another; they see in science something that can be used in the service of life. For instance, women who enter the medical profession specialize in family practice and pediatrics in overwhelming numbers. While some would argue that this is due to the continued discrimination in the workplace, the more plausible explanation is that women self select into specialties that enable them to help children and possibly leave open the possibility of having their own children.

Woman's envy, on the other hand, may be a reaction against the blind respect and reverence men have for the pursuit--perhaps she would like to be the object of affection and devotion. She may also view his selfless devotion to scientific "objective" truth as senseless and useless. Perhaps she also envies the power that science seems to have over human life. A real woman does not want to become an objectified specimen. Her resistance to the scientist's objective "truth" indicates a superiority to man's tendency to accumulate knowledge at all costs. The crisis of modernity is in part a result of too much knowledge. Males have attempted to make the world completely thinkable. In doing so,

they have reduced all mystery, beauty, and divinity to small, explainable facts. While every mother instinctively knows (has faith) that her child is uniquely beautiful and inspiring (even if her child is physically ugly), modern scholarship generalizes and erases the subtleties that distinguish one individual from the next. Moreover, science can never understand the mysterious bond of a mother to child or probe the depth of woman's love. Deep love can be the spark for many kinds of creativity (cf. H, 42).

### ***Why Man Is "The Sterile Animal"***

Nietzsche's suggestion that female scholars are sexually defective certainly applies to man--perhaps to an even greater degree. Nietzsche characterizes man as "the sterile animal." Man has a different relationship to life since he does not physically create life. Though Nietzsche does not present a full elaboration of why man is sterile and woman is not, Rousseau offers a reason that is consistent with Nietzsche's assessment. In the *Emile*, Rousseau argues that "The male is male only at certain moments. The female is female her whole life or at least during her whole youth. Everything constantly recalls her sex to her; and, to fulfill its functions well, she needs a constitution which corresponds to it" (Rousseau, 361). Whether the woman gives birth or not, the capacity to do so is a function that the woman never forgets, at least not in her childbearing years. Man, on the other hand, has no such corresponding function inside his body. Because birth process is external to him, he does not have the concern present to his mind at all moments of life, even though he may be capable of impregnating a woman for many more years than woman is able to bear children. Man may more easily forget his manhood than woman and search for ideals external to him to which he may dedicate himself. Man cannot impact life through physical birth; consequently, he seeks to understand (or change) the world through thinking. This explains why males have created goals and ideals.

But if great men have created the most extraordinary gods, truths, and values that have existed thus far, what sense does it make to characterize man as a sterile animal? Nietzsche means that man, more than woman, has a tendency to organize what is unclear,

to impose order where there is none, to understand life from the outside by attempting to grasp it objectively. In the hands of men, the pursuit of knowledge has become disconnected from life. These males devote themselves to uncovering even the most ugly truths and yet have no clear reason why they do this. Nietzsche calls man by “nature” the “sterile animal” because males disconnected modern scientific research from philosophy. Thus men, more than women, have been the most ascetic sterile scholars and objective asses. Because males have created the current horizon of natural science, Nietzsche characterizes history as the “Eternal Masculine” (H, 33). Nietzsche may be indicating a defect in the male animal, an inherent masculinity that pushes man away from the necessary illusions upon which human life has hitherto thrived. Males willingly become martyrs for the sake of knowledge, regardless of what that knowledge may be. History is in danger of becoming the “Eternal Objective” in the hands of males (H, 33).

### **Nietzsche’s Standard to Replace the Historical Sense**

Nietzsche rejects the sterile scholar’s notion of history because it robs life of its beauty and mystery. Utilizing masculine and feminine metaphors to describe the creative genius indicates a superiority of these two fundamental perspectives over the “Eternal Objective” position of the eunuch scholar. The objective scholar is

no complementary man in whom the *rest* of existence is justified, no termination--and still less a beginning, a begetting and first cause, nothing tough, powerful, self-reliant that wants to be master--rather only a delicate, carefully dusted, fine, mobile pot for forms that still has to wait for some content and substance in order to “shape” itself accordingly--for the most part, a man without substance and content, a “selfless” man (BGE, 207).

Nietzsche’s choice of masculine and feminine perspectives over the scholar’s objective perspective is still strange in light of the fact that all gods are dead. Nietzsche’s rejection of objectivity indicates that he still finds some standard by which to judge the worth of various perspectives.

Nietzsche’s condemnation of objectivity also reveals a few things about the Nietzschean standard of evaluation. First, since nothing is true “in-itself,” there is no “truth” apart from the human life that creates it, interprets it, and is influenced by it. The

world is better understood in terms of *degrees* of truth and *provisional* perspectives rather than absolutes. Nietzsche's perspective, which he considers to be the highest perspective so far, is both masculine and feminine--only such a combination can give birth to the horizon of the future. Second, human beings are not "objective" unchanging things "in-themselves"; consequently, an objective standard is an inappropriate means of evaluating human life. Rather than impose a fixed standard from the outside, Nietzsche looks to the inside of humans as the source of a new ideal. Truth should be just as mysterious, perspectival, and passionate as human beings can be. Third, Nietzsche's goal is necessarily linked with a concern for promoting life above wisdom. Deep down, it is life that Nietzsche loves, not wisdom (Z, 221). This is not Nietzsche's final word on the subject, but he never demotes the importance of life. He evaluates the worth of a truth based on whether it promotes an ascending or a descending kind of life. Nietzsche's task is to create a new truth that is not only consistent with, but also transcends, historical relativism by promoting life.

Nietzsche favors life over wisdom, but he does not want to cultivate just any life. If he did not distinguish among types, he would be giving in to nihilism. But this begs the question of what distinguishes one type of life from another. Nietzsche distinguishes among sick, degenerative types of life and healthy, strong, noble lives, and between masculine and feminine types. Despite his perspectivism which undermines metaphysical dichotomies, Nietzsche preserves the masculine/feminine dichotomy. Nietzsche indicates that the feminine perspective is separate and distinct from the masculine one. It appears that Nietzsche is describing some type of fixed distinction between these two fundamental perspectives--one which has the capacity to beget and one which has the potential to give birth. Furthermore, when Nietzsche characterizes man as the sterile animal and woman as instinctively antipathetic toward scientific pursuits, Nietzsche describes what sound like natural differences between the sexes. Nietzsche's rejection of the sterile scholar's objectivity may be due to his turning to nature as a standard of evaluation.

But the death of God undermines “nature” as a basis for distinguishing between man and woman. Ultimately, the question of the different “natures” of man and woman may not be the fundamental issue for Nietzsche. Nietzsche attempts to maintain separate masculine and feminine perspectives as alternatives. He is not concerned with the origin of two perspectives, nor is he primarily concerned with the cause of the differences between the sexes. Nietzsche’s overriding interest is the cultivation of a life-affirming horizon of the future. Nietzsche’s discussions of the differences between man and woman and his insistence on promoting the masculine and feminine perspectives must be understood in light of his goal. Nietzsche does not submit to a fixed standard of “nature” to determine what his goal should be; rather, he understands man and woman, as well as the masculine and feminine perspectives, in light of his task to overcome nihilism.

However, the fact that there is a tension between life and wisdom does not settle the question of why Nietzsche favors one type of life over another. Perhaps there would be no life-affirming wisdom without the particular type of extraordinary individual Nietzsche promotes. Nietzsche does not articulate the specific standard by which he determines which types of individuals are worth promoting. His desire to promote a certain kind of life also does not explain his need to preserve both the masculine (begetting) and the feminine (giving birth) forms of creativity. Nietzsche insists that the erosion of the masculine and feminine instincts is a form of degeneration. He indicates a close connection between transcending nihilism and the two types (masculine and feminine) of creating.

Nietzsche understands the death of God to be the springboard for his new truth and the horizon of the future. He explains:

Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. 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).

This event gives human beings “the freedom over the created and uncreated” (Z, 334).

Nietzsche's personal agenda, his positive goal toward which he wants to orient humanity, colors his understanding of the fact that "God is dead." Turning to humanity's two alternatives, the Übermensch and the last man, will help shed light on the Nietzschean project and on the role of the masculine and feminine perspectives within it.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ÜBERMENSCH

### Return to Nature

Nietzsche's rejection of modern scholarship comes from the perspective of one who attempts to improve the human species by creating a "natural humanity" (WP, 120). Nietzsche explains that he must "translate man back into nature" (BGE, 230). The "domestication (the 'culture') of man does not go deep-- Where it does go deep it at once becomes degeneration (type: the Christian). The 'savage' (or, in moral terms, the evil man) is a return to nature--and in a certain sense his recovery, his *cure* from 'culture' --" (WP, 684). Creating a natural humanity means to foster "all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man" (GM II: 16) and to recapture "a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity" (GM I: 7). These animal instincts contrast starkly with the herd instincts of self-preservation and equal rights encouraged by democrats, Christians, and other nihilists (cf. EH, 261). If human beings are to be natural again, masculinity *and* femininity must be cultivated. Translating Man back into nature means that man and woman must remain separate distinct types who recognize themselves as such. Nietzsche hopes to return Man to a more animal nature similar to what men and women were like prior to Christianity and the Enlightenment.

Woman is closer to these animal passions and instincts than man is. Despite efforts to domesticate her, she has maintained her brutish inclinations. Her ability to sustain her animal instincts means that she resists modern degeneration (passivity, sterility, and nihilistic tendencies of modernity) more strongly than man does. Nietzsche describes woman's nature as "more 'natural' than man's" which means that woman is more savage than man (BGE, 239), until the Enlightenment taught her to suppress her instincts. Woman's ability to maintain these animal traits is an amazing superiority over modern man. Males have much to learn from females who hold on to that pre-Christian nature more



strongly. In particular, males need to return to a more manly nature; the nature of the aristocratic Greeks:

go back to the innocent conscience of the beast of prey, as triumphant monsters who perhaps emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a students' prank, ...One cannot fail to see at the bottom of all these noble races the beast of prey, the splendid *blond beast* prowling about avidly in search of spoil an victory; this hidden core needs to erupt from time to time, the animal has to get out again and go back to the wilderness (GM I:11).

Males need to become like those "Human beings whose nature was still natural, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken strength of will and lust for power, hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilized, more peaceful races" (BGE, 257).

Nietzsche is no conservative or reactionary for "there has never yet been a natural humanity ...man reaches nature only after a long struggle--he never 'returns'" (WP, 120). Indeed, Nietzsche attempts to reach two contradictory goals--to "return to nature" and to create something new (a natural humanity). In an unpublished manuscript, Shapiro resolves the contradiction by explaining that Nietzsche proposes to take one evolutionary step backward in order to take two steps forward. Taking a step backward in the chain of human development is the precondition for transcending the modern "sickness of the will" (BGE, 208). He explains that this sickness only "disappears to the extent to which the 'barbarian' still--*or again*--claims his rights under the loose garments of Western culture" (ibid., emphasis added). Moderns are so corrupt, passive, and weak that they cannot overcome themselves as they are. Man cannot simply return to what he was before Christianity and democracy took hold, but perhaps he can approximate or recapture certain qualities that were once responsible for his accomplishments. They must return to the pre-Christian, pre-Enlightenment, pre-nihilistic animal instincts (i.e., take a step backward and become barbarian *again*) so that they can take two steps forward beyond modern decadence to become natural. Strauss explains that Nietzsche's understanding of nature here is similar to Aristotle's conception of nature as a completion. Aristotle explains; "nature is an end:

what each thing is--for example, a human being, a horse, or a household--when its coming into being is complete is, we assert, the nature of that thing" (Aristotle, 1985, 1252b 32-34). Nature is a peak and fulfillment that few individuals can achieve. According to Nietzsche, the barbarian nature that once characterized Man is a prerequisite for achieving an entirely new, higher nature. In other words, nature is not a spontaneous happening, but a willed goal.

With the exception of Strauss and Shapiro, secondary literature has inadequately dealt with contradiction between his notion of translating Man back into nature and Nietzsche's assertion that there has never yet been a natural humanity. Thus, scholars have had great difficulty explaining why Nietzsche must maintain sexual difference and whether his insistence is due to a natural necessity or not. They fail to recognize Nietzsche's intention of creating something entirely new (i.e., a natural humanity) and, therefore, they cannot explain why Nietzsche relegates woman to a separate role from man.<sup>59</sup> The *Übermensch*, a counter-ideal to the ascetic one, has the potential to inspire humanity to transcend modern degeneration. By changing the type of goal that humanity reveres from an ascetic, life-denying, nihilistic one, to the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche fundamentally alters humanity. A natural humanity is one that dedicates itself to a *human* goal as opposed to a *supernatural* goal or god. Nietzsche's assertion that there has never been a natural humanity could mean that human beings have not yet been shaped by the type of goal that Nietzsche envisages--a human goal, an earthly goal.

But most humans will not aspire to be, nor are most able to become *Übermenschen*

<sup>59</sup>For instance, Koelb does not even mention this contradiction in Nietzsche's conception of nature and so his analysis of Nietzsche's metaphors is rather shallow. The only conclusion Koelb can reach is that "Nietzsche's rhetoric binds together the notions of woman, truth, nature, and revulsion into a single idea" (Koelb, 79). But Nietzsche does not find all truth, nature, and women to be simply repulsive. Truth, nature, woman, and femininity are all seductive to him. This oversimplification is a result of Koelb's limiting himself primarily to Nietzsche's early texts (mainly *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Gay Science*). His focus on the texts written before Nietzsche's full maturation as a philosopher can only give an incomplete picture of his view regarding nature, truth, and woman. Koelb cannot clarify whether Nietzsche uses nature as a fixed standard or a changeable one. Because he does not fully understand the centrality and the problem of nature as a standard for Nietzsche, Koelb simply cannot understand the connection between Nietzsche's view of nature and his insistence that sexual dichotomy ought to be maintained.

(natural). Nietzsche may also mean that *humanity* as a whole never has been and never will be natural (though a pre-Christian, aristocratic humanity may be *more natural* than a modern one). If nature is a peak, most humans will never reach their natural condition, and herds of men will never be natural according to Nietzschean standards. A more natural humanity is one that lives according to conditions that make the extraordinary individuals more likely. Only a few exceptional individuals (if any) can become natural. Man must return to the brute qualities and recognize the need for suffering if he is to make the “*ascent*--up into the high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness” (TI, 552). Humanity can be strong or weak, but only the individual can make the ascent to nature. He explains; “The great human being is a finale; the great age--the Renaissance, for example--is a finale. ...The instinct of self-preservation is suspended, as it were; the overpowering pressure of outflowing forces forbids him any such care or caution” (TI, 548). Since only a few individuals ever make the ascent, one must also question first whether woman can make the ascent at all, and second, whether her ascent would be different from man’s. Nietzsche’s insistence that man and woman are separate types should mean that woman has a different peak than man. In other words, a natural woman is a different type from a natural man.<sup>60</sup> The individual genius (who begets or gives birth) is a piece of nature. A *more natural humanity* that is oriented toward a goal beyond comfortable self-preservation may have a greater likelihood of producing such geniuses.

The historical situation following the death of God opens new possibilities and introduces more freedom than mankind has ever known. This radical freedom not only gives human beings the opportunity for improvement, but also the possibility of irreversible degeneration. Because of the possibility of irreversible degeneration (including the erosion of sexual distinctions), extraordinary types like Nietzsche must decide what human nature shall be in the future. Nature itself does not decide in which

<sup>60</sup>In the section “Should Biology Matter?” below, I discuss the relationship between woman’s body and her completeness.

direction it should go because there is no such thing as “nature in-itself;” instead, Nietzsche must make this choice. Because all gods, including “nature” as a standard, are dead, what Man’s future will be is an open question. A few errors brought man to his current degenerative condition, so perhaps Nietzsche’s truths can help humanity climb out of their domestication. In a section entitled “*Truth as Circe*” he asks: “Error has transformed animals into men; is truth perhaps capable of changing man back into an animal?” (HAH I: 519). To translate man back into nature Nietzsche’s truths must be like Circe: seductive, sweet-sounding and smelling, life-affirming and life-promoting, but also potentially dangerous, ferocious, and brutal.<sup>61</sup>

Rather than allowing humanity to become a race of shallow nihilists, Nietzsche teaches humanity (both men and women) to esteem the *Übermensch*. As a conscious creation of human beings (specifically, of Nietzsche), the *Übermensch* is not a universal, fixed ideal, like the traditional “God”, “truth”, or even “nature.” Rather it is a new *type of ideal* for humanity at the endpoint of Western metaphysics, when ascetic ideals no longer have power to shape human life. And since Nietzsche must turn to human beings themselves as the source of this new goal, he must consider the possible roles of both man and woman in the actualization of this task. Nietzsche will shape man and woman by turning them toward the first non-ascetic, life-affirming, human goal.

### **Übermensch versus Übermenschen**

Nietzsche’s poetic masterpiece *Zarathustra* represents the kind of creative history that Nietzsche calls for in “The Use and Abuse of History.” Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* teaches that the death of God means that humanity can no longer stay merely human. He presents humanity with only two options: (1) evolve into the last man, the most despicable kind of man, or (2) transcend the human-all-too-human, that is, become more than human. Though *Zarathustra* discusses the higher man in part four, which appears to be a third

<sup>61</sup>See the section entitled “Truth as Woman” in chapter 3 for others reasons why truth should be understood as a woman.

option for humans, as he declares the situation in the prologue, humanity must choose between these two options. After the first italicized assertion of Zarathustra's Prologue ("*God is dead*") follows the second set of italics which posits the new ideal to replace God: "*I teach you the overman*" (Z, 124). Zarathustra declares; "Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!" (Z, 125). To understand this teaching, one must look at the teacher, Zarathustra, and his goals. Because Zarathustra is a teacher who presents his teaching through his speeches and deeds, one should always consider the audience to whom he speaks. Initially, Zarathustra presents this teaching to all humanity, but later he teaches only his companions (fellow creators and harvesters (Z, 136)), and finally, only himself in solitude.<sup>62</sup> His apparent intention is to instill a new belief in mankind, to present a new (created) purpose, "a *world-governing* spirit, a destiny," a new goal for which human beings can strive (EH, 304).

Nietzsche gives some clues as to what this new ideal will look like. But before attempting to discern what precisely the *Übermensch* is, one should recognize that what Zarathustra teaches and what Nietzsche teaches may not be the same, although Nietzsche asserts that Zarathustra and he have the same task (cf. EH, 308). Nietzsche rarely mentions the term "*Übermensch*" outside of Zarathustra (cf. Lampert, 314, n. 9), and when he does, he frequently uses quotation marks or employs the term as a metaphor for a type and not an actual person or entity.<sup>63</sup> Zarathustra typically employs the term as a singular noun meant to designate a supreme achievement on the part of humanity, a new human ideal. However, in a single instance (Z, 240), he speaks of "*Übermenschen*" in the

<sup>62</sup>The *Übermensch* doctrine is first taught by Zarathustra, though Nietzsche does mention the term "overman" prior to this (GS, 143). He also uses the adjective "superhuman" twice in *Human-All-Too-Human* (143, 164).

<sup>63</sup>For example, GS 143 refers to overmen of all kinds; GM I.16 mentions superhuman as an adjective; TI 538 and AC 571 refer to a kind of overman; EH 305, EH 261, and WP 866 refer to the word or concept "overman" in quotations; EH 331, WP 804, and WP 1060 mention the overman; and Nietzsche italicizes *overman* in WP 1001.

plural. Nietzsche may not be using the singular term “Übermensch” and the plural “Übermenschen” in the same way. As Zarathustra uses “Übermensch,” the term does not simply mean *an* Übermensch, but more specifically, *the* Übermensch--a specific, unique individual (or ideal). But the plural term is less specific, since both Nietzsche (GS, 143) and Zarathustra (Z, 240) associate “Übermenschen” with other gods (who are all now dead), creations of poets like heroes, and mythic creations.

[F]or all gods are poets’ parables, poets’ prevarications. Verily, it always lifts us higher--specifically, to the realm of the clouds: upon these we place our motley bastards and call them gods and overmen. For they are just light enough for these chairs--all these gods and overmen (Z, 240).

Nietzsche’s use of the plural term here indicates the advent of a new *type*, rather than a single individual (cf. Rosen, 39). Moreover, Nietzsche indicates here that there is a kinship between gods and Übermenschen. Just as all gods proved to be mortal rather than eternal--as the lying poets had promised--so too will all Übermenschen be temporary.

For most humans (men and women) the Übermensch teaching may be a political myth or a noble lie (cf. Z, 239-240). This is because, as Zarathustra indicates, the masses do not comprehend his teaching (Z, 135). Although most will fail to understand the goal properly and are simply unable to reach this pinnacle, those who do not understand Zarathustra’s teaching may still be able to have faith in the Übermensch as an ideal. Zarathustra begins by teaching the Übermensch to the masses, but as the story continues, he goes his own way to becoming the Übermensch--something the masses cannot do. This is why Zarathustra ultimately presents his teaching only to himself and recommends solitude to other creative spirits. Zarathustra hopes to cultivate in humans the ability to esteem again, even though all gods are dead. For those who actually understand what the Übermensch is, the teaching is not a myth, but an achievable goal. Nietzsche describes what the term “Übermensch” means to these individuals:

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,<sup>64</sup> 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, as an "idealistic" type of a higher kind of man, half "saint," half "genius" (EH, 261).<sup>65</sup>

The collective term "Übermenschen" refers to all life-affirming ideals like Zarathustra's Übermensch. An Übermensch is defined as an exceptional case, an exception to the rule. Zarathustra does not tell the multitude to *become*, but to *believe* in the Übermensch as the meaning of the earth (Z, 124-125).

The description above does not rule out the possibility of male and female Übermenschen. Throughout history peoples have worshiped both female goddesses and female saints. Though a male Übermensch would be a different type from a female Übermensch, they will have some fundamental qualities in common. As Nietzsche makes clear in the above passage (EH, 261) no Übermensch (whether male or female) would be a democrat or a Christian. If woman cannot break free of Christianity, feminism, or egalitarianism then she would not be able to be an Übermensch.<sup>66</sup>

Nietzsche does not promote one fixed interpretation of this ideal because he wants to posit a new *kind* of ideal of which there may be many different, specific types. Nietzsche might compare the difference between "Übermensch" and "Übermenschen" with the difference between God (the Christian God) and other gods (of various kinds but still the same type of divine ideal). Just as the Christian God is one specific type of the many

<sup>64</sup>Nietzsche speaks of "a Zarathustra" here indicating that Zarathustra, like the Übermensch, represents a *type* of human. There may be others like Zarathustra (though not exactly the same) just as there may be other Übermenschen.

<sup>65</sup>Nietzsche characterizes Christians as nihilists in this passage. This characterization seems strange since Christians believe in the Christian God and orient their actions in light of that God. However, Nietzsche is likely referring to the fact that the flight from reality that characterizes Christianity is a virulent type of nihilism. These people think that they believe in something, but instead they worship a false ideal. They are unable to affirm the only world that exists and are in that sense nihilistic.

<sup>66</sup>Lorraine's feminine Zarathustra, who stands for a non-oppressive society, is not the type of individual that Nietzsche has in mind.

gods that have existed, so too is the *Übermensch* one of many types of *Übermenschen*. Just as the Christian God is a universal ideal for all mankind, so too will the *Übermensch* be a goal for all of humanity.

The singular term “*Übermensch*” is not explicitly associated with mythic creations; however, it is most frequently utilized in Nietzsche’s poetic work *Zarathustra*. Strangely, there is not a single reference to the *Übermensch* in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the book that directly follows *Zarathustra*.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to Jacob Burckhardt, Nietzsche states that *Beyond Good and Evil* “says the same things as my *Zarathustra*, but differently, very differently” (BGE, translator’s preface, x). And if these two books say “the same things,” it is strange that Nietzsche would not mention such a central idea. Perhaps the reason Nietzsche does not mention the *Übermensch* is that *Beyond Good and Evil* is the “No-saying, *No-doing* part” of Nietzsche’s task, the “revaluation of our values so far” (EH, 310). Nietzsche must destroy and transcend all previous values before he can present the *Übermensch* (the most Yes-saying, affirmation of life) as a goal. Although he does not use the term “*Übermensch*,” in *Beyond Good and Evil* he does, however, refer to the “complementary man” and the “genius of the heart,” which bear a striking resemblance to *Zarathustra*’s *Übermensch*. But Nietzsche only mentions the “genius of the heart” in the penultimate aphorism of the text, after he has completed the revaluation of values (BGE, 295).

The *Übermensch* will not be a permanent ideal because it will be an actual life. Because this ideal will be connected to a mortal body, it will be temporary in three senses. The *Übermensch* is an actual (super)human life (rather than an incorporeal spirit), which means that it will eventually die and decompose. Second, because this new ideal is such a personal creation, the *Übermensch* will, in a certain sense, die along with Nietzsche,

<sup>67</sup>Nietzsche also does not explicitly mention the last man or the eternal recurrence in *Beyond Good and Evil* either. He alludes to the eternal return of the same in aphorism 56 and in aphorism 203, he gives a description of “the dwarf animal of equal rights and claims,” a description which sounds like the last man. Although Nietzsche does not employ the term “last man” in aphorism 203, in aphorism 225, he uses the German term “*Untergang*.”



because no one else will understand the ideal precisely as Nietzsche does. Nietzsche's most personal, subjective interpretation of the *Übermensch* dies with him. When Zarathustra speaks of *the* *Übermensch* (the singular term he uses in the "Prologue") he is referring to his own subjective ideal, the ideal that Zarathustra himself envisions. Nietzsche's hope is that other individuals like himself will create other ideal types (*Übermenschen*). Third, although this ideal is personal, it will eternally be open to interpretation by others. So the *Übermensch* is temporary in the sense that different interpretations may predominate in different historical epochs. But like many humans, the *Übermensch* can continue to have influence after it dies. Since Nietzsche immortalizes the concept of the *Übermensch* in a book, the idea will exist as long as people read his books and are shaped by them. After Nietzsche puts his idea in a book, from that point on, it is possible that the *Übermensch* will never die.

### **What is the *Übermensch*?**

Humanity is at a point when there is no way to affirm life without an *Übermensch* to fill the void that the death of God has left. Nietzsche italicizes Zarathustra's two pronouncements "*God is dead*" and "*I teach you the overman*" because these two doctrines are intertwined: God's death creates in humanity the need for the *Übermensch* teaching (Z, 124). In the "Prologue," Zarathustra presents three images of the *Übermensch*.<sup>68</sup> He first describes the *Übermensch* as the goal of Man's evolution. As such, he is the first human goal and the "meaning of the earth" (Z, 125). Next, he describes Man as a "polluted stream" and the *Übermensch* is the sea in which man's "great contempt can go under" (ibid.). If humanity turns toward this ideal, modern degeneration will not have been meaningless--humanity can be purified. Finally, he is "lightening" and "frenzy" (Z, 126). The *Übermensch* should inspire an exalted sense of longing. But these metaphors do not tell us what the *Übermensch* is like substantively, nor do they explain in what way(s) it is different from all previous ideals. Nor do these metaphors indicate the connection between

<sup>68</sup>In *Nietzsche's Teaching*, Lampert offers a helpful discussion of these images (Lampert, 18-21).

this new goal and Nietzsche's insistence on sexual dichotomy.

The Übermensch teaching fulfills a purpose similar to the one that the ascetic ideal once did. Nietzsche is not unambiguously hostile towards asceticism. The ascetic ideal actually saved humanity at a time when "existence on earth contained no goal; 'why man at all?'--was a question without an answer; the *will* for man and earth was lacking; behind every great human destiny there sounded as a refrain a yet greater 'in vain!'" (GM III, 28). Clark explains that during this time the ascetic ideal "gave these beings ways of affirming their lives, of finding them worth living, when no alternative was available. While it may have done this in different ways for different groups," (Clark, 1990, 163) there does not appear to be any "evidence that Nietzsche thinks some groups could have done without it" (ibid.). The Übermensch must fulfill a similar purpose. Zarathustra does not clarify precisely what the Übermensch will be like because creative individuals like himself will determine what the Übermensch will be. Different groups may need different things from this ideal, but not all interpretations will be equal, according to Nietzsche (BGE, 228). The Übermensch will exist the extent that human beings can believe.

Zarathustra initially presents the Übermensch as a project that will involve all of humanity, not just a specific people. Christianity teaches that there is only one (type of) God; therefore, Christian morality has been taken to be the whole of morality. This god is male, but an emasculated male, "the *anti-natural* castration of a god, to make him a god of the good alone, would here be contrary to everything desirable" (AC, 582-583). Nietzsche considers the Christian conception of God to be a castration because he "knew nothing of wrath, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, and violence" (AC, 583). The absence of these traits, some of which Nietzsche associates with masculinity and others with femininity, constitutes castration. Not only did Christianity castrate God, but it destroyed polytheism. Christianity (along with the democratic spirit, historicism, and modern science) creates in humanity the need for a *universal* goal (GS, 143). Nietzsche explains,

Monotheism, ..., this rigid consequence of the doctrine of one normal human type--the faith in one normal god beside whom there are only

pseudo-gods--was perhaps the greatest danger that has yet confronted humanity. It threatened us with the premature stagnation that, as far as we can see, most other species have long reached; for all of them believe in one normal type and ideal for their species, and they have translated the morality of mores definitively into their own flesh and blood (GS, 143).

Before Christianity, the one-thousand goals had been understood in terms of “clans, communities, tribes, peoples, states, churches” and families, while Christianity teaches that there is only one group--humanity as a whole (BGE, 199). The Christian God formerly “represented a people, the strength of a people, everything aggressive and power-thirsty in the soul of a people; now he is merely the good god” (AC, 583). When the Christian God became the only God, he lost the manly qualities Nietzsche reveres. Even though man has no *eternal* horizons, a *universal* goal still must be created. Despite the fact that there have been a thousand goals hitherto, Zarathustra argues that *humanity* still lacks a goal (Z, 172). Interestingly, Nietzsche states, “Not ‘mankind’ but *overman* is the goal!” in section 1001 of *The Will to Power*. The Übermensch is the goal for humanity as a species; it is the thousand-and-first goal. But this goal will affirm manliness, play, sexuality, cunning unlike the Christian God.

Although all of humanity will be transformed by the goal, Nietzsche’s primary concern is not with the well-being of the masses of men. Nietzsche’s overriding goal is to promote the production of other extraordinary individuals like himself. And these individuals are ends themselves; they are not to be understood in terms of utility. Nietzsche explains that “one misunderstands great human beings if one views them from the miserable perspective of some public use. That one cannot put them to any use, that in itself may belong to greatness” (TI, 555). Different individuals will have different roles in bringing about this ideal. In his declarations of love which are reminiscent of the Beatitudes, Zarathustra dictates the various roles that he hopes people will take in the actualization of the Übermensch (Z, 127-128). In the “Prologue,” Zarathustra does not

differentiate the roles of man and woman in achieving this task, though he does later.<sup>69</sup> Some individuals may try to approximate (or become) the *Übermensch* themselves, while others (most) will sacrifice themselves for the sake of the *Übermensch* (ie, “go under”). Those who are unable to help bring about or to become this new ideal type will be commanded by the *Übermensch*. The masses are to the *Übermensch* what the horse is to Man. Humans understand a good horse as one that serves humans well. The desire for transportation, pets, recreation, and war have led to the manner in which horses have been bred and cultivated. Similarly, the *Übermensch* understands humans in terms of how they may serve the *Übermensch*. Just as horses are altered by the goals of humans so too will humans be molded to fit the goals of the *Übermensch*. They will believe in the *Übermensch* as a goal that is worthy of their devotion and admiration.

Zarathustra attempts to instill this new faith in humanity. In a world where god is dead, such a faith requires the art of self-deception--an art that woman seems to have mastered.<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche asserts that woman is better equipped to instill such a faith in herself and others than man is. He states; “Seducing one’s neighbor to a good opinion and afterwards believing piously in this opinion--who could equal women in this art?--” (BGE, 148). The initial tone of the passage is critical and condescending. Nevertheless, this quality is necessary and one might therefore expect Nietzsche to praise this womanly ability. But in another passage he argues that this art of seduction may be a slave’s quality, which accentuates the negative tone of Nietzsche’s assertion here. “It is ‘the slave’ in the blood of the vain person, a residue of the slave’s craftiness--and how much ‘slave’ is still residual in woman, for example!--that seeks to *seduce* him to good opinions about himself;

<sup>69</sup>See Zarathustra’s speeches “On Old and Young Little Women” (Z, 177-179) and “On Child and Marriage” (Z, 181-183).

<sup>70</sup>For a consideration of the possibility of human beings as the center of the world, consult Michael Grenke’s essay “Man in the Middle.” In it, Grenke suggests that human being is not one thing, but two (i.e., man and woman). He uses this observation as a springboard for considering Nietzsche’s cryptic use of double aphorisms in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Grenke points out that it may not be possible to have a world with a center other than God without some type of self-deception (Grenke, 4-5).

it is also the slave who afterwards immediately prostrates himself before these opinions as if he had not called them forth” (BGE, 261). Still, if self-deception is needed, it is unusual that Nietzsche would characterize this quality as slavish. Although it is possible that Nietzsche might recognize qualities as lowly but nevertheless needed, a closer look at BGE 261 indicates that Nietzsche actually criticizes *vanity*, not the art of deceiving others and oneself. The first quotation (BGE, 148) does not specify that the person is vain or that the opinions are about oneself. Perhaps such deception is only slavish if the opinion itself is ignoble, slavish, or unwarranted. When woman directs this seduction toward the proper goal (the *Übermensch*) this art is most praiseworthy and may not be slavish at all.

With the former passage (BGE, 148), Nietzsche indicates that a woman is better equipped to inspire faith in others than is man. Nietzsche does not indicate whether a man could practice this art, though his descriptions of Zarathustra (EH, 220) and the “genius of the heart” as seducers (BGE, 295) indicates that males can acquire this trait. Apparently a man, namely a Zarathustra or a Socrates, can acquire this ability as well. Perhaps these men can equal woman in the art of seduction. If woman is more masterful at this art, Nietzsche’s choice of a man (Zarathustra) as the herald and seducer is a bit strange. Nietzsche would reply that Zarathustra and the “genius of the heart” must also be creators of ideals. Women may lack this ability or be less likely to develop this skill in Nietzsche’s view. It may be that only man can achieve the creativity, the masterful ability to rule, and the seductive ability to inspire others to believe.

### **Has There Ever Been an *Übermensch*?**

Zarathustra teaches that there never has been an *Übermensch*, but it could be created (Z, 197, 205). But Nietzsche lists a few individuals who fit descriptions similar to the *Übermensch* and those passages imply that there may have been *Übermenschen*. All of the examples he lists are male with one exception (Napoleon’s mother). He also makes a direct connection between an actual man and the *Übermensch* (Napoleon). All of these extraordinary types have arisen only by accident: “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 of great success have always been possible and *will* perhaps always be possible” (AC, 571). The *Übermensch* will be different because he will not be an accident, but the purpose of man’s evolution. This is one reason why Nietzsche calls these fortunate accidents *a kind of Übermensch* instead of *the Übermensch*.

Some examples he gives of the “more profound and comprehensive men [Menschen]” of his century include Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer, and Wagner (BGE, 256). These men are not simply the most comprehensive *males* of the time, but the most comprehensive *human beings*--they transcend the *men and women* of their time. He later adds that Caesar, Homer, Aristophanes, Leonardo, and Goethe possess “slackness, skepticism, ‘immorality,’ the right to throw off a faith,” which all “belong to greatness” (WP, 380). While most of these men are artists or poets, he praises some key political figures as well--Caesar, Alcibiades (BGE, 200), and Napoleon (GM I: 16).<sup>71</sup> Consider the following passage:

But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life--and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too--then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar (to whose company I should like to add that *first* European after my taste, the Hohenstaufen Frederick II), and among artists perhaps Leonardo da Vinci (BGE, 200).

The qualities he attributes to the above men characterize the *Übermensch* as well. He idealizes the notion of a “Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul” (WP, 983) and recognizes that the “brief spell of beauty, of genius, of Caesar, is *sui generis*: such things are not inherited. The *type* is hereditary; a type is nothing extreme, no ‘lucky stroke’ --” (WP, 684). Perhaps

<sup>71</sup>Nehamas argues that *all* of the figures that Nietzsche reveres are literary artists and poets (Nehamas, 227). He even includes Napoleon in this group because Nietzsche describe him as “steeped in world literature.” However, I agree with Detwiler that this argument is unconvincing as Nietzsche praises political figures as well. Nietzsche also praises Napoleon, Caesar, Napoleon’s mother, and Cesare Borgia--all of whom are political figures (Detwiler, 47-50).

what Nietzsche means when he asserts that there has never been an *Übermensch* that there has never been a “type” of *Übermensch* that was consciously cultivated. All of these men possess “irreconcilable” masculine and feminine drives. Even though all of these are males, Nietzsche understands the characteristics of these men as both masculine (waging war against oneself, self-control, predestined for victory over others) and feminine (magical, incomprehensible, enigmatic, and seductive).

Nietzsche specifically uses the term *Übermensch* with respect to Napoleon who he referred to as a “synthesis of the *inhuman* and *superhuman*” (GM I: 16). However, Nietzsche also describes the “higher man” as “inhuman and superhuman” (WP, 1027). As part four of *Zarathustra* indicates, the higher men are not *Übermenschen*. These two passages together suggests that Napoleon is a higher man, but perhaps not the *Übermensch*. He possesses superhuman qualities, but may not fulfill all of the requirements of Nietzsche’s ideal. However, in two instances in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche also uses the phrase “return to nature” to describe Goethe and Napoleon. As discussed above, “return to nature” is another description of his task of creating the *Übermensch*. Of all the figures he discusses, perhaps there is most evidence that Napoleon was an *Übermensch*. In this regard he describes Goethe as

a magnificent attempt to overcome the eighteenth century by a return to nature, by an *ascent* to the naturalness of the Renaissance--a kind of self-overcoming on the part of that century. He bore its strongest instincts within himself: the sensibility, the idolatry of nature, the anti-historic, the idealistic, the unreal and revolutionary... he surrounded himself with limited horizons; he did not retire from life but put himself into the midst of it; ...,he *created* himself.

In the middle of an age with an unreal outlook, Goethe was a convinced realist: he said Yes to everything that was related to him in this respect--and he had no greater experience than that *ens realissimum* called Napoleon. Goethe conceived a human being who would be strong, highly educated, skillful in all bodily matters, self-controlled, reverent toward himself, and who might dare to afford the whole range and wealth of being natural, being strong enough for such freedom; the man of tolerance, not from weakness but from strength, because he knows how to use to his advantage, even that from which the average nature would perish; the man for whom there is no longer anything that is forbidden--unless it be *weakness*, whether called vice or virtue (TI, 553-554).

“Napoleon was a piece of ‘return to nature’” (TI, 552) who “commands unconditionally”

as one of the most “valuable human beings and moments” (BGE, 199). Napoleon possesses qualities that Nietzsche considers superhuman qualities, but because the world is a different place than it was when Napoleon lived, a new type of *Übermensch* is required.

Nietzsche does not specifically associate the concept *Übermensch* with any particular woman, however he does characterize one woman as powerful and praiseworthy by his standards --Napoleon’s mother. She is one of “the most powerful and influential women [Frauen] of the world” who owed their “power and ascendancy over men [Männer]” to the force of her will (BGE, 239). What he reveres in her is obvious--she gave birth to a strong child. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Nietzsche addresses her as Napoleon’s *mother*. Napoleon is center stage while his mother seems to remain in the background as the *mother* of greatness. Yet, as Grenke notes, it is difficult to envision Napoleon’s mother as “a stay-at-home baby-machine” (Grenke, 10). The only extraordinary woman that Nietzsche cites in *Beyond Good and Evil* is the mother of the only man to which Nietzsche specifically associates superhuman qualities. Perhaps Nietzsche holds her responsible for Napoleon’s greatness. Napoleon is the canvas upon which his mother paints her will. Nietzsche may recognize Napoleon’s mother as the true puppet-master. Perhaps she is responsible for Napoleon’s being and doing what she willed. She physically shapes him in her body and with this close connection, she molds him into the type of human being she desires him to be. Nietzsche’s praise of Napoleon’s mother casts some doubt on the assumption that the *Übermensch* could only be male. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not use the term *Übermensch* in conjunction with Napoleon’s mother, so Nietzsche probably did *not* consider her to be an *Übermensch*.

Zarathustra’s statement that there has never yet been an *Übermensch* may mean that although some men and one woman possess some of the qualities, they do not fit Zarathustra’s description of the *Übermensch*. Alternately, Zarathustra’s words may be rhetoric intended to spark the creativity of the disciples. Zarathustra is a teacher and a poet who admits he lies too much (Z, 239). He hopes to inspire the most promising individuals



to go their own way to their solitude and become *Übermensch*. So far the most extraordinary types have only arisen by accident. "The accidental, the law of absurdity in the whole economy of mankind, manifests itself most horribly in its destructive effect on the higher men whose complicated conditions of life can only be calculated with great subtlety and difficulty" (BGE, 62). Passively allowing evolution to continue will ultimately lead to a time when there will be no more extraordinary individuals or events.

### **Creative Evolution**

Instead of allowing these strokes of luck to come about accidentally, Zarathustra teaches that humans can create the *Übermensch* consciously. Zarathustra further teaches that the entire historical process has been a preparation for the *Übermensch*. The death of God leaves man in a precarious position: "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman-- a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping" (Z, 126). Man is at a midpoint, stuck between degenerating into something subhuman or turning toward the *Übermensch* as a new goal. Man must decide in which direction he will go.

Zarathustra's opening proclamation of the *Übermensch* replaces Darwin's evolutionary theory of survival of the fittest (a deadly truth) with the theory of creative evolution (a life-affirming truth).<sup>72</sup> Zarathustra explains the difference between Man and the *Übermensch* with an analogy: Man will be to the *Übermensch* what the ape has been to Man.

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: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape (Z, 124).

Zarathustra does not clarify whether the *Übermensch* will look physically different from humans, nor does he characterize the *Übermensch* sexually. But looking at the

<sup>72</sup>Henri Bergson coined the term "creative evolution."

evolutionary chain that Zarathustra cites (worm-->ape-->man-->Übermensch), it appears that the Übermensch will of a new species altogether. This new species will be as different from Man as is the ape. Regarding the question of the sex of the Übermensch, it is noteworthy that only the lowest rung of the evolutionary chain, the worm, does not exhibit sexual differentiation. Most worms are hermaphrodites. Zarathustra stresses that much in Man is still worm, which signifies lowly, despicable qualities, perhaps the sterility of objective scholars or the mediocrity of the masses. On the metaphorical level, perhaps the lack of sexual differentiation of the lowest rung indicates a lack of passion, love, and creativity in modern man. The second phase, the ape, is a step up from the worm. Apes have higher intellectual capacities, advanced abilities, and more possibilities than worms. Although apes look physically different from humans, sexual differentiation still exists. Males and females have different roles for the protection of the species. Of the three species above, sexual differentiation in human beings is most pronounced as man and woman are visibly different from one another. Moreover, humans interpret the physical differences between man and woman as significant intellectually, psychologically, and morally. Certainly male and female apes look different from one another because male and female apes have different genitalia. But apes do not translate their physical differences into psychological differences the way that humans do. The progression in Zarathustra's analogy indicates that the Übermensch will have a sex, since only the lowest rung, the worm, is without clear sexuality.

The analogy above suggests that Übermenschen are a new species, a new type, and as such will procreate. Nietzsche explains how a species originates: "A *species* comes to be, a type becomes fixed and strong, through the long fight with essentially constant *unfavorable* conditions" (BGE, 262). Zarathustra does not articulate how different from Man the Übermensch will be. Nor does he list the specific differences between the species Man and the species Übermensch. Zarathustra indicates that when he saw the greatest and smallest human naked, they appeared "all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest all-

too-human. All-too-small, the greatest!" (Z, 331). This statement suggests that the *Übermensch* will look different from Man, but as a new type of species, will be differentiated into males and females.

On the surface Zarathustra's teaching sounds like Darwin's here because he argues that a new species will evolve from Man just as the worm evolved into the ape and the ape into Man. But in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche cautions against this incorrect reading (EH, 261). Creating the *Übermensch* is not a simple, mechanical process. Human beings must decide to create the *Übermensch* through an act of volition. Zarathustra teaches that with the power of his mind, Man can recreate himself into a different kind of being. Of course thinking alone is not all that is required here. Man must *will* himself to be different. An elaborate eugenics program is also required. Humans must mold themselves into the new species of *Übermensch*--just as the worm created the idea of the ape, the ape created the idea of a human. The *Übermensch* will be as different from Man as Man is different from the ape. Zarathustra teaches that "Man is something that shall be overcome," and that it is within Man's own power to transcend himself (Z, 124).

### **Malleability of Humans**

All other animal species have a fixed type or essence: that is, they cannot choose one way of life over another. No one says to the cat, "Become who you are!" But since no ideal, truth, or goal is permanent for humans, the content of human nature has no fixity. Human beings are altered by the types of goals they esteem. Of all living things, only Man has a changeable nature and this is because "man alone among all the animals has no eternal horizons and perspectives" (GS, 143). The creative power of the human mind combined with the extraordinary freedom he experiences by being free of all gods enables Man (and only Man) to transform human instincts over time. Only Man can decide whether his species ought to be sexually differentiated or not. Man's malleability also means that there is no clear beginning or end to human development. Contrary to Hegelian philosophy, Nietzsche teaches that there is no predetermined endpoint toward which humans progress.

There is, however, an endpoint toward which humans degenerate--the last man. Man is the “*as yet undetermined animal*, the rare exception” (BGE, 62). Zarathustra wants to affirm this fluidity of Man’s nature as a kind of majestic freedom and responsibility.

If Man is not-yet-determined, either he will consciously shape his own nature and in so doing determine what human nature will become (WP, 953), or he can allow external circumstances like the historical environment, people, and events (like the death of God)--in short, chance--determine who he will be. Allowing the human species to continue evolving in its current direction will produce a creature who lives longest, but who is the embodiment of mediocrity. This would mean the complete acceptance of nihilism. Creating the Übermensch represents a true improvement of the human species. Those who believe in the Übermensch will be improved by their reverence for this new kind of ideal.

Since the Übermensch is the goal toward which humans strive, the sex of the Übermensch will have significance for the human beings who revere the Übermensch. In determining the sex of the Übermensch at least three questions must be considered. First, are human beings (men and women) capable of revering a male and/ or a female Übermensch? Human experience does not rule out the possibility of bowing down to a feminine ideals (like goddesses). Second, could woman acquire the necessary masculine traits needed and would a woman even want to be an Übermensch? And third, would it be *easier* for a man to acquire the requisite feminine traits than for a woman to acquire the requisite masculine traits? Some extraordinary men have given birth metaphorically and have at least achieved the status of higher men. Addressing these issues requires a consideration of whether the different biologies of the sexes rule out the possibility of either one becoming an Übermensch.

### **The First *Human* Ideal**

Zarathustra stresses the importance of the body with the second command which appears in italics; “Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak

to you of otherworldly hopes!" (Z, 125). All other ideals have been associated with "otherworlds" rather than the earth. Zarathustra notes that "All beings so far have created something beyond themselves" by which they have judged the inferiority of the earth (Z, 124). Unable to affirm the earth, peoples have only been able to create eternal ideals (i.e., gods). All gods are false ideals because they pretend to be something they are not, namely eternal. The realization that the Christian God is not immortal is perhaps the most disturbing recognition humanity has ever known. Christianity implicitly preaches that no meaning can be found on this earth without God to provide the meaning. But now that all gods have died, it is no longer possible to believe in such "otherworldly" ideals. Instead of turning to divine, incorporeal ideals, Zarathustra teaches humanity to affirm the earth, to embrace a tangible, achievable goal.

Turning to a faith in the earth means turning away from the "mendacious and false" heavenly realm that "has so far been the curse on reality" (EH, 218). The heavenly realm represents a "curse on reality" because it creates in humans a hope that cannot be fulfilled and fills humans with despair when they realize this fact. Because all previous ideals have denigrated the human realm, the earth, humanity has never yet been oriented toward a *human* ideal. Zarathustra's hope is "that everything be changed into what is thinkable for man, visible for man, feelable by man" (Z, 198). To love the earth means to focus on what humans can actually achieve. The *Übermensch* is to be the first life-affirming human goal that, unlike previous gods, is actually achievable by humans (Z, 197). The *Übermensch* is *life-affirming* because it is based on the earth. Also, the *Übermensch* is a *human* ideal because it affirms Man as the real creator. Zarathustra compares the *Übermensch* as a goal to God:

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. Perhaps not you yourselves, my brothers. But into fathers and forefathers of the overman you could re-create yourselves: and let this be your best creation (Z, 197-198).

When humans accept themselves as the most powerful and creative beings of the earth,

humans can originate their own purpose. Humans mistakenly believed that God was the source of their being and purpose. Nietzsche describes the flaw of this way of thinking:

As soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature),<sup>73</sup> and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be happy or wretched, we corrupt for ourselves the *innocence of becoming*. We then have someone who wants to achieve something through us and with us (WP, 552).

It is striking that Nietzsche pairs God with nature here as a false ideal. When humans turn to a god, or believe in some other type of fixed purpose (like nature), they deny their own potential strength and creativity.

But modernity has so corrupted the instincts that humans today may not yet be prepared to create the *Übermensch*. This is why Zarathustra must be the herald of the *Übermensch*. Humans should believe it to be within their capability to bring about the *Übermensch*. Zarathustra relays his own recognition that there cannot be gods but only *Übermenschen*. He declares: “if there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god! Hence there are no gods. Though I drew this conclusion, now it draws me” (Z, 198). One can substitute the term “*Übermensch*” in the place of “gods” in Zarathustra’s statement. Man should ask himself, “If there were *Übermenschen*, how could I endure not to be an *Übermensch*!” In other words, humans should recognize this goal as an achievable one. That humans can achieve this goal means that the *Übermensch* represents a type of mortal body rather than an incorporeal, divine spirit (like a god). The *Übermensch* represents an extraordinary type of being which Man can create, emulate, and perhaps also become.

### **Nietzsche’s Focus on the Body**

Creating a human ideal necessitates starting with what is tangible, what is closest, and what is undeniable--the body. For each individual human being, the body is a

<sup>73</sup>This admission that nature as a fixed standard is dead is especially strange given Nietzsche’s own apparent use of a natural standard. As mentioned above, he speaks of a “return to nature” and the goal of creating a “natural humanity.” Either Nietzsche is creating a new understanding of what nature is (or the kind of truth that nature is) or he is guilty of a metaphysical relapse. For an analysis of the problem that nature poses for Nietzsche, see Strauss’s essay “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” especially pp. 189-190.

beginning, a means, and an end. Moreover, because no two bodies are alike, a renewed focus on the body preserves a means of distinguishing among different types of individuals. This focus also maintains the differentiation between man and woman. Zarathustra turns toward the wisdom of the body as the only possible root of human evaluation and esteeming: "Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do--back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning." (Z, 188). One's body is one's most secure as well as the most personal, idiosyncratic possession any human being can own. Nietzsche teaches that "soul is only a word for something about the body" because he is replacing the faith in metaphysical dualities (Z, 146). In contrast, Christianity preaches the denial of body for the sake of the "soul." Against the self-sacrificing asceticism of Christianity, Nietzsche promotes egoism, an affirmation of one's idiosyncratic self. Nietzsche teaches Man to see all things as emanations of the body so that he can transcend the faith in incorporeal spirits.

The body is not permanent or unchanging and is therefore an appropriate model for the new kind of ideal needed in a world where all gods are dead. "The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd" (Z, 146). As the body ages, it changes and so over time the person continually becomes who he is. The body also limits what an individual can become and therefore also limits the types of ideals appropriate to humans. Just as some things (like food, proper nutrition, and drink) are appropriate for a healthy body, certain ideals can strengthen Man (make him healthy), while others can destroy or cause him to degenerate (make him sick or pervert his instincts). Bodies are mortal and temporary just like all human ideas (ideals). And the *Übermensch* can give birth to or pave the way for other new ideals, just as individual bodies can.

It is not clear how the body (and consequently the mind) of the *Übermensch* will be superior to the human body. Nietzsche suggests that the *Übermensch* or *Übermenschen* will have the "courage to side with their *physis* and to heed its demands down to the subtlest nuances. Their aesthetic and moral judgements are among these 'subtlest nuances'

of the *physis*" (GS, 39). The soul of the *Übermensch* will be the "most comprehensive soul, ...the soul which, having being, dives into becoming; the soul which *has*, but *wants* to want and will; ...the soul which loves itself most" (Z, 320-321). The comprehensiveness of the *Übermensch*'s character may indicate a different type of body, or at least an extraordinarily healthy body. And since the soul is inseparable from the body, the sexuality of the *Übermensch* will be a fundamental part of what this new ideal is. Given Nietzsche's critique of sterility, the *Übermensch* will certainly not be objective, sterile, or neuter. As an individual, the *Übermensch*'s sex will influence his goals or at least color the way he orients himself toward the world.

Two difficulties arise from Nietzsche's focus on the body as the foundation for a new ideal. First, when turning to the body, one notices that there are two types of human bodies--male and female. Nietzsche does not destroy and cannot deny this dichotomy. One wonders what it could mean to have a *human* ideal that affirms the earth when there are two types of humans. It is possible that there are two types of *Übermensch*--one male and one female. There may be a type of *Übermensch* that a female would create and revere, while a male would esteem a different type. But since the *Übermensch* transcends all humans, it is likely that the *Übermensch* is to be revered by both men and women. Moreover, since Nietzsche intends the *Übermensch* to be a new species, both male and female *Übermenschen* seem to be necessary. It is unlikely that this new species could survive without both sexes. Breeding *Übermenschen* with non-*Übermenschen* (i.e., mixing two different species), would seem to make the production of future *Übermenschen* less likely. Since Nietzsche's goal is to produce a race of *Übermenschen*, female *Übermenschen* would seem to aid that task. But, alternatively, the *Übermensch* may have no mate at all. The *Übermensch* sublimates his or her sexuality in activities of higher order. Perhaps the *Übermensch* does not procreate. If this is the case, the question of whether the *Übermensch* is a woman would come down to the question of whether woman's peak (her ascent to nature) could mean denying her ability to give birth.



Nietzsche's praise of Napoleon's mother indicates that woman's greatness takes a different form from man's. But the question of whether a woman could be the *Übermensch* cannot be addressed until a second difficulty is considered.

### **Should Biology Matter?**

The second difficulty is that Nietzsche's focus on the body appears to be an impermissible reliance on *physis*--nature as a fixed standard.<sup>74</sup> The malleability of human nature begs the question of whether human biology ought to matter. Individuals can transcend the limitation of their bodies, but in a sense, Nietzsche insists that they must not do so. An essential element of his argument is a renewed focus on breeding a powerful physicality that is prerequisite for the *Übermensch*. This goal is the reason Nietzsche focuses on the body. Nietzsche argues that this renewed focus is necessary to combat the demotion of passion, sexuality, and sensuality that has resulted from Christianity and the Enlightenment.

To a great degree, the classical justifications for equality (and equality between the sexes) are responsible for the denigration of the importance of the body and biological differences. A rational proof that men and women are of equal worth must be based on some species characteristics that all human beings share (since their obvious physical differences can be seen). In other words, the justification for such equality must be based on what is common between the sexes (which may in the end be what is least important about humans). These are the characteristics of Locke's defense of political equality. He argues in the *Second Treatise* that "nothing [is] more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to *all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties*, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection..." (Locke, 4, emphasis added). He argues that human beings are equal because as members of the same species all have the same faculties (inherent powers or abilities).

<sup>74</sup>The problem of Nietzsche's potential use of *physis* as a standard has been touched on above. See pp. 41-42; 87-89.

The *development* of those faculties is not politically relevant, according to Locke. But even putting aside the unequal development of the faculties, Locke's argument for natural equality is not quite sound since man and woman have different bodies and physical capabilities that correspond to those sexual differences. Man cannot nurse a baby, for example. Man and woman do not share *all* of the same faculties, but only *most* of them. And on the basis of their similarities, they ought to be treated the same according to liberalism. Their differences, physical or otherwise, should be politically irrelevant. And so we accentuate our commonalities, faithfully believing that only what humans share is significant.

If everyone is to be treated as equals, it becomes necessary to convince ourselves that the physical differences that humans see before their very eyes are inconsequential. This means humans must become blind. Of course the question of whether sex differences matter would not be an issue at all if the differences between the sexes were really insignificant or trivial. But there *are* differences, or we would not be struggling to ignore that they exist. Wolgast describes what the "mere biology" argument wrongly asserts:

Consider this argument: Sex, like skin color and other features of race, is a merely biological characteristic. It is an aspect of a person's physical composition like the chemical constituents of cells, and has nothing to do with the person as a moral entity. The sex of a person, like these other characteristics, should have no influence on how she or he is treated. I call this the "mere biology" argument.

It is true that skin color is an unimportant difference and should not affect a person's rights. But it is not unimportant *for the reason that it is biological*. The difference between men and apes is merely biological too, as is the difference between men and fishes; yet these differences rightly lead to different treatment. Who says we must treat all biological forms alike? Indeed, among humans some biological differences justify differences of treatment, as helping a blind person and caring for a baby clearly show. The "mere biology" argument is therefore a bad one (Wolgast, 22).

It is absurd to argue that the biological differences between the ape and the human are negligible. It would also be ridiculous to discount the biological differences between an Übermensch and a Mensch. Wolgast is correct to point out that the differences between species is biological and that men and women accept those differences as meaningful.

However, she does show that differentiation *within the species* is crucially important. Still, she is correct to point out that in some cases we take biology to be important as well as evidence that differential treatment is required. In other cases we insist that biology should not matter at all. Liberal democrats are of two minds regarding the importance of biological differences—especially with respect to sex.<sup>75</sup> An argument is still needed to explain why sexual differentiation within a species ought to be maintained and ought to be definitive. Nietzsche's explanation of the connection between physiology and psychology offers the beginning of a justification for treating the sexes differently. Those differences are not important because they are biological (and natural), but because the elimination of those differences would result in an "uglification" of human life (BGE, 232).

Nussbaum rejects Nietzsche's focus on the body as the foundation of treating the sexes differently because he does not present a "serious account of the body and its needs" (Nussbaum, 11). In fact, Nietzsche does present a serious account, but he accentuates different aspects of the body and its needs than Nussbaum does. Nussbaum's primary concern is *comfortable* self-preservation for all humans, while Nietzsche's is the breeding of the most extraordinary creative types. Nietzsche wants to improve the species by turning human concerns away from mere survival. His goal turns him away from a focus on alleviating hunger, physical pain, and other types of bodily ailments. In contrast, Nietzsche declares "What does not destroy me, makes me stronger" (TI, 467). This declaration is problematic since, in many cases, what does not physically kill one makes the body *weaker*. Heart attacks, cancer, malnutrition, and poverty (which is Nussbaum's concern) cause great weakening of the body. But Nietzsche's statement, if understood

<sup>75</sup>In defense of the eradication of sexual dualism based on biological differences between the sexes, Tirrell notes that 5% of the population is born with ambiguous genitalia. This means to Tirrell that the claim that there are two genders is normative (Tirrell, 206). Parents of this 5% immediately impose a gender on their child. Moreover, she claims that most people display some masculine and feminine traits regardless of whether in a male or a female body. But Tirrell misses the reason why parents impose a gender on their child. Gender distinctions are desirable and give a person a sense of self. If sexuality is an important aspect of who a human being is, then one's sex and gender should be recognized as important, not irrelevant.

metaphorically, makes some sense. He argues that a battle (with health, in war, against oneself) can enliven and strengthen the will. Nietzsche is also referring to *himself*, his relationship with his own body, and his self-knowledge. He is not describing all humans, although all humans should rely on the wisdom of the body. For most, a weakening of the body leads to a corresponding weakening of the spirit. Nussbaum focuses on the needs and desires that humans as humans (last men) have but completely disregards the potentially noble human needs for children, love, and goals beyond themselves. Nussbaum's focus on comfortable self-preservation demonstrates her close ties to liberal democratic morality, the very morality against which Nietzsche fights.

### **The Relationship Between Physiology and Psychology**

Nietzsche recognizes the intimate connection between one's body and the type of ideal which one can believe. A weak body seeks comfort while a strong body seeks challenges and danger. Zarathustra presents the human body as the source of all gods, all ideals, and all types of *Übermenschen* (Z, 147). In fact, he argues that psychological experiences are merely interpretations of physiological situations. The source of psychological pain is some basic physiological fact like an injury or lack (like hunger or exhaustion) (cf. GM III: 16). Nietzsche even defines valuations as "physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life" (BGE, 3). He considers whether an ascending life or a weak, degenerative life created the idea. Nietzsche does not love all life equally, but wants to promote a certain type of life-affirming human.

Different types of bodies are animated by different ideas. The idiosyncratic traits of the body push an individual's thoughts down the individual's own path. What the mind is capable of doing is directly linked to what the body is capable of doing. What is thinkable for a strong body may be inconceivable to a sick or weak body. One does not desire the same things when sick as one does when in good health. A healthy body does not imply a healthy mind, as Nussbaum's argument insinuates. In fact it may be just the opposite. In order to experience the health of creating, one may need to endure a great deal of suffering.

It may be that sickness makes one aware of what health can be. Becoming healthy is a convalescing (cf. Z, 327-333). Suffering people who denied the wisdom and instincts of the body created the life-denying values that corrupt modern man. Zarathustra explains:

It was the sick and decaying who despised body and earth and invented the heavenly realm and the redemptive drops of blood: but they took even these sweet and gloomy poisons from body and earth. They wanted to escape their own misery, and the stars were too far for them. So they sighed: "Would that there were heavenly ways to sneak into another state of being and happiness!" Thus they invented their sneaky ruses and bloody potions. Ungrateful, these people deemed themselves transported from their bodies and this earth. But to whom did they owe the convulsions and raptures of their transport? To their bodies and this earth (Z, 144-145, cf. EH, 334).

Sick bodies gave birth to the otherworldly ideals that forced human evolution in the direction of nihilism. A sick body belongs to an individual who is unable to esteem anything human, an individual who suffers and cannot affirm life. Man must learn to love his body as the foundation of a new goal. And the new goal is to be a very personal, idiosyncratic one. Since no two bodies are exactly alike, no two ideals, goals, or virtues are exactly alike. Nietzsche even links the evolution of ideas to the evolution of human bodies: "the entire evolution of the spirit is a question of the body; it is the history of the development of a higher body that emerges into our sensibility" (WP, 676).

Nietzsche's argument that physiology is the root of certain psychological differences among men is quite plausible. He is simply correct to note that all humans love their body as uniquely their own. An individual may be dissatisfied with his body—he may prefer a taller, slimmer, stronger body; however, every individual is necessarily attached to the body into which he is born. When an individual loses a leg or an arm, he somehow feels incomplete, as if a piece of him is missing, even though the soul remains intact. Dissatisfaction with one's body certainly leads to psychological consequences. The body is something that cannot be shared with another completely. No other individual can experience the precise sensations of another's body. Recognition of the importance of the body grounds one's love in an egoism, and this helps Man remain faithful to the earth.

Different bodies will have different goals because the physiology of the individual

will determine the way in which one comports oneself towards the world. A physically weak individual will likely try to “fit” with the world while a physically strong individual would be more rash, more likely to try to conquer the world. These are not inevitable, but likely because “All actions must first be made possible mechanically before they are willed. Or: the ‘purpose’ *usually*<sup>76</sup> comes into the mind only after everything has been prepared for its execution” (WP, 671). One would expect an individual with a strong body to be more physically daring than a weak, feeble one. Considering man and woman, Nietzsche notes several biological differences: physical size, physical beauty, pregnancy, strength, and will. Those physical differences manifest themselves psychologically.

Not only does the body produce psychological conditions, but a psychological weakness can lead to the production of a certain type of physiology. Nietzsche recognizes the ignorance of the importance of bodily differences is producing a serious physiological effect in Europe:

Behind all the moral and political foregrounds to which such formulas point, a tremendous *physiological* process is taking place and gaining momentum. The Europeans are becoming more similar to each other; they become more and more detached from the conditions under which races originate that are tied to some climate or class; they become increasingly independent of any *determinate* milieu that would like to inscribe itself for centuries in body and soul with the same demands. Thus an essentially supra-national nomadic type of man is gradually coming up, a type that possesses, physiologically speaking, a maximum of the art and power of adaptation as its typical distinction (BGE, 242).

The democratization of the population and the predominance of herd morality creates a type of body that can live in many types of climates. As comfortable self-preservation is the only goal, the body is cultivated so as to allow humans to live longest. Before one can select the proper path for the future, one must recognize the repercussions of failing to acknowledge the body. Nietzsche turns to the body because the consequences of allowing a homogenous race of neuters overrun the earth is so nauseating. This path is not only possible, but extremely likely. Nietzsche’s focus on biology is important for liberal

<sup>76</sup>Nietzsche italicizes the word “usually.” Perhaps the exceptional individuals are the ones who create a purpose prior to the mechanical requirements being met.

democrats to consider because he accurately predicts the path down which liberal democrats are currently heading.

### **The Übermensch as the Ideal to Counter the Last Man**

Humanity already is headed toward “what is most contemptible: but that is the *last man*” (Z, 129). The concept “last man” signifies the most domesticated animal, the lowest type of human imaginable. The possibility of “this degeneration and diminution of man into the perfect herd animal” is the precise reason why humanity needs the Übermensch (BGE, 203). Zarathustra explains that “only the highest form, the most dangerous, the one that was most seductive in its No to life, provokes its [life’s] highest affirmation” (EH, appendix, 343). Only after Nietzsche recognizes the nauseating threat that the last man represents, does he feel impelled to create the Übermensch. The Übermensch is *the* alternative to the last man.

Zarathustra’s description of the last man is a bit more concrete than his description of the Übermensch. The term “last man” is a metaphor for a sterile type of individual who no longer esteems anything. The last man is no longer able to despise himself which means that he also does not experience an exalted sense of longing. An essential part of what the last man is includes the complete erosion of passion, sexuality, and fertility (i.e., the absence of ability to love, aspire, or create): “‘What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?’ thus asks the last man, and he blinks” (Z, 129). The term “last man,” which utilizes the gender neutral term “Mensch,” indicates the erosion of both masculine and feminine perspectives into a completely objectified, sterile life. Nietzsche’s description of the sterile scholars comes to mind when considering the sexuality (or lack thereof) of the last man. Just like the sterile scholars, last men are neuters (H, 33). The last man is the logical extension of the sterile scholar, the shallow Christian, the utilitarian, and the democrat. None of these types is specifically defined by any type of fertility or sexuality because they lack the ability to create anything meaningful.

The last man also hides from genuine experiences, fails to strive for anything, and

focuses solely on self-preservation. Because the last man seeks nothing more than physical safety, he lives longest. To call the last man sterile does not mean that the last man cannot procreate. He has his “little pleasure for the day” and his “little pleasure for the night” and that is all that he requires (Z, 130). He is a human life stripped of all struggle, tension, ideals and goals. The last man mistakenly believes that human happiness rests in complacency and repose of the body and mind. Nietzsche’s focus on the body does not mean that the proper human goal is mere physical comfort and pleasures. Nietzsche is attempting to renew Man’s focus on an egoism that can generate an exalted love of the *Übermensch* as a higher goal.

The *Übermensch* is anything but complacent, or “wretchedly content.” This does not mean that the *Übermensch* is a tortured soul or a mess of chaotic impulses and destructive drives as is the modern; rather, it means that the *Übermensch* experiences an exalted animation of striving and struggle. To long for greatness, to strive toward achieving an authentic goal, means to fight great battles against worthy opposition.

He [the *Übermensch*] needs the opposition of the masses, of the “leveled,” a feeling of distance from them! He<sup>77</sup> stands on them, he lives off them. This higher form of aristocracy is that of the future.--Morally speaking, this overall machinery, this solidarity of all gears, represents a maximum in the exploitation of man; but it presupposes those on whose account this exploitation has meaning. Otherwise it would really be nothing but an overall diminution, a value diminution of the type man--a regressive phenomenon in the grand style (WP, 866).

The *Übermensch* is introduced with, and is inseparable from, the notion of the last man. This is because a new ideal “needs enemies more than friends: in opposition alone does it *feel* itself necessary, in opposition alone does it *become* necessary” (TI, 488). Nietzsche explains that Zarathustra’s “relatively superhuman type, is superhuman precisely in its relation to the *good*--that the good and the just would call his overman *devil*” (EH, 331). Nietzsche maintains the differences between the sexes due to this need for opposition. The power of the nation-state is eroding, the significance of race is disintegrating, and the hold

<sup>77</sup>Kaufmann does not capitalize the beginning of the sentence here, but I do.



of religion is dying. Nietzsche searches for a tension--such as the struggle between the sexes--that can produce a creative spark to replace the past struggles that no longer seem to be worthwhile. Moreover, sexual difference is based on the body, and a focus on this difference fulfills the need to remain loyal to the earth.

### **The Significance of the Übermensch's Sex**

The very possibility of an Übermensch's existing at all requires the proper understanding of sex which Zarathustra characterizes as "the happiness that is the great parable of a higher happiness and the highest hope" (Z, 300). Nietzsche does not clearly express what the sexuality of the Übermensch will be, and this is strange given the crucial importance of the body and fertility. Nietzsche may be ambiguous regarding this essential quality of the Übermensch because *the* Übermensch is Nietzsche's (Zarathustra's) own personal goal. Nietzsche does not need to describe it because others of his type will be oriented toward the same type of goal. He does not want to produce shallow believers but creators: "I want to have fences around my thoughts and even around my words, lest swine and swooners break into my garden!" (Z, 301). A second reason for this ambiguity is that Nietzsche hopes that others will create their own type of Übermensch. Nietzsche challenges others to find, or better yet, create their own idiosyncratic and respective paths. But the final reason that the Übermensch is so ambiguous is that the Übermensch needs both masculine and feminine traits and experiences a tension between them.

Whether the Übermensch is male or female may not be as crucial as the fact that the Übermensch is not merely "objective." The opposing enemies that are needed externally must also be experienced inside the soul of the superhuman type. The character of the Übermensch consists of "powerful and irreconcilable drives" (BGE, 200). He is child and mother (Z, 199); the seduced and a seducer; an end and an opposition to ends; a lover of wisdom and a lover of life (Z, 220-221); victorious (BGE, 200) and tolerant (TI, 554); rash, but also delicate (BGE, 295) and subtle (BGE, 200); a lover and a creator; and finally, a philosopher and a poet. The Übermensch experiences an internal struggle due to

the war between the masculine and the feminine aspects of his character: "Our attitude to the 'internal enemy' is no different: here too we have spiritualized hostility; here too we have come to appreciate its value. The price of fruitfulness is to be rich in internal opposition; one remains young only as long as the soul does not stretch itself and desire peace" (TI, 488). This statement by itself does not indicate what the nature of the internal opposition is. However, since tempestuous opposition between the masculine and the feminine perspectives is an enduring and changeable opposition, and because all other types of opposition are currently eroding, this is the struggle in which Nietzsche places his faith for the future. The physical manifestation of this tension is the struggle between man and woman. Not only will there always be a physical distinction between the sexes; there will also be an eternally masculine and an eternally feminine perspective because of the connection between physiology and psychology. The significance of the two types of bodies and the two fundamental perspectives varies over time and place.

### **The Übermensch as a Child and Mother**

The fact that the Übermensch is a human ideal reveals quite a bit about what this being is like. As a human ideal, the Übermensch will be mortal, which means that eventually the Übermensch will die. This goal is the first human ideal that humans will acknowledge as temporary. Like the charismatic individual, as long as the Übermensch lives, he has the possibility of providing meaning to the earth. After the Übermensch dies, humanity will need either another type of Übermensch or another type of ideal. Also as a mortal being, a woman will give birth to and a man will beget the Übermensch. Man and woman together will create the Übermensch. Recognizing the necessary roles of man and woman in the physical creation of the Übermensch explains Nietzsche's affirmation of the importance of sexuality, selfishness, and the lust to rule (cf. Z, 298-303). These three "evil" passions draw man and woman together and hopefully will spark the production of the Übermensch. Woman will give birth to the Übermensch as a new hope for the future, just as a child (potentially) represents to its parents a new beginning and hope.

Nietzsche does not characterize the *Übermensch* specifically as a male or female, but instead as the child who “is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’ For the game of 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, 139). A child may be either a male or a female and it is noteworthy that again Nietzsche is vague here. Elsewhere Nietzsche describes man as “more childlike than woman” (Z, 178). By childlike, Nietzsche means an ability to create one’s own goal without needing a purpose external to oneself. The child “wills his own will” instead of searching for some external ideal (Z, 139). Children do not know how to be other than they are until parents educate them to suppress the passions and instincts. The child asserts himself because he cannot do otherwise. This description of the *Übermensch* as a child indicates that a male *Übermensch* is most likely.

### **The Respective Roles of Man and Woman in the Creating of the *Übermensch***

In the speech “On Old and Young Little Women,” Zarathustra prescribes the respective roles of the ordinary men and women in the creating of the *Übermensch*. Zarathustra uses the term “Weiblein” in the speech, which is a diminutive term meant to belittle women.<sup>78</sup> This connection indicates that Zarathustra is not describing the most extraordinary women in this section, but *small* women, that is, ordinary or typical women. He may prescribe a different role for small women (those who are not beautiful) than he does for noble women (Frauen).

Zarathustra explains that man may be more childlike, but woman “understands children better than man does” which means that woman understands man better than man does (Z, 178). In fact, she understands both men *and* women better than man does.

<sup>78</sup>Similarly, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche even describes little women (Weibchen) as a third sex (GS, 75). Nietzsche connects this statement to Aristotle’s suggestion that small people cannot be beautiful, though they may be well-proportioned. Aristotle states; “For high-mindedness implies greatness, just as beauty implies stature in body: small people may have charm and proportion but not beauty” (Aristotle, 1962, 1123b 7-9).

Zarathustra explains; “one is deceived about many things in man because many a shell is shabby and sad and altogether too much shell. Much hidden graciousness and strength is never guessed; the most exquisite delicacies find no tasters. Women [Frauen] know this--the most exquisite do: ...Man [Mensch] is hard to discover--hardest of all for himself” (Z, 306). Since she understands man, woman knows what man needs in order to thrive.

Nietzsche may be correct to say that woman understands men, children, and human beings generally better than man does. Woman’s small size and weakness physically may explain why she understands man better. Because she is physically weaker than man, if she wants or needs something from a man (like physical protection), she cannot simply physically force man to help her. More useful to her would be an ability to seduce him into serving her, to make the man want to give her what she seeks. If woman wants something different than what man wants to give her, she needs to find a way to make man want to fulfill her needs. She has to learn what he likes and lure him into believing that he desires to fulfill her needs. She must watch, learn, and notice the subtle details in his behaviors so that she can mold her behavior to him. Because she does not have physical strength at her disposal, she must be cunning. Still, to say that all women really know what men want is surely an exaggeration. Many women simply do not know how to mold men into the manly men they crave. But there is some sense to Nietzsche’s suggestion that (due to her physical weakness relative to man) woman understands man better than man understands woman. When applied to women who actually do understand men and children, Nietzsche’s argument that her body is the root of her better understanding of children and man is sound.

But *understanding* the creator and *being* one are two separate concepts altogether. Never does Zarathustra command woman to *become* the Übermensch. Instead, Zarathustra commands women; “Let your hope be: May I give birth to the overman!” (Z, 178). He goes even further by suggesting that “Everything about woman is a riddle, and everything about woman has one solution: that is pregnancy. Man is for woman a means: the end is

always the child” (Z, 178). But one must keep in mind that Zarathustra, a man, makes this assertion. And Zarathustra is relaying his story to a companion, presumably a male as well. Woman seems to be a mystery because man does not understand her. It is certainly possible that man sees woman as a mysterious riddle whom he continually misunderstands.

But Nietzsche’s suggestion that pregnancy is the only solution for woman sounds reactionary and chauvinistic, which is why so many scholars refuse to take Nietzsche seriously on this point. But to determine how shallow or misguided this assertion may be, one must determine what riddle Zarathustra intends to solve. Nietzsche is attempting to find a way to teach all humans to revere a *human* ideal, one that affirms the creative power of humans. Woman’s body is a source of her own physical creations. Teaching woman to revere her child as the new ideal prepares her to affirm a new ideal that is loyal to the earth. Bearing a child is the act that affirms the female body to the highest degree. In the child woman sees a physical manifestation of her will. If the child becomes her ideal, she serves something that was once in her body that she understands as an extension of herself. Because she cannot give birth to a child without man to fertilize her, this goal also makes her dependent on man. Her completion ties her to man and child.

Nietzsche sees pregnancy as the ultimate affirmation of woman’s body. If woman is to affirm her body, she must also affirm that man is different from her, and the root of that difference is indeed the body. Woman affirms her own body when she is faithful to man because she needs man as a means to the child. Of course man would have to be worthy of woman’s reverence for her to be fulfilled in this manner. But Zarathustra is wrong to characterize man only as a means to the child. Many women perceive men in this way, but many do not. Zarathustra is also wrong if he suggests here that all women ought to be mothers. Woman’s ability to give birth may give her a predisposition to desire a child--a predisposition that--man does not have,<sup>79</sup> but this does not make all women

<sup>79</sup>See the section entitled “Will and Willingness” in chapter 5 for a comparison of the ways in which men and women desire the child.

naturally qualified to have children. Nietzsche acknowledges this point in his speech “On Child and Marriage.” Only “the victorious one, the self-conqueror, the commander of your senses, the master of your virtues” is entitled to wish for a child (Z, 181). The child should not be sought due to loneliness or “lack of peace” with oneself (ibid.). Affirmation of the body and recognition of his radical freedom should motivate the individual to create the child.

Nietzsche’s suggestion that pregnancy is woman’s solution may have some worth since a renewed emphasis on the importance of pregnancy and children (as opposed to occupation, money, or other petty bourgeois goals) may result in the cultivation of stronger children, women, and families. This suggestion focuses on the beneficial effects that woman’s focus on children could have on the species. He sees pregnancy as the solution to woman’s degeneration because having a child provides woman with a longing for something beyond herself, but a goal that is loyal to the earth. Yet this longing might also tend to make woman more pious, looking to God or the gods, to protect her child.<sup>80</sup> Her heightened love of the child may make her utterly aware of her vulnerability, which may awaken her desire for (divine) protection. Nietzsche also suggests that woman ought to be pious and this suggestion may be due to the fact that she is the bearer of children. Nietzsche argues that “a woman without piety” would “seem utterly obnoxious and ridiculous to a profound and godless man” (BGE, 239). Nietzsche does not indicate toward what woman ought to be pious, but the direction of his project indicates that woman is to be dedicated to the *Übermensch*. Having the child can help to cultivate this pious dedication in her. Pregnancy maintains her femininity, but also cultivates a passionate spiritedness. Having a child also forces woman to recognize a difference (between herself, her child, and others) and encourages an egoistic love of herself and the child. The desire to become pregnant gives her a predilection for a strong man--the type of man Nietzsche hopes to cultivate.

<sup>80</sup>Plato explicitly makes this point in *The Laws* (cf. Plato, 1980, 418b).

Nietzsche does not articulate whether man's ability to be childlike or woman's ability to understand the child is a more valuable quality. With respect to *creating* the Übermensch, *both* are needed. Man's childlike quality demonstrates the kinship he has with the Übermensch. Man, more than woman, works with the seriousness that a child exhibits while playing. But woman (as mother) has a better understanding of what is needed to unleash that childlike quality. Woman has the ability to set the groundwork for the Übermensch to come about. Zarathustra's point, it seems, is that woman is quite capable of *giving birth to* this extraordinary type.

This means that woman may not be capable of becoming the Übermensch herself. Nietzsche does not expect that a woman could become the Übermensch. Indeed, he never refers to woman or any specific woman as superhuman. Instead, Nietzsche, Napoleon, Zarathustra, and the shepherd from "On the Vision and the Riddle" (Z, 271-272)--all of whom display some superhuman traits--are male. Yet both the shepherd and Zarathustra are fictional characters whom Nietzsche never specifically calls the Übermensch. In fact, nowhere does Zarathustra command man to *become* the Übermensch, nor does he command any individual man to become the Übermensch. Nor does Zarathustra say to man, "Let your hope be: May I beget the overman!" Rather, he tells Man to fight wars *on behalf of* the Übermensch and adds that the commands are to come from Zarathustra rather than themselves. Zarathustra does not define man in terms of his procreative capacity. He instead gives man the following command; "Your nobility should be obedience. Your very commanding should be an obeying. To a good warrior 'thou shalt' sounds more agreeable than 'I will.' And everything you like you should first let yourself be commanded to do" (Z, 160). Men will be warriors who fight so that the Übermensch may one day live, which means that they are not Übermenschen themselves. So it is still not at all clear that the Übermensch must be a male since man is to live a "life of obedience and war" (ibid.).

Man's role in the preparation for the Übermensch is to fight wars, the likes of which have never been seen before. A "real man," we are told, seeks danger (Z, 178).

Man's greater physical strength in comparison to woman explains why Zarathustra asserts that "Man should be educated for war" (ibid.). Man imposes himself on the world by trying to alter the world. Man's physical strength also makes him more naturally suited to inflict physical suffering. And Nietzsche describes this ability to inflict suffering as a trait of greatness.

*What belongs to greatness.--Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and the will to inflict great suffering? Being able to suffer is the least thing; weak women and even slaves often achieve virtuosity in that. But not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering--that is great, that belongs to greatness (GS, 325).*

Man's physical courage may make him more able to be the *Übermensch*. Though it is certainly possible to have a leader who is physically weak, Nietzsche seems correct to say that a physical courage may be mimicked in the soul as a psychological courage to command (oneself or others).

Woman's biology also provides reasons why she would not be the best warrior. In addition to her physical weakness and small size, the fact that woman gives birth may give her a natural antipathy to war just as it makes her antipathetic to science. Because she has the unique ability to form life in her body, woman may be more likely to see mere life as a precious gift that ought not be destroyed. This does not mean that she could not learn to love war, but her body does incline her away from an ardent love of violence and war. If she would be less likely to feel an exhilaration and delight in war, she may serve better in another role. Woman should instead be educated for the recreation of the warrior. Furthermore, she should be man's dangerous plaything. Though Zarathustra's tone again appears to be condescending and demeaning, some sense can be made of the argument when considered in light of woman's antipathy to such pursuits.

Like woman, the *Übermensch* also knows how to seduce and seem. Consider the description of the "genius of the heart":

The genius of the heart, as that great concealed one possesses it, the tempter god and born piper of consciences whose voice knows how to descend into the netherworld of every soul; who does not say a word or cast a glance



in which there is no consideration and ulterior enticement; whose mastery includes the knowledge of how to seem--not what he is but what is to those who follow him one *more* constraint to press ever closer to him in order to follow him ever more inwardly and thoroughly--the genius of the heart who silences all that is loud and self-satisfied, teaching it to listen; who smooths rough souls and lets them taste a new desire--to lie still as a mirror, that the deep sky may mirror itself in them--the genius of the heart who teaches the doltish and rash hand to hesitate and reach out more delicately; who guesses the concealed and forgotten treasure, the drop of graciousness and sweet spirituality under dim and thick ice, and is a divining rod for every grain of gold that has long lain buried in the dungeon of much mud and sand; the genius of the heart from whose touch everyone walks away richer, not having received grace and surprised, not as blessed and oppressed by alien goods, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown at and sounded out by a thawing wind, perhaps more unsure, tenderer, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no name, full of new will and currents, full of new dissatisfaction and undertows--- (BGE, 295).

This description incorporates the feminine qualities that Nietzsche attaches to woman, including seduction, secrecy, and deception. When Zarathustra asserts that woman understands children better than man does (Z, 178), he is referring to this ability to provide the appearance that is needed by others. Woman has an uncanny ability to decipher what is needed in others and to create the illusions needed. The *Übermensch* possesses the feminine ability to create life-affirming hopes and illusions. Nietzsche also suggests that the genius of the heart is more beautiful than others. Although Nietzsche laments the fact, woman is the more beautiful sex of the human species (GS, 72).

Kaufmann suggests that the genius of the heart is Socrates, who obviously is a male (BGE, 295, n. 43). It should be noted, however, that Socrates was notoriously ugly. Despite his physical flaws, an individual man, namely Socrates, is able to acquire the requisite feminine traits. The next question is whether a woman could acquire the necessary courage, self-mastery, and strength to become the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche envisions the possibility of a woman embodying his ideal. Here Nietzsche imagines the perfect female master:

A deep and powerful alto voice of the kind one sometimes hears in the theater can suddenly raise the curtain upon possibilities in which we usually do not believe. All at once we believe that somewhere in the world there could be women with lofty, heroic, and royal souls, capable of and ready for grandiose responses, resolutions, and sacrifices, capable of and ready

for rule over men because in them the best elements of man apart from his sex have become an incarnate ideal. The intention of the theater, to be sure, is not at all that such voices should create this notion of women; what they are supposed to represent is usually the ideal male lover such as Romeo. But to judge by my experience, the theater regularly miscalculates at this point, as does the composer who expects that kind of effect from such a voice. Such lovers are unconvincing: such voices always retain some motherly and housewifely coloration--most of all when they make one think of love (GS, 70).

Nietzsche admits that he typically does not believe in women who are capable of ruling over men. But the beauty of an alto voice can conjure such an image--a woman who is a combination of the best feminine qualities with the best masculine qualities. Two aspects of the woman he envisions are motherly and housewifely coloration. This focus is consistent with Zarathustra's solution of pregnancy to the riddle that is woman; the perfect woman is motherly and housewifely. He does not state the masculine qualities of such a woman, but he likely means the traditional manly qualities of courage, resolve, command, and an ability to fight. Though he does not name a woman *Übermensch*, he imagines this as a possible ideal.

Nietzsche stresses, though, that woman may be less likely than man to understand herself as the goal--as a potential *Übermensch*. This may make her less likely to be an *Übermensch*. Woman's greater connection to mere life inclines her toward democratic and Christian moralities. Her compassion for mere life may make her unable to stand seeing others suffer. However, having a child could be a cure to this as well. Her passionate love of her own child may make her most willing to inflict suffering on others, that is, anyone who dares threaten the child.

Nietzsche suggests that the proper reading of him will spawn opposition. That Nietzsche does not expect there to be a female *Übermensch* does not mean that woman could not prove him wrong. Therefore, the *Übermensch* will either be a male with the most praiseworthy feminine attributes or a female who has attained masculine attributes. Since Nietzsche relegates woman to a secondary role, it is most likely that the *Übermensch* will be a man (with feminine attributes), though Nietzsche does not rule out the possibility

that the Übermensch could be a woman (with masculine attributes). “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” (Z, 199). The creator-mother gives birth to children (ideas) who in their innocence produce (or are the impetus for the creation of) new ideals themselves.

## CHAPTER 5: WILL TO POWER

### Why the Übermensch Must Be Willed

Feminists like Tirrell, Lorraine, and Singer incorrectly interpret the will to power as the will to the empowerment of woman. Their particular misreading results from the failure to recognize the purpose Nietzsche attaches to the will to power. For example, Singer incorrectly concludes that Nietzsche's "emphasis on the power of individuals to create themselves through a process of commitment and will offers one road past an essentialist conception of masculinity and femininity, and its reproduction as an arbitrary system of privilege in both the social and philosophical spheres" (Singer, 185). But this interpretation is cloaked in Singer's feminist ideals. Nietzsche does not encourage every individual to follow the path of the creator, but only the tiniest minority will be able to accomplish the greatest transcendence. As a means of preparing humanity for the Übermensch, Nietzsche understands his will to power doctrine to encourage the promotion of the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine as distinct types. In fact, Nietzsche promotes separate masculine and feminine wills in order to institute the very system of privilege and hierarchy that Singer hopes to abolish.

Nietzsche teaches that active willing by human beings is the only possible means of creating the horizon of the future. Men and women must learn to conceive of themselves in a new way--they must learn that their fundamental drive is the will to power. Zarathustra teaches his disciples to will *in a new way*. "A new will I teach men: to *will* this way which man has walked blindly, and to affirm it, and no longer to sneak away from it like the sick and decaying" (Z, 144). Humans must acknowledge and affirm the will to power as the root of human action. Regardless of whether the sexes have different ways of willing from one another, both man and woman must believe that "life itself is *will to power*" (BGE, 13) because willing is *the* means of actualizing the Übermensch. Triumphant over nihilism requires initially, the proper understanding of the meaning of God's death (i.e., Nietzsche's transvaluation); second, an acceptance of the new human goal (the

Übermensch) as the light of the future; and third, the *means* of achieving that goal, that is, knowledge of how to will creatively.

As with the Übermensch teaching, one does well to remember the context in which Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) presents the will to power, the specific audience he teaches, and what his intentions as a teacher might be. The will to power doctrine is *Nietzsche's* proposition and, as such, does not, nor does it claim to, have the status of a traditional truth (of course, no "truth" can have such a status in light of the death of God). The will to power doctrine appears in *Zarathustra* but the doctrine occupies a central role in Nietzsche's later works as well. Unlike the Übermensch teaching which Zarathustra initially tries to teach the multitude (but later only to brothers), Zarathustra presents the will to power doctrine, not to the masses, but to his brothers and comrades. Though the will to power describes the basic condition of all living things, neither Nietzsche nor Zarathustra addresses the teaching to all life, or even all human beings. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche presents the doctrine to those who share similar experiences with him, i.e., "we free spirits," "we good Europeans," and "we scholars." Nietzsche hopes this doctrine will enable individuals to overcome philosophy, religion, and modern science. But he also presents a simplified explanation of life (as the will to power) to see if that explanation has the power to improve humanity (BGE, 24).

### **What is the Will to Power?**

Nietzsche teaches that the will to power is the origin of all moralities, ideals, mistakes, and triumphs. Humans have failed to recognize the will to power as the fundamental drive of Man and the root of all organic functions until Nietzsche reveals it as such. The will to power teaching reveals that individual wills are the only possible foundation for goals, ideals, or gods. These moralities, ideals, and gods originally served the purpose of preserving humans: "Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself--he alone created a meaning

for things, a human meaning” (Z, 171). Because different ideals are conducive to the preservation of different types of individuals, a thousand different “truths” have been created so far. No divine entity created morality, purpose, or meaning for humanity--various human beings did. This means that even philosophy, the so-called “will to truth,” is nothing but a form of the will to power according to Nietzsche (WP, 583; BGE, 3, 9). Human life as it exists is really the unconscious creation of a few (male) geniuses who transformed human nature (and the world) without realizing they were doing it.

Nietzsche teaches the will to power doctrine in order to turn humans away from what they are becoming. As an explanation for all human action, the entire purpose of teaching the will to power doctrine is to transform human beings--men and women. In order to achieve this transformation, Nietzsche teaches that all previous philosophers misunderstood themselves, human beings, and life in general. Without being aware of it, these philosophers (as well as priests, scholars, scientists, etc...) were actually exerting their will to power, attempting to master the world by interpreting it in a variety of ways. All philosophers “want to create the world before which [they] can kneel: that is [their] ultimate hope and intoxication” (Z, 225). Nietzsche teaches that the root of all philosophic thought, and, even the most rational conceptual thinking, is nothing more than an instinct, a guess, or a hunch. Philosophers necessarily interpret the world in a way that served their own physiological or psychological needs. Philosophy “always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the ‘creation of the world,’ to the *causa prima*” (BGE, 9). Philosophers do not want simply to understand the world, but to invent the world. Prior to Nietzsche, philosophers incorrectly thought that they had an innate drive for knowledge, a drive to uncover the “true world,” a fixed essence, an objective truth about reality (WP, 593). Nevertheless, Nietzsche teaches, they really tyrannized nature, unconsciously made nature bend to their will, to their belief that all beings should be thinkable (Z, 225). Nietzsche, too, is a philosopher and as such he is not an exception to this rule. But

Nietzsche recognizes himself as a fundamentally different species of philosopher because he is the first to acknowledge the will to power as the source of ideals.

Nietzsche's will to power teaching seems on the surface to be just as life-denying as the historicists' revelation that all truth is historically conditioned. There is no fixed standard above individual human wills by which to judge one set of ideas against the next. There are as many wills as there are people--and no way to judge among their perspectives. Nietzsche, however, intends the will to power doctrine (in the context of the death of God and the eternal return of the same) to free Man, to liberate Man from his "bondage under Purpose" (Z, 278). The recognition that "no 'eternal will' wills" (Z, 278) frees Man to determine his own destiny. This is not to say that all human beings are (or should be) the creators of ideals, nor does it mean that creating ideals is the only way to express one's will. Nietzsche means that humans are responsible for all of the accomplishments that they falsely attributed to divine gods.

With his introduction of the will to power as the basic motivation of all human action, Nietzsche is creatively reinterpreting history. When considering what gods are through the lens of the will to power, they come to light as nothing more than false ideals and mistakes made by humans. Since Nietzsche is the creator of the will to power doctrine (i.e., he has "discovered" the will to power), one may view him as the first consciously artistic philosopher who transcends all false ideals. According to Nietzsche, Man must become aware of the will to power because Man's failure to understand himself properly created all forms of the ascetic ideal. Zarathustra commands, "what you have called world, that shall be created only by you: your reason, your image, your will, your love shall thus be realized" (Z, 198). By making the will to power conscious, Nietzsche presents to humans the means of creating a new human goal. Awareness of the will to power fundamentally alters human nature--both male and female natures. An individual who recognizes this power is fundamentally different than one who turns outside of himself to find meaning in life. In other words, a human who wills unconsciously has a different

*nature* than a human who wills creatively. A human who understands himself to be essentially will to power is a different type of being than a human who has never learned of the will. By teaching humans to will consciously, Nietzsche unleashes a great creative potential in Man to reinvent himself.

Once Nietzsche reveals the root of morality, new philosophers must exert the will in ways it has never been exerted before. New philosophers will also be “*commanders and legislators*” (BGE, 203) who create “the yoke for the thousand necks,” the goal for humanity that justifies the past--the *Übermensch* (Z, 172). But the fact that man and woman have separate roles in the creating of the *Übermensch* begs the question of whether they *will* in fundamentally different ways from one another. In other words, is a fixed distinction between a masculine and feminine will the reason why Nietzsche insists on preserving these two wills? If human beings are not-yet-determined, it is possible to alter man and woman. As already noted, there is no necessary reason why the new philosopher ought to maintain separate roles for man and woman unless his subjective will deems it preferable. Nietzsche’s desire to maintain distinct male and female wills initially appears as nothing more than his subjective preference, for all human choices are subjective preferences. Examining the respective instincts of man and woman and the corresponding relationship between will to power and instinct helps explain the need for sexual duality.

### **The Relation Between Will to Power and Instinct**

The will to power is an expression for a process, a striving that cannot be understood in isolation from the individual who wills. Nietzsche translates all organic functions back to the will to power; this form of the will is the explanation for everything that Man (as well as all other life) does. Heidegger deciphers no difference between “will” and “will to power” in Nietzsche. He asks, “What does ‘will’ mean? What does ‘will to power’ mean? For Nietzsche these two questions are but one. For in his view will is nothing else than will to power, and power nothing else than the essence of will. Hence, will to power is will to will, which is to say, willing is self-willing” (Heidegger, I: 37).



But Heidegger's thesis is not entirely correct. Nietzsche's thesis posits "our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will--namely, of the will to power" in order to "find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment" (BGE, 36). Nietzsche suggests that there is more than one form of the will; he traces all of our instincts back to *one form of the will*. The passage suggests that there may be other forms of the will, though he does not enumerate them here. Elsewhere he mentions other forms of the will--the "will to truth" (Z, 227), the "will to ignorance" (BGE, 24, 59), the "basic will of the spirit" (BGE, 230), the "will to stupidity" (BGE, 107), the "will to the denial of life" (BGE, 259), and he also speaks of a "double will" (Z, 254). He hopes to demonstrate that it is possible to understand all of these forms of the will and all of our drives in terms of the will to power--the delight and striving for an increase in the feeling of power.

The will to power is not an instinct itself, but the *development and ramification of our instinctive life*. Willing is connected to the instincts because humans will what their instincts propel them to will. Nietzsche describes the will to power as the *development of* our instinctive life because our instincts developed the ability to will consciously. It is now possible for humans to become consciously willing beings. Which instincts will develop over time no longer has to be based on chance; now the human will can determine the direction the instincts will develop. Nietzsche also describes the will to power also as the *ramification of* our instinctive life. The ability to will consciously is the consequence of the current development of the human instincts. The current direction of human instincts is led by sick individuals, but new philosophers can decide to develop the instincts in a different direction. The new philosophers creatively will so that Man can incorporate different habituations into human instincts.

With the will to power doctrine, Nietzsche teaches humans to rely on the wisdom of the instincts: "'instinct' is of all the kinds of intelligence that have been discovered so far--the most intelligent" (BGE 218). In particular, Nietzsche reminds Man to rely on the wild,

playful, “self-enjoying” instincts like sex, the lust to rule, and selfishness (cf. Z, 299-303). Nietzsche offers a comprehensive understanding of the power of the instincts by explaining; “by far the greater part of conscious thinking must still be included among instinctive activities, and that goes even for philosophical thinking” (BGE 3). Nietzsche intends the will to power to explain all human behavior, even instincts that contradict one another. Most notably, Nietzsche teaches that reason is not the opposite of instinct, but merely one interpretation of the world that the instincts produce.<sup>81</sup> And because it is only one interpretation among many, a rational interpretation does not necessarily warrant a privileged status over other types of interpretation. Ironically, Nietzsche challenges the faith in reason in order to teach humans to rely on the instincts, yet the crucial type of willing for Man is the willing of ideas and ideals--an act necessarily linked to his reasoning capacity (BGE, 285). But this is no inconsistency since the instincts drive the thoughts. Nietzsche notes the typical “misunderstanding of passion and reason, as if the latter were an independent entity and not rather a system of relations between various passions and desires; and as if every passion did not possess its quantum of reason--” (WP, 387). The instincts even animate the philosopher, as Nietzsche explains: “most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts” (BGE, 3). Reason is a tool of the will that enables Man to act upon or to sublimate his passions. Nietzsche is not simply hostile to reason, but he attacks the faith in reason alone, the insistence on rationality at any price (cf. TI, 478). Nietzsche places a renewed emphasis on instinct and passion as opposed to theoretical reasoning.

### **The Masculine and The Feminine Drive**

Instincts can conflict with one another, so the order of rank of the instincts determines what the individual wills. The difference between wills is the order of rank of

<sup>81</sup>This teaching is similar to Hobbes’ teaching that reason has no power to decide what is good; instead, the passions decide. Reason does not control the passions; it serves them by sending out scouts and spies to attain what the passions desire (Hobbes, 139). Reason is not the opposite of passions, but a tool of them. Man will even use his reason to develop moralities that serve the passions.

the instincts. But man and woman have different instincts from one another. While both man and woman have an instinct to procreate, due to their different reproductive capabilities, this instinct takes a different form in man than it does in woman. Man and woman desire sex in different ways as well. The woman is well aware that sex can result in pregnancy, while the man does not have to concern himself with the result to the same degree. At the very least, man has an instinct to beget or not to beget, while woman has an instinct to give birth or not to give birth. Birth control does alter the influence of the possibility of pregnancy to a degree, but woman is still generally more mindful than the man of this possible result. Their respective instincts shape their relationship with one another and with other human beings. Since man and woman have different *instincts*, Nietzsche's definition of the will to power as the development and ramification of the instincts implies that man and woman have different *wills*. And since they have different wills, the perfection of man would be different than the perfection of woman.

Furthermore, Zarathustra describes the will to power as "the unexhausted procreative will of life" (Z, 226). By describing the will as *procreative* rather than *creative*, Nietzsche suggests that there are two fundamental wills of life--a masculine and a feminine one. Together, the respective wills of man and woman procreate. In other words, the choice of the term "procreative" indicates that there is a masculine type of willing that is distinct from the feminine type of willing. Nietzsche suggests that life needs both types of creativity or there will be no procreation--physically or metaphorically.

Willing means a desire to cause a change. A dissatisfaction (with oneself, with others, with conditions) often provides the spark to will. To corroborate the suggestion that Nietzsche conceives of a separate feminine will from a masculine one, Nietzsche speaks of two types of dissatisfaction (that impel one to will)--a quasi feminine type that consists of primarily feminine qualities and a masculine type that consists of primarily masculine qualities.

The weak and quasi feminine type of the dissatisfied has a sensitivity for making life more beautiful and profound; the strong or masculine type, to

stick to this metaphor, has a sensitivity for making life better and safer. The former type manifests its weakness and femininity by gladly being deceived occasionally and settling for a little intoxication and effusive enthusiasm, although it can never be satisfied altogether and suffers from the incurability of its dissatisfaction. Moreover, this type promotes all those who know how to provide opiates and narcotic consolations, and it resents all who esteem physicians above priests: thus it assures the *continuation* of real misery. If this type had not been superabundant in Europe since the Middle Ages, the celebrated European capacity for constant *change* might never have come into existence, for the requirements of the strong among the dissatisfied are too crude and at bottom so undemanding that eventually they can surely be brought to rest (GS, 24).

Dissatisfaction (in particular, contempt) can animate an individual's will. Dissatisfaction with oneself (or others) can lead to corruption or it can enable the individual to transcend himself. In his description of the quasi feminine type, Nietzsche argues that the more physically beautiful sex has a (feminine) inclination to enhance life by attempting to beautify it. Woman is biologically suited to this role; this is the proper development of the quasi feminine dissatisfaction. Due to man's greater physical strength (relative to woman), the proper development of masculine dissatisfaction is to strive to make life better and safer. Man's biology makes him more suitable as a protector and warrior.

The initial impression of this passage is that Nietzsche castigates the quasi feminine type because it is weak while he hopes to promote the masculine type because it is strong. But both of these inclinations have the possibility of serving descending life.

China, for example, is a country in which large-scale dissatisfaction and the capacity for *change* have become extinct centuries ago; and the socialists and state idolaters of Europe with their measures for making life better and safer might easily establish in Europe, too, Chinese conditions and a Chinese "happiness," if only they could first extirpate the sicklier, tenderer, more feminine dissatisfaction and romanticism that at present are still superabundant here. Europe is sick but owes the utmost gratitude to her incurability and to the eternal changes in her affliction: these constantly new conditions and these no less constantly new dangers, pains, and media of information have finally generated an intellectual irritability that almost amounts to genius and is in any case the mother of all genius (GS, 24).

The masculine type of dissatisfaction settles for nothing more than comfort and complacency without the presence of the opposing quasi feminine dissatisfaction. The quasi feminine type is desirable as the foundation for the strong masculine type that Nietzsche hopes to cultivate. Thus, the quasi feminine dissatisfaction is necessary, though

not necessarily noble or praiseworthy on its own. The inability of the quasi feminine type to be satisfied can create new dangers and pains that animate the masculine type of dissatisfaction. The masculine type of dissatisfaction may lead to the production of the last man (i.e., shallow complacency) without the challenge of the quasi feminine type. The tension produced by these two types of dissatisfaction has the potential to produce genius, with which Nietzsche is most concerned. Nietzsche also associates the quasi feminine type with the “celebrated European capacity for constant change.” The capacity for change is desirable and necessary as one must alter oneself in order to deal with the problems of one’s time. This trait Nietzsche recognizes in himself in his poem “From High Mountains”<sup>82</sup> where he states that “One has to change to stay akin to me.” Nietzsche’s own character, like the character of the contemplative type, maintains a quasi feminine character.<sup>83</sup>

Nietzsche uses the term “quasi feminine” instead of “feminine” type to describe the contemplative. In other words, he notes a masculine type of dissatisfaction and a only a *quasi* feminine one. What could the feminine type of dissatisfaction look like? Perhaps the genuinely feminine dissatisfaction results from a longing of the female body. The feminine type of dissatisfaction manifests itself in its longing to produce beauty physically through the birth process. The quasi feminine type of dissatisfaction seeks to beautify the world through certain types of consoling illusions. Only a woman could experience feminine dissatisfaction, while Nietzsche and other contemplatives only approximate her physical longing.

### **Life as the Will to Power**

Nietzsche says that all life is will to power, not just human life. Life is “*essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness,

<sup>82</sup>This poem can be found at the end of the text of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

<sup>83</sup>Kaufmann also makes this argument in n. 22 on p. 99 of his translation of *The Gay Science*.

imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation" (BGE, 259). This seems to eliminate the distinction among types, for what motivates the lion also drives the tree, and the human. But notice the Nietzsche italicizes the word "essentially." Life may be more complex than Nietzsche's characterization here. Nietzsche's most definitive statement about the will to power occurs in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength--life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*" (BGE, 13). Although self-preservation is an instinct of life, the inclination to preserve oneself is not the primary drive in organisms. One's inclination to accumulate and discharge one's strength is the most fundamental drive of life. All organisms crave the feeling of increased strength and exhilaration. Life is choiceworthy as a prerequisite for the exercise of the will but it is the feeling of power that makes life desirable. Zarathustra's wild wisdom says to him, "You will, you want, you love--that is the only reason why you *praise* life" (Z, 220). In this passage Zarathustra indicates that his love of willing and striving are deeper than his love of life.<sup>84</sup> Zarathustra's love of life is certainly not a love of all life indiscriminately. Nor does he love mere life, but life as struggling to increase the exhilaration of power. The last man, in contrast, exists merely to exist comfortably.

The will to power is characteristic of Man, animals, and all living organisms; in fact, "there is no other physical, dynamic or psychic force except this" (WP, 688). So the will to power is a comprehensive phenomenon (it explains all actions) and a universal one as well (it is applicable to all living things). This characterization seems to rule out distinction among different types of beings and categories. But Nietzsche's will does distinguish between different types--between Man and the other animals and between man

<sup>84</sup>But Zarathustra seems to deny his love of life as a prerequisite for willing when he explains later, "Deeply I love only life--and verily, most of all when I hate life. But that I am well disposed toward wisdom, and often too well, that is because she reminds me so much of life" (Z, 221). Now this is not Zarathustra's final word on the subject, but he indicates that he has a love of life over a love of wisdom and perhaps a love of life above all else. But this speech also occurs before Zarathustra offers his full articulation of the will to power (Z, 225-228; cf. BGE 9, 19, 230, 231). The exchange here indicates the difficulty Zarathustra has articulating the relationship between willing and living.

and woman. The distinction is not that some will while others do not because living things will what their instincts impel them to will. The *order of rank* of those instincts distinguishes one individual from the next. Human beings are different from animals because they can be (or become) cognizant of the fact that they will, and this cognizance opens up great opportunities for Man. Only human beings can *choose* what to will, which goals to pursue.

Although Nietzsche's characterization of all life as will to power makes some sense, one wonders whether animals actually experience a feeling of power, let alone blades of grass. Much of Nietzsche's description of willing and what it means for a living thing to will applies only to humans. Nietzsche argues that "it is only in intellectual beings that pleasure, displeasure, and will are to be found; the vast majority of organisms has nothing of the sort" (GS, 127). Animals do not strive to transcend themselves, nor do they love, philosophize, or create gods. The commonality between animal and human wills is a type of striving, a spiritedness, and a desire to grow. Every living thing continually strives to become more than it is already. Biology and instinct determine the direction in which plants and animals develop. But humans can transcend their physical limitations and their instincts, at least to a degree. Yet the intimate connection between will and instinct also suggests that humans cannot *completely* transcend their drives.

Zarathustra describes life as "*that which must always overcome itself*" (Z, 227). To live does not mean to rest, or to be content, safe, or satisfied. Willing means affecting a change, striving to leave an imprint on the world, pushing against opposing forces, wanting to be different. Zarathustra explains how life as will to power always seeks to overcome itself: "Whatever I create and however much I love it--soon I must oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it." (Z, 227). Just as an individual achieves a goal (accumulates a certain sum of power), the individual strives to go beyond what he has just achieved. One transcends oneself by seeking that which is weak and alien to oneself and striving to suppress it. "Life is not the adaptation of inner circumstances to outer ones, but

will to power, which, working from within, incorporates and subdues more and more of that which is 'outside'" (WP, 681). And because man and woman have different bodies, this means that they will experience an accumulation of power in different objects. What is "alien" to a female body may not be "alien" to a male body. Living means seeking out things or people over which one can establish dominion and thus accumulate power. And this means that one must do "to other bodies what [one]...refrain[s] from doing to [oneself]. ...striv[ing] to grow, spread, seize, become predominant--not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power" (BGE, 259). By mastering more and more of what is alien to oneself, one experiences a feeling of exhilaration and enhances one's strength. Their different physiologies may mean that they seek dominion in different ways from one another. However, this description of the will to power seems to affirm the masculine will (as a powerful physicality) more strongly than the feminine will.

Willing sounds like "wanting"; however, Nietzsche clarifies that willing "is not 'desiring,' striving, demanding: it is distinguished from these by the affect of commanding. There is no such thing as 'willing,' but only a willing *something*: one must not remove the aim from the total condition--as epistemologists do" (WP, 668). Willing is indistinguishable from that which is willed, the goal toward which the organism strives. What an individual wills depends on the type of person that individual is, the physiological needs of that individual. The term "will to power" tempts one to conclude that *power* is the end goal common to all living things. But Nietzsche is not saying that humans conceptualize "power" as a goal and devise different means of attaining it. Humans create goals because the will to power impels them to do so. The will to power does not originate in a feeling of a lack that needs to be filled by "power"; the will is better understood as an internal striving to be more than one already is. An organism may feel an accumulation of power by fixing on a variety of goals, i.e., "power" can mean a variety of things (cf. Hobbes, 150-160). By suggesting that the masculine will and the feminine will are



different from one another, Nietzsche suggests that power means something different to woman than it does to man. To try to understand willing apart from its goal or apart from the body that is its source is to misunderstand the will.

### **Commanding and Obeying**

The will to power always manifests itself in commanding and obeying. Zarathustra explains: “Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master (Z, 226). It is possible to experience an accumulation of power even in heeding the commands of others. In submitting to the stronger force, the weaker individuals assert their power over those who are weaker still. For example, a physically weak individual may even experience an empowerment by submitting to another. Consider the child who submits to the father. The child’s submission is an exertion of the will to power because the child envisions one weaker than himself over whom he can establish dominion. Nietzsche explains:

That the weaker should serve the stronger, to that it is persuaded by its own will, which would be master over what is weaker still: this is the one pleasure it does not want to renounce. And as the smaller yields to the greater that it may have pleasure and power over the smallest, thus even the greatest still yields, and for the sake of power risks life. That is the yielding of the greatest: it is hazard and danger and casting dice for death (Z, 226-227).

The weak do not submit to the strong out of a fear of death or a desire to preserve life, but primarily due to an internal striving for the feeling of strength. The term “weak” does not necessarily refer to physical weakness, but weakness of the will. It is not uncommon for a physically strong individual to submit to a physically weak one (cf. BGE, 21). The fact that women as a sex are generally physically weaker than men does not necessarily indicate that women will always obey men. It is quite possible for a male to submit to a female, just as it is quite possible for a parent to submit to their physically weaker child.

All willing requires some type of submission since willing is *simultaneously* a commanding and obeying. Nietzsche clarifies this idea by explaining that each individual is “at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying [party], and as the obeying party we

know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion” (BGE, 19). Within each human being there are drives that push against one another struggling to tyrannize the others. What distinguishes one human being from another is the order of their instincts (cf. BGE, 6). When the individual heeds a command from the outside or from one of his drives, all of the other drives obey at that moment. So every will to power is a duality, a commanding and obeying, although “we are accustomed to disregard this duality” (BGE, 19).

Additionally, willing can be directed inward or outward (that is, it can be passive or active). When an individual is incapable of commanding himself, others will command him. Commanding is more difficult than obeying; therefore, there will always be a few extraordinary individuals who create the values that the others obey. The many lack the courage to command themselves. There has always been “a great many people who obeyed, compared with the small number of those commanding” (BGE, 199). But these creators of ideals are disappearing from the human race.

The will to power is an egoistic type of striving that originates in one’s love of self. This is why Zarathustra teaches that one “must learn to love oneself...with a wholesome and healthy love, so that one can bear to be with oneself and need not roam” (Z, 305). Even what has been understood to be a sacrifice (for another, for an ideal, etc.) is actually an attempt by an individual to achieve mastery. Self-love impels one to make so-called sacrifices. For example, one sacrifices one’s life for one’s country because of the belief that one will be rewarded in the afterlife. The individual seeks mastery over death by “sacrificing” his life. Both weak and strong individuals will; however, a weak individual (a slave) will experience strength through submission while a strong individual (a master) experiences strength by commanding. Similarly, a feminine will experiences the accumulation of power differently than a masculine will does. In a woman the feminine drives rule, while in a man the masculine drives rule. Different individuals also experience different degrees of tension in their souls.

## Ressentiment and Willing

Nietzsche describes the history of the West as the history of the creation of nihilistic values which promote a weak, sick type of life, a weak type of will. Just as there are two types of wills, there are two types of moralities produced by those wills: “There are *master morality* and *slave morality*” (BGE, 260). The slave revolt in morality begins when those who are weak (physically, morally, and psychologically) declare life to be unfair. Since they lack the strength to affirm war, chaos, cruelty, slavery and struggle as necessary parts of life, they declare those things sins. The motivation of the slaves is resentment, which “becomes creative and gives birth to values” (GM I:10). Because they lack the courage and strength (of body and soul) to react in a physical way against their enemies (by fighting, enslaving, or killing them), slaves attempt to enslave all others to their valuation. Nietzsche explains;

While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside,” what is “different,” what is “not itself”; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye--this *need* to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself--is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all--its action is fundamentally reaction (GM I: 10).

Because they feel cheated by life, they create perfect ideals outside of this world. They hope these ideals will justify their suffering. The fact that Nietzsche intends to maintain both the master and slave and the masculine and feminine dichotomies suggests a relationship between the two. One wonders if the weaker sex necessarily relies on the same type of reactive measure as the slave. To determine the relationship between the two dichotomies, further consideration of the difference between master and slave morality is required.

The difference between master and slave morality is not that one is creative while the other is not; both masters and slaves create. Masters are different from slaves because masters love and affirm themselves through their spontaneous creation. Slaves create because they cannot affirm themselves. While slaves may be creative, they are essentially

reactive, sneaky, and sly. Their instinct to preserve themselves impels them to reject those who are strong. They demand that strength “should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs” (GM I:13). Rather than create spontaneously of themselves, they react to external stimuli. Slave morality springs from and supports sick life. Those who cannot accept the real nature of the world (its lack of purpose, its malleability, its immorality) are characterized by ressentiment. Christianity is the result of the creativity of slaves; in fact, ressentiment has been the most creative force so far. Nietzsche sees the history of the West as the history of the replacement of master morality with slave morality. The two aspects of slave morality that have become instinct in man are compassion and herd morality. The ascetic ideal is the result of ressentiment and its cunning will to create. But humans cannot rely on ressentiment any longer. The only direction ressentiment has left to go is toward the complete acceptance of nihilism.

Nietzsche is not unambiguously hostile toward slaves, slave morality, and the slave revolt. Slaves are praiseworthy because their loyalty to the masters is needed. Slaves are necessary, for there would be no masters if the masses were not slavish. Nietzsche’s insistence on maintaining the sexual dichotomy may relate to this phenomenon. Perhaps Nietzsche wishes to keep woman “in her place,” i.e., uneducated and relegated to the private sphere, in order to allow males to be masterful. In other words, the purpose of maintaining sexual dichotomy could be to perpetuate the superiority of males over females. If this is the case, females take the role of the slaves while males take the role of the masters. After all, woman’s role is secondary to man’s. If Nietzsche understands woman’s role to be praiseworthy only insofar as she serves as inspiration for men, she may simply be a slave in Nietzsche’s view. But this is an oversimplification because the mass majority of *males and females* are slaves. Most human beings are to be servants to the Übermensch. Since a correlation between “woman” and “slave” is not self-evident, it is necessary to determine if woman herself benefits from Nietzsche’s maintenance of sexual

dichotomy. Is woman an essentially submissive and reactive being or does the sexual dichotomy serve to enhance her own accumulation (or feeling of) power? Nietzsche suggests that the sexual dichotomy (and the corresponding role he prescribes to woman) benefits not only man, but woman as well. Indeed, the human species as a whole benefits from this dichotomy. Although he prescribes a secondary role for woman, this role is *not* essentially a submissive and reactive role.

### **Will and Willingness**

Since all willing is a commanding and obeying, most scholars have assumed that women (who are feminine) live the life of obedience (slaves), while men (who are masculine) live the life of the commanding master. For example, in reference to Zarathustra's speech "On Old and Young Little Women," Lorraine voices this typical reaction to Nietzsche's anti-democratic prescriptions: "In Zarathustra's ranking of rule and obedience, it would seem that women, simply by virtue of being women, are fit only for obeying" (Lorraine, 1998, 121). One must consider, however, whether the drives that Nietzsche considers to be feminine are essentially submissive and reactive, while the masculine drives are commanding and self-affirming. Lorraine's assessment that woman is a slave *by virtue of the fact that she is a woman* cannot be correct for at least two reasons. First, what constitutes "woman as such" can be transformed. Women (and men, for that matter) can be bred to be strong or weak. Nietzsche insists that defeminized women are weaker and more slavish than feminine women, and these feminine women may in fact not be slavish at all. Second, because all willing is simultaneously a commanding and obeying, it cannot be the case that women are *simply* obedient. All humans command and obey simultaneously (BGE, 19). As a physically stronger type than woman, man may have a predilection for commanding other humans, but this does not necessarily mean that man more than woman affirms himself through commanding others.

A close examination of aphorisms 60-75 of *The Gay Science* can help demonstrate that "woman" is not simply synonymous with "slave." Although this work precedes

*Zarathustra*, this section is consistent with the separate roles he ascribes to man and woman in his later works. This section on women opens with a consideration of the topic of nature:

*We artists.*--When we love a woman, we easily conceive a hatred for nature on account of all the repulsive natural functions to which every woman is subject. We prefer not to think of all this; but when our soul touches on these matters for once, it shrugs as it were and looks contemptuously at nature: we feel insulted; nature seems to encroach on our possessions, and with the profanest hands at that. Then we refuse to pay any heed to physiology and decree secretly: "I want to hear nothing about the fact that a human being is something more than *soul and form*." "The human being under the skin" is for all lovers a horror and unthinkable, a blasphemy against God and love (GS, 59).

Woman's natural functions ought to be hidden or veiled because artists consider those functions to be repugnant. Nietzsche includes himself in this group of artists in love who are repulsed by the sight of woman's natural functions. A couple of possible reasons come to mind why loving artists hate the natural functions to which every woman is subject. First, these functions (labor pain, menstruation, hot flashes, menopause, and various other bodily functions), though natural, are not simply beautiful or desirable in themselves. Second, the artist is not necessarily a philosopher or knowledge-seeker. The artist may not adequately (and may not wish to) understand those functions or the power those natural functions have over woman. He is in love with the illusion, with the idea of woman that he wants to mold as his own possession. Nietzsche continues; "We artists! We ignore what is natural. We are moonstruck and God-struck. We wander, still as death, unwearied, on heights that we do not see as heights but as plains, as our safety" (GS, 59). Initially this repulsion and desire to ignore nature seems to be inconsistent with Nietzsche's renewed emphasis on the importance of the body and physiology. But this inconsistency can be resolved by realizing that the above passage was written by the pen of Nietzsche *as artist* (one aspect of his personality) rather than as a philosopher of the future. Nietzsche surely considers himself to be more than just an artist, but creativity is an essential trait of the philosopher of the future. Moreover, that he recognizes the importance of the body does not mean that all physiological functions must be beautiful to Nietzsche. He can recognize

their necessity without embracing them as beautiful goals. Nor does Nietzsche simply consider women to be ugly, just as he does not consider the truth to be simply ugly. The complete denial or the attempt to eradicate woman's natural functions (and man's) would constitute a further uglification of the human species. Humanity moves a step closer to "*The greatest danger*"<sup>85</sup> by failing to recognize the differences between the sexes (GS, 76).

If Nietzsche understands woman to be an essentially resentful creature, one would expect woman to view her own body as a prison that she wants to flee. But Nietzsche suggests that women actually can use their biology to enhance their strength. He explains this in aphorism 66 which is entitled "*The strength of the weak*":

All women are subtle in exaggerating their weaknesses; they are inventive when it comes to weaknesses in order to appear as utterly fragile ornaments who are hurt even by a speck of dust. Their existence is supposed to make men feel clumsy, and guilty on that score. Thus they defend themselves against the strong and "the law of the jungle" (GS, 66).

Because Nietzsche describes women as weak and manipulative, the tone of this aphorism seems to reflect a hatred of women. However, a closer analysis reveals another possibility. By exaggerating their weaknesses, by making men believe that they are weaker than they actually are, women enhance their strength. Nietzsche describes this as a quality of *all* women. Although he does not specify whether these weaknesses are physical, moral, psychological, or political, Nietzsche most likely refers to woman's physical weakness and apparent fragility relative to man. Nietzsche counsels woman to convince man "that woman must be maintained, taken care of, protected, and indulged like a more delicate, strangely wild, and often pleasant domestic animal" (BGE, 239). And when man is able to perceive woman as this delicate flower, he respects her and will likely be afraid to hurt or otherwise corrupt her. In short, he will *serve* her. If woman can convince man that she needs him, he will want to protect and stay loyal to her and also their future children.

But not all women are physically weaker than all men. Nietzsche therefore seems

<sup>85</sup>Appropriately, the aphorism that follows this cluster of aphorisms on woman is titled "*The greatest danger*" (GS, 76).

to exaggerate when he states that *all* woman have this ability to exaggerate their weaknesses. This generalization may indicate, however, that Nietzsche is referring to more than mere physical weaknesses. Moreover, Nietzsche does not specify that woman exaggerates the ways in which she is weaker *than man*, but rather makes the more general statement that she exaggerates her weaknesses. He argues that whatever particular weakness a woman may have, she has a keen ability to exaggerate it. Woman makes others (especially men) bend to her will (i.e., achieve mastery over men) by appearing to be weaker than she actually is. Exaggerating her weaknesses does not make woman submissive to man, but conversely is more likely to make man serve and protect her. However, one may imagine that such an exaggeration of women's weaknesses would likely perpetuate the idea that women are weaker than they in fact are. Paradoxically, Nietzsche teaches that it is in woman's interest to promote the belief that she is weak.

Whereas Nietzsche is correct that this type of manipulation may be a useful tool, many women today refuse to put on such airs. Instead they prefer to be seen as equal to man. But their refusal to use manipulative tools does not undermine the plausibility of Nietzsche's assertion that a physically weaker sex may need to find ways to achieve strength and power in a non-physical way. Nietzsche would argue that today's high divorce and child abandonment rate is, in part, due to woman's refusal to make man feel as a needed protector. Nietzsche suggests that woman would have more power over men if she continued to exaggerate her weaknesses instead of trying to exaggerate her strengths. When women use their bodies to exaggerate their weaknesses, they actually affirm their bodies and exert a strength of the feminine will. And perhaps more importantly from Nietzsche's perspective, this art enables man to affirm his own masculinity as well.

Woman's clever defense is surely sneaky and sly, but Nietzsche does not say that it is necessarily motivated by resentment. Whether or not this cleverness is slavish depends upon the goal of the individual woman. Whereas all *women* exaggerate their weaknesses, not all women are *sick* women. *Sick* women may be the most vengeful creatures possible,



but this does not mean that all women are motivated by resentment. Nietzsche describes the human of resentment:

The man [human] of *resentiment* is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself. His soul *squints*; his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert entices him as *his* world, *his* security, *his* refreshment; he understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble. A race of such men of *resentiment* is bound to become eventually *cleverer* than any noble race; it will also honor cleverness to a far greater degree: namely, as a condition of existence of the first importance; while with noble men cleverness can easily acquire a subtle flavor of luxury and subtlety (GM I: 10).

The slave demands that strength “should not express itself as strength, that it should not be a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs,” (GM I:13). The slave believes that the strong should pay retribution for their strength. Slave morality is a celebration of weakness by the weak and is created out of resentment against the strong, noble, and beautiful. What the masters embody and call good, the slaves call evil and sinful.

Woman’s exaggerating her weaknesses is not necessarily a denial that the strong should be strong, nor does it necessarily imply a woman’s dishonesty with herself. The slave says strength is bad simply. The situation that Nietzsche describes here is a bit different. The slave does not say, “I can be crushed like a speck of dust.” The slave insists that all crushing is bad and creates laws and universal rights to support this assessment. Women who exaggerate their weaknesses are not saying that domination simply is bad. They say, “Serve me because I’m fragile, beautiful, and delicate.” Woman’s exaggerating her weaknesses and calling for man to protect her leaves open the possibility that man can be strong. It is compatible to say “don’t crush me,” as woman does, but crush some other individual or another society or group. Pretending to be fragile and vulnerable calls man to be strong and manly. Man’s protection of woman is compatible with the crushing of other groups. More slavish would be for woman to deny the fact that women are physically weaker, to redefine physical weakness. Using her physical weakness to her advantage is an affirmation of woman’s body. She invents a way to use her body in a way that makes

men bow to her whims. In so doing she develops “a subtle flavor of luxury and subtlety” (GM I: 10). Woman would need to have a strong will to get man to react in the way she desires. Of course, she would also need a measure of beauty (like an ornament (GS, 66)) to be able to seduce man. Perhaps women who lack both physical strength and beauty would have the likelihood of becoming resentful. Nietzsche seems to suggest that without physical strength, the woman needs beauty, subtlety, and fragility. The implication may be that without beauty, woman has few or no tools left. Cleverness without the subtlety and seduction of beauty would need to be quite insidious to achieve any power over man.

Nietzsche suggests in the next aphorism that women are weaker than men in a way other than merely physically--her will is reactive to man's. As Nietzsche states, “Someone took a youth to a sage and said: ‘Look, he is being corrupted by women.’ The sage shook his head and smiled. ‘It is men,’ said he, ‘that corrupt women; and all the failings of women should be atoned by and improved in men. For it is man who creates for himself the image of woman, and woman forms herself according to this image’” (GS, 68). Men corrupt women with the education they give women. Nietzsche suggests that men take the more active role in determining how men and women are molded. Women simply accommodate themselves to the role that men prescribe to them. The sage continues; “Will is the manner of men; willingness that of women. That is the law of the sexes--truly, a hard law for women” (GS, 68). This is similar to Zarathustra's assertion that woman is submissive to man's will. Zarathustra declares; “The happiness of man is: I will. The happiness of woman is: he wills” (Z, 179). Zarathustra likely means that woman is happy when *her man* wills, not when *any* man wills. Her happiness depends, it seems, on her taking an obedient role. Woman's will is excited when man exercises his masculine power. He suggests that woman is characterized by willingness to follow man's will instead of her own self-affirming will; somehow woman feels an accumulation of power when her man wills. By this, Nietzsche suggests that woman actually prefers man to establish dominion, perhaps over her. But Nietzsche does not mean that woman does not

will, for all life is will to power.

In the same speech, a little old woman advises Zarathustra; “You are going to women [Frauen]? Do not forget the whip!” (Z, 179). Consistent with the above suggestion, the little old woman suggests that women prefer men to hold the physical power (the whip). Women like manly men who are strong enough to “keep them in their place,” to whip them into submission. He also may mean that men *need a whip* to keep woman in line *or* that woman should want man to be capable of putting her in her place (as his servant?). Man needs a whip because he is no longer strong enough on his own to inspire fear in others. The notorious whip comment does not necessarily mean that woman is simply man’s slave, since the speech does not clarify who is to wield the whip.<sup>86</sup> After all, Nietzsche posed in a picture with Reé and Salomé in which Lou holds the whip. This portrait indicates that woman may well be the possessor of the whip. Woman may be dangerous to man because he may never know when she might pull out a whip against him. Some women may be capable of wielding the whip against man, while others are not. Nietzsche suggests that even those women who might be capable of possessing the whip, should exaggerate their weaknesses in order to make men believe that they (women) occupy a subordinate role. For the others, man is the possessor of the whip. Nietzsche suggests that women are more womanly when they take the role of a reactor to man’s will.

Nietzsche describes this secondary role as “a hard law for women” because man’s active willing shapes the kind of being that woman becomes. Moreover, when man fails to be strong, woman is harmed as well. Woman’s fulfillment and power is connected to man’s being a real man. But man cannot feel manly if he knows that he is dominated by woman, or anyone else, for that matter. Woman is dependent upon man’s active willing for her completeness and man’s fulfillment is dependent upon woman’s affirmation of his willing. To say that all women are masochistic is a gross exaggeration and generalization,

<sup>86</sup>Carol Diethe also correctly notes that Nietzsche does not identify who possesses the whip (Diethe, 63-66).

yet Nietzsche makes a serious point with this assertion. Women prefer strong men (of body, soul, and/or spirit) to weak men. And though there are exceptions, this statement seems to be accurate.

But it is difficult to determine who initially creates the image that molds woman. Although Nietzsche suggest that all women mold themselves according to an image that man presents to them, not all women do--however much men would like to *think* that they have this power over women. Indeed, it might actually have been women who created this image in their efforts to mold their men according to their respective ideals of man. For example, the chivalrous notion of woman as an object of perfection worth fighting and dying for, may have been an image that man created. But woman could have easily planted in man the notion that she is a delicate creature in need of his protection. There are reasons to believe that woman may have wanted man to view her this way. For if he does, he might treat her with more respect, gentleness, and devotion. And as we have seen, the desires for protection or respect or admiration are reasons why woman may *exaggerate* her weaknesses. Determining who planted the seed first would be quite difficult, if not impossible to determine. The question of who constructed the current image of women is not decisive for Nietzsche anyway. Nietzsche is concerned with the qualities that one should cultivate in woman *now*. He intends to breed the qualities that are conducive to the cultivation of an ascending type of woman (who actively wills) instead of a degenerating one (who wills reactively). He insists that woman should have the secondary role, but in Nietzsche's view, this does not mean that she is a weak slave, but that she is a stronger woman in this role.<sup>87</sup> Still, Nietzsche does consider the male role, his own role, to be the more choiceworthy position of the two.

If men are responsible for the corruption of woman, or if women come to believe that they are, one would expect women to be full of resentment. Nevertheless, the

<sup>87</sup>This point is consistent with my rejection of Lorraine's criticism that remaining faithful to man forces woman to deny herself. See pp. 127-128 above.

manner in which women defend themselves against men is not necessarily motivated out of resentment. Women need to have a method of defense if man holds an image of woman that she could not (or refuses to) fulfill. It is no surprise that the manner in which woman defends or avenges herself is by constructing an image that creates in man a need for her.

Nietzsche explains:

If someone cannot defend himself and therefore does not want to, we do not consider this a disgrace; but we have little respect for anyone who lacks both the capacity and the good will for revenge--regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. Would a woman be able to hold us (or, as they say, "enthrall" us) if we did not consider it quite possible that under certain circumstances she could wield a dagger (any kind of dagger) *against us*? Or against herself--which in certain cases would be a crueler revenge (Chinese revenge) (GS, 69).

Woman, it appears, is not really slavish at all but is quite capable of defending herself and gaining revenge against man. She has the power to inflict the most cruel revenge of all on men--taking herself away from him. The fact that Nietzsche understands this as the cruelest revenge means that man very deeply wants and/or needs woman. Women are amazing in that they appear to be submissive and weak, but they actually hold a great deal of power over men. They "enthrall" men. And because of this power, they have a great ability to master men. This ability to enthrall men does not appear to be the quality of a slavish woman. A slave is an individual who wants revenge but lacks the resolve to instigate it. Nietzsche places most humans in this category. As indicated here, woman's delight in man's active willing does not necessarily indicate a rejection of her own will or a denial of her own strengths.

Next, <sup>88</sup> Nietzsche examines the riddle of female chastity (GS, 71). Woman's paradoxical situation is that she is supposed to be modest and ignorant regarding sex, yet her existence is to a great degree determined by the fact that she will one day have (or fail to have) a child. Nietzsche suggests that her ignorance of sexual matters can lead to a great disappointment on her wedding night. He argues that women "need children and wish for

<sup>88</sup>I have skipped the previous aphorism which is appropriately titled "*Women who master the masters*" (GS, 70). This aphorism has already been discussed in chapter 4.

them in a way that is altogether different from that in which a man may wish for children” (GS, 71). Men and women seek children for different reasons. Nietzsche does not outline the reasons why women’s need for children is more fundamental than man’s, but given his focus on the wisdom of the body, one can surmise that the disparity in their needs for children emanates from their bodily differences. And because woman’s desire for children stems from her body, the desire itself is not necessarily motivated by resentment; this desire can be an egoistic affirmation of her own body. However, a disenchantment with sex or love may make a woman resentful (just as it might do the same to a man). But the failure (or inability) to satisfy this need to produce offspring can make woman’s resentment much deeper than man’s since her need for the child runs deeper.

In the same passage (GS, 71), Nietzsche asserts that women “easily experience their husbands as a question mark concerning their honor, and their children as an apology or atonement.” He suggests that the deeper need and desire women have for children is as a compensation or excuse for their pathetic husbands. Women do not feel that their husbands are worthy of themselves or society. Nietzsche may be correct to note that some women seek a child to compensate for their slavish husbands, yet this is not the primary reason that most women want children. Many women want children simply because they *can* have them. Women may understand the birth process as the ultimate affirmation of herself. They may further consider this ability as evidence of female superiority over men. This type of a desire for the child would not be a slavish or resentful motivation. Women may also consider the child as a way to beautify their own individual lives or life generally. But perhaps the most serious reason women want the child or children, which Nietzsche does not discuss, is to gain a piece of immortality, for mothers believe that a piece of them lives on in the child. Nietzsche is correct to note that women see in their children a reflection of their own honor, but to suggest that having children is merely an excuse for their husbands is reductionistic. Nietzsche also does not explain the way in which men wish for children, but he asserts that the male desire for offspring is different. In this

aphorism, Nietzsche overlooks the fact that both woman and man seek immortality in their children. The desire to imprint one's will (on others, on the world), i.e., the will to power, would be Nietzsche's answer to the desire for immortality.

Appropriately, the next section discusses the different ways that mothers and fathers love, which may explain the manner in which men wish for the child. One might expect man's posture toward the child to be potentially more resentful than woman's. He has no choice but to watch the birth process from the sidelines. In fact, Nietzsche's own description of the natural functions of woman as repulsive may in part be motivated by resentment. However, it could also be the case that his inability to bear children would necessarily foster a weak desire to do so in man, or at least much weaker desire than woman's. If this is the case, man would not be jealous of woman's capability. In either case, man's view of woman is shaped by his view of pregnancy, which is something that his body is not capable of experiencing. Nietzsche suggests that man does not put as high an estimation on the ability to bear children as animals do. Nietzsche explains, "Animals do not think about females as men do; they consider the female the productive being" (GS, 72). Nietzsche asserts that in a given species one sex is productive while the other is beautiful, and animals<sup>89</sup> consider females to be productive and males to be beautiful. The inference is that the opposite is the case in the human species. Woman is the more beautiful sex, but man is the more productive one. Nietzsche asserts that generally "woman would not have the genius for finery if she did not have an instinct for a *secondary* role" (BGE, 145). Woman's physical weakness and beauty gives woman an instinct for a secondary role in the public realm.

According to Nietzsche, men do not consider women to be productive beings; men consider themselves as the producers. Nietzsche means that man is (and should be considered to be) more productive in the industrial, military, social and political realms.

<sup>89</sup>Actually, *humans* (instead of animals) view female animals as the productive beings and males as the beautiful ones. *Animals* likely do not categorize themselves as beautiful *or* productive--these are *human* categories.

Although women today make up almost half of the work force, to a great degree, men still consider themselves to be more productive than women. Men, Nietzsche concluded, define productivity in terms of the public realm. Men would note that women still take longer maternity leave and focus on children to a greater degree than career. Indeed, society considers males to be more productive despite the fact that more and more women choose to have a career *and* to raise children. Evidence of the continued stereotype is the fact that traditional female occupations (like nurses, day care workers, secretaries, etc.) have a lower status and lower income than traditional male occupations.

Women are not less productive in the public realm than men. In fact, women actually outnumber the number of males in college (Hoff Sommers, 14).<sup>90</sup> And if women outnumber men in college, it is entirely possible that they will eventually outnumber men on the job market, perhaps eventually outnumber men in the most prestigious occupations. Yet even if woman maintained the traditional role of mother as Nietzsche counsels, this would not make her less productive than man if one considers that raising children properly requires a great amount of skill, time, patience, and wisdom. In other words, one could question whether the private realm truly is of secondary importance. Domesticity is secondary when measured by the standard of publicity, but this need not undermine its significance or its difficulty. Indeed, it is difficult to measure the greatness of Napoleon's mother in comparison to the greatness of Napoleon whom she created. There would be no Napoleon without Napoleon's mom. Certainly giving birth to children and raising them is as demanding as working in the public realm, yet society tends to demote the importance of this role, so much so that as women enter the work force, less and less care is given to the question of who will raise the children.

Perhaps man has traditionally sought to be productive in the public sphere in order to compensate for the fact that he does not give birth and he is not the beautiful sex.

<sup>90</sup>Hoff Sommers notes that in 1997, full-time college enrollments were 55 percent female and 45 percent male. The U.S. Department of Education predicts that the ratio of boys' entering college will continue to decrease over time.



Paternal love does not exist among them; merely something like love for the children of a beloved and a kind of getting used to them. The females find in their children satisfaction for their desire to dominate, a possession, an occupation, something that is wholly intelligible to them and can be chattered with: the sum of all this is what mother love is; it is to be compared with an artist's love for his work. Pregnancy has made women kinder, more patient, more timid, more pleased to submit; and just so does spiritual pregnancy produce the character of the contemplative type, which is closely related to the feminine character: it consists of male mothers. -- Among animals the male sex is considered the beautiful sex (GS, 72).

This passage suggests that man's desire for the child may be weaker than woman's. The weakened desire for the child (relative to woman's desire) impels him to imprint his will on the world through his work rather than through his children. Before Nietzsche suggested that creative females could exist (GS, 70). Certainly many women have become scholars, scientists, artists, and writers. Yet here he implies that only men are contemplative; only men are philosophers (male mothers). Indeed, this role may have been taken by man due to the fact that he takes a secondary role and has a weaker desire than woman to partake in the rearing of children. And the great *noble* philosophers, far from being full of resentment, have affirmed themselves through their master moralities.

Nietzsche understands this production (willing) of noble ideals (i.e., master moralities, not human beings) to be the greatest human events. So far this task has been the exclusive domain of the most extraordinary males (who also possess the most praiseworthy feminine qualities). Initially, one might understand Nietzsche's praise of metaphorical birth as superior to physical birth to be the perspective of a man who resents the fact that he cannot bear children. Furthermore, one might understand the creation of ideas itself to be the result of man's revenge against the fact that he cannot bear children. Man must *settle* for metaphorical birth and metaphorical children of his own. But not all moralities are slave moralities; not all moralities are created out of resentment. And the genius of the greatest philosophers (creators of master morality) enabled them to transcend resentment. Their ability to give birth metaphorically to ideas, ideals, and moralities can also be understood as the affirmation of the male body. These men are responsible for creating the most life-affirming noble moralities. While will to power characterizes women

as well, thus far women have not exercised their will through the creation of values. That these values originate in the male will is not an insignificant fact. The greatest males seek to tyrannize the world by creating the gods before which they will kneel. But woman seeks mastery as well since all life is will to power. Both man and woman continually seek to transcend themselves by making the world bend to their respective wills. This means that woman may be able to create values (or ideals or gods) even though she is not inclined to do so. The fact that males have been the only creators of values so far does not mean that males will *always* be the creator of values, though this is likely the case in Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche therefore implies that man should be considered the more beautiful sex, for he has given humans ideals to revere.

Since women have not created values, one might conclude that woman is more slavish, that is, more inclined to obey than man. Women devote themselves to the ideals created by male philosophers. The reason why women have not created values is due to their instinct for a secondary role which manifests itself in the desire for the child and the desire for a manly man, according to Nietzsche. And Nietzsche prescribes the maintenance of this role for woman. But a *secondary* role is not synonymous with a *submissive*, *passive*, or *slavish* role of obedience. Woman's body gives her a potential means of fulfilling her creative impulse; she can leave an imprint on the world by giving birth to and rearing of children. Rearing children is creative because a woman can change the world by the type of child she produces. Nietzsche compares a woman's love of her child with the artist's love of his painting: "The females find in their children satisfaction for their desire to dominate, a possession, an occupation, something that is wholly intelligible to them and can be chattered with: the sum of all this is what mother love is; it is to be compared with an artist's love for his work" (GS, 72). By teaching her child how to think, by stamping the child with her own ideas and goals, by imprinting her own will upon the child, woman molds the child's character. If this creative outlet is intrinsically fulfilling to most women, dedication to some pursuit ideal outside of herself would be unlikely. But a woman who

fears she will never experience the feeling of being a mother, or believe that they would be incompetent or unhappy as a mother, may turn to such a pursuit.

Nietzsche asserts that underneath woman's refined surface lies a wild, changeable, mysterious beast (cf. BGE, 238; Z, 220). All women are not slaves, nor do all women possess an innate inclination to be obedient to men. Nietzsche is quite aware that there have been women rulers, but these are not in the same category as the creators of values. Though Nietzsche chooses not to use women rulers as his examples for his ideal of the *Übermensch*, an individual female will is not necessarily more submissive than an individual male will. Woman can master others by giving birth to children who become the rulers, philosophers, and future creators. Woman can master men by exaggerating her weaknesses and by seducing him with her beauty. Now these suggestions may sound distasteful, but if all life wants power, then this is praiseworthy from Nietzsche's perspective. Though he expects that she will have, and hopes to encourage, woman's predilection for a secondary role, woman can achieve mastery over man in this role. The woman behind the man may be responsible to some extent for some of the ideals produced by men. Of course it would be difficult to provide evidence of this, because women in a secondary role may not speak openly of their strength over man.

In sum, Nietzsche's prescribing woman to a secondary role is somewhat reductionistic but does not necessarily imply that woman is essentially slavish. Women do not have to be constituted by willingness, but Nietzsche insists that this secondary role is desirable for women. Women do not necessarily reject all expressions of mastery and strength. Women prefer manly men, but when women take the primary public role, men lose their masculinity. Women suffer as a result. But Nietzsche goes even further than this. According to him, women like to *serve* manly men. Now, Nietzsche is simply wrong to imply that all women desire to serve men; however, his suggestion that women prefer to serve strong men to feeble ones is plausible. Unfortunately, he also suggests that most modern men do not fit this description.

Woman obviously does not need to be relegated to the private realm and she can quite capably fulfill other roles. Still, Nietzsche insists that woman must be in a secondary role relative to man. Nevertheless, Lorraine is incorrect to conclude from this that “One could dismiss this aspect of Zarathustra’s teaching as a cultural by-product; surely if Nietzsche had been writing now, Zarathustra would have taught something different. Surely Zarathustra would not have made a gender distinction between those who could and should attempt his path and those who shouldn’t” (Lorraine, 121). But the homogenization of the sexes and its deleterious consequences remain serious issues today. Nietzsche’s concern with maintaining the dichotomy of the sexes addresses this problem. He insists that if woman does not take this secondary role, the dichotomy of the sexes cannot be maintained. If woman does not occupy this role, she takes on man’s role and becomes more like man. Surely it would be convenient for feminists to dismiss Nietzsche’s comments here as mere “cultural by-products,” but unfortunately there is *some* truth to some of his assertions. A secondary role could mean *appearing* to be obedient, *appearing* to be modest, *appearing* to be sacrificial. Nietzsche even says that “the state of nature, the eternal war between the sexes, gives her by far the first rank” (EH, 267). Woman’s physical weakness does not make her man’s slave because a woman’s *will* may be stronger than a man’s.

### **Why Women Have Not Created Ideals, Values, or Moralities**

The source of the most debilitating values so far is resentment. In particular, the resentment of males has created the most life-denying values in all human history. Males created Christianity, liberal democracy, and all forms of asceticism. Picart wrongly associates slave revolt with feminine revolt (Picart, 145). The slave revolt in morality is perhaps better described as an effeminate or emasculated revolt. The erosion of masculinity, the lack of resolve for fighting genuine wars, led to the desire for comfort and security above all else. The manifestation of male resentment in the creation of values would seem to indicate that man is capable of a deeper type of resentment than woman.

But Nietzsche says that “In revenge and in love woman is more barbarous than man” (BGE, 139). Woman’s barbarous capacity for revenge seems to indicate a deep strength of resentment, perhaps deeper than man’s. But woman has not been the dominant creator of life-denying values. Perhaps her inability to create values out of her resentment makes her more slavish than man. Or, alternately, woman’s ability to love in a barbarous way has kept her from creating life-denying values (cf. BGE, 238). Her sense of what men need (cf. Z, 178) has kept her from creating the decadent type of modern ideals.

Woman hates in a more dangerous way than man does:

In a state of hatred women are more dangerous than men; first and foremost because, once their hostility has been aroused, they are hampered by no considerations of fairness but allow their hatred to grow undisturbed to its ultimate consequences; then because they are practiced in discovering the wounded places everyone, every party possesses and striking at them: to which end their dagger-pointed intellect renders them excellent service (whereas at the sight of wounds men become restrained and often inclined to reconciliation and generosity) (HAH I: 414).

While this description sounds discordant to liberal democratic sensibilities, for Nietzsche, an ability to transcend the rules of fairness is praiseworthy. Woman’s ability to strike like a ferocious animal is a desirable quality. A great many of modernity’s defects result from bourgeois passivity. Nietzsche holds males responsible for this widespread “wretched contentment.” Woman has been able to maintain a ferocious love and hate despite this tendency of man. Recall that Nietzsche had described woman’s capacity for revenge as much stronger and more insidious than man’s (cf. GS, 69). Woman has the capacity to defend herself against man and may be more cruel than man when seeking revenge (BGE, 139). This capacity for cruelty is one of the traits of the free, very free spirit. But, it should be noted, that woman’s deeper desire for revenge (relative to man) would also be more difficult for her to transcend.

Woman’s deeper vengefulness is one reason why Nietzsche argues that woman cannot be a friend (to other women or to men). Whether or not one can be the type of

friend that Nietzsche reveres depends upon one's will (whether it is slavish or masterful).<sup>91</sup>

Nietzsche draws a connection between slave, tyrant, and woman:

Are you a slave? Then you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? Then you cannot have friends. All-too-long have a slave and a tyrant been concealed in woman. Therefore woman is not yet capable of friendship: she knows only love.

Woman's love involves injustice and blindness against everything that she does not love. And even in the knowing love of a woman there are still assault and lightening and night alongside light.

Woman is not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats and birds. Or at best, cows.

Woman is not yet capable of friendship. But tell me, you men, who among you is capable of friendship?" (Z, 169).

Nietzsche's point is that woman is a lover; she wants man only as a lover, not as a friend.

And this desire for man makes her incapable of friendship with men and women. She is a tyrant with respect to other women and a slave to her desire for children. If woman wants man merely as a means to a child, she would see other women as competition toward that end. A childless (or barren) woman would also be resentful and envious of other women who already have the husband and child that she seeks. Nietzsche would probably say that women with children cannot be friends with women without children because of this jealousy. Women cannot be friends with men because the sexual tension (her tyrannical desire for the child) destroys the potential bonds of friendship. However a single man is certainly capable of impregnating several women. Women prefer to possess *a particular* man, *her* man, not *any* man. And given this fact, Nietzsche is wrong to say that man is merely a means to the child; she seeks the man for other reasons as well. Woman wants man's full attention, not to be one among many. Women want love and protection as well, but not friendship. Before marriage every man is viewed as a potential father, protector, and lover.

Women are notorious for being more catty (which is why Zarathustra refers to women as cats) than men in their competition for a lover and this may have some truth to it

<sup>91</sup>In *Zarathustra*, the speech "On the Friend" precedes the first mention of will to power in "On the Thousand and One Goals" (or, as it is better translated, "On the Thousand and on One Goal.")

if Nietzsche is correct that woman's deepest desire is for the child. But not all women desire children and not all women are catty. Nietzsche also does not speak about lesbians--whether they may be capable of friendship or not. Not much else needs to be said about these stereotypes. Women are certainly capable of seeing men as more than sperm donors and many women have achieved fulfilling friendships with other women and with men. However, Nietzsche is correct to imply that a friendship between a man and a woman would have very different character than a friendship between two men or two women. Nietzsche's condemnation of female friendships is really a critique of a bourgeois notion of friendship and marriage, which is merely an institutionalized shallow friendship. He leaves open the possibility that a woman might *one day* be able to be a friend--something that is not yet possible. Although Nietzsche implies that men can be true friends with one another while women cannot, he does not think that *anyone* is capable of friendship in his day.

Woman's dependency on man to beget her child may make her his slave. Bourgeois women likely resent the fact that they need a man for pregnancy (and this may explain the growing number of sperm banks nowadays). If they are supposed to be man's equal (in the workplace), they feel as if they should not need man in any respect. A genuine friend cannot be slavish or tyrannical because the wills of the individuals must be of similar strength and longing. Shallow bourgeois goals cannot be shared with another just as lovers cannot be shared. But Nietzsche's assessment of woman's inability to be friends also demonstrates his comments on women to be more than cultural by products.

Nietzsche here criticizes bourgeois woman, but his argument rests on traits that have characterized women in all historical epochs so far--her biology and the psychological consequences of that biology. To be sure, technology could alter her biology, or she could be socialized to ignore her biology altogether, but those two possibilities aside, Nietzsche's argument transcends his time.

**Woman's** resentment keeps her from being genuine friends with other women. **He says that a slave and a tyrant have been concealed in woman for too long. One day**

these may no longer be concealed and perhaps at that point woman could be a friend.

Nietzsche's understanding of the friend is something that transcends the bourgeois notions of love and friendship. He defines the friend in terms of his goal and as a means to that goal. Thus, the genuine friendship to which Nietzsche refers is born out of a thirst and striving for self-transcendence and the *Übermensch*. He explains; "Here and there on earth we may encounter a kind of continuation of love in which this possessive craving of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and lust for possession--a *shared* higher thirst for an ideal above them. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its right name is *friendship*" (GS, 14). He suspects that no woman or man has yet encountered this type of friendship, though it may one day be possible. Suffering, struggle, fighting, tension, pain, are all prerequisites for this type of friendship: "If one wants to have a friend one must also want to wage war for him: and to wage war, one must be *capable* of being an enemy" (Z, 168). Pity, the root of modern notions of friendship and neighbor love, is a sterile foundation of friendship, for pity leads to little else than comfort and security. Zarathustra preaches that "It is the good war that hallows any cause. War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of neighbor. Not your pity but your courage has so far saved the unfortunate" (Z, 159). Woman, he contends, is not capable of having this type of friendship with another woman. This friendship emanates from struggle and strife against the mutual friend/ enemy. Awareness of the strength and masterful quality of the friend engenders reverence. But Nietzsche insists that such respect is not to be eroded into a shallow self-gratification. Friends respect one another as enemies who could kill them.

Most assuredly, a sick woman (i.e., a woman with a sick will) cannot be a friend. According to Nietzsche, vengefulness is particularly pronounced in the sick woman: "no one can excel her in the wiles to dominate, oppress, and tyrannize. The sick woman spares *nothing*, living or dead; she will dig up the most deeply buried things" (GM III: 14). If woman is more vengeful and even more cruel than man in the type of revenge she seeks,



one might expect her to sublimate her vengeance through the creation of values. When she is vengeful, woman is more clever than man. In fact, Nietzsche concedes that woman is more clever than man generally (HAH I: 411). And if she is more clever than man, the sick woman would pose the greatest danger to the production of healthy noble types. The sick woman's deeper vengefulness would have to be more difficult for her to overcome than man's is. If the sick woman is more corrupted than the sickest man, perhaps if woman were able to overcome resentment she would be able to transcend herself and man. Nietzsche supports this interpretation with his assertion that the perfect woman is a higher type than the perfect man (HAH I: 377).<sup>92</sup>

### **Love as Will to Power**

According to Nietzsche, love (eros) is nothing more than a manifestation of the will to power. Two of the highest expressions of eros are philosophy ("the most spiritual will to power" (BGE, 9)) and sexual love. Will to power is similar to eros in that it involves a striving, a longing to overcome oneself. But to a large degree Nietzsche's descriptions of the will to power reduce eros to thymos, which leads to a somewhat reductionistic view of philosophy and erotic love. Thymos<sup>93</sup> is a Greek term that means an "unbeatable spirit" that enables one to protect one's own (Plato, 1991, 375a). Thymos is an egoistic defensiveness that compels one to protect oneself and one's own. But thymos can also cause one to sacrifice one's life for the sake of a cause, ideal, or goal. It is the root of anger and vengeance, the love of victory, protection of one's own, and the desire to punish. Thymos gives the patriotic man the feeling of invincibility when he courageously risks his life in battle. It is the spirit that enables the mother to protect her child in the face

<sup>92</sup>In the section entitled "Which Sex is Superior?" of concluding chapter, I examine the meaning(s) and implications of the word "perfect" in HAH I: 377. There I consider whether a perfect woman could be a female *Übermensch*.

<sup>93</sup>For an understanding of what constitutes thymos, consult the following passages from Plato's *Republic*: 375a-e, 376c, 410b, 410d, 411a-e, 435e, 436a, 439e-441c, 441e, 442c, 456a, 465a, 467e, 536c, 547e, 548c, 550b, 553c-d, 572a, 580d, 581a, 586c-d, 590b, and 606d.

of life-threatening danger. Even an animal displays thymotic spiritedness when defending its young. Consider Nietzsche's characterization of noble men who possess "a certain imprudence, perhaps a bold recklessness whether in the face of danger or of the enemy, or that enthusiastic impulsiveness in anger, love, reverence, gratitude, and revenge by which noble souls have at all times recognized one another" (GM I: 10). Nietzsche's descriptions of the will to power are quite similar to Plato's description of thymos.

### **The Will to Truth (Philosophy)**

Plato teaches that through the erotic pursuit of the "truth" one can sublimate (overcome) one's thymotic impulses. Wise individuals are not particularly thymotic according to Plato. Nietzsche considers modern degeneration to be an unfortunate consequence of this teaching. Consequently, Nietzsche describes the drive to philosophize as a thymotic passion itself--as a form of the will to power. This most spiritual activity has been the domain of males. According to Nietzsche, the philosopher is a tyrant. He does not seek to understand the world, but to make nature bend to his will; to imprint his spirit on nature itself (BGE, 9). The peak of tyrannizing the world is creating the center of the world around which it is to evolve. The philosopher is erotic in the sense that he wants to create a world, a god, or an ideal that is greater than himself. However, Nietzsche focuses on philosophy as thymotic because philosophy has become a sterile scientific pursuit. The philosopher who bends nature to his own will is to replace the sterile scholar who is a martyr to the "truth" at all costs.

Nietzsche's calls attention to the tension in the soul of the seeker after knowledge. This discussion is helpful because it clarifies the difference between the will to truth (a form of the will to power) and the will to power. The two fundamental drives of the basic will correspond to a masculine and a feminine way of willing which appear as contradictions and yet have their source in the same drive--the drive for the feeling of power and growth. The basic will which "unceasingly strives" for power or the *feeling* of increased power, is synonymous with the will to power (BGE, 229). Nietzsche explains:

That commanding something which the people call “the spirit” wants to be master in and around its own house and wants to feel that it is master; it has the will from multiplicity to simplicity, a will that ties up, tames, and is domineering and truly masterful. Its needs and capacities are so far the same as those which physiologists post for everything that lives, grows, and multiplies. The spirit’s power to appropriate the foreign stands revealed in its inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the manifold, and to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory--just as it involuntarily emphasizes certain features and lines in what is foreign, in every piece of the “external world,” retouching and falsifying the whole to suit itself. Its intent in all this is to incorporate new “experiences,” to file new things in old files--growth, in a word--or, more precisely, the *feeling* of growth, the feeling of increased power (BGE, 230).

Like all living things, the seeker after knowledge desires to impose his will on the world in order to experience the feeling of increased power. The philosopher does this by creating new explanations of the world, new truths that prescribe to nature what it ought to be. The desire for the increased feeling of power is focused on conquering what is foreign to oneself and incorporating what is outside of it. This drive encourages the individual to command (internally and externally) whatever contradicts the individual’s inclinations. This drive pushes the individual to simplify the world (explain it) in a manner that fits with his will. This means that the philosopher desires to “falsify the whole world to suit himself.” The degree to which one can incorporate new experiences distinguishes one individual from another. This description of the first drive sounds similar to the traits Nietzsche associates with a real man (the warrior who fights to conquer others for the sake of some form of power or the feeling of power).

Nietzsche then describes an opposing drive that *appears* to push the individual in an entirely different direction:

An apparently opposite drive serves this same will: a suddenly erupting decision in favor of ignorance, of deliberate exclusion, a shutting of one’s windows, an internal No to this or that thing, a refusal to let things approach, a kind of state of defense against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark, with the limiting horizon, a Yea and Amen to ignorance--all of which is necessary in proportion to a spirit’s power to appropriate, its “digestive capacity,” to speak metaphorically--and actually “the spirit” is relatively most similar to a stomach.

Here belongs also the occasional will of the spirit to let itself be deceived, perhaps with a capricious intimation of the fact that such and such is *not* the case, that one merely accepts such and such a delight in all uncertainty and ambiguity, a jubilant self-enjoyment in the arbitrary

narrowness and secrecy of some nook, in the all too near, in the foreground, in what is enlarged, diminished, displaced, beautified, a self-enjoyment in the caprice of all these expressions of power.

Here belongs also, finally, that by no means unproblematic readiness of the spirit to deceive other spirits and to dissimulate in front of them, that continual urge and surge of a creative, form-giving, changeable force: in this spirit enjoys the multiplicity and craftiness of its masks, it also enjoys the feeling of its security behind them: after all, it is surely its Protean arts that defend and conceal it best (ibid.).

This latter drive to illusion is only “*apparently* opposite” to the former. Surprisingly, even the seeker after knowledge seeks refuge in ignorance, illusion, and a limiting horizon. The latter drive, a “kind of state of defense against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark, with the limiting horizon,” is opposite in the sense that it contradicts the first drive “ties up, tames, and is domineering and truly masterful.” The first drive pushes the individual to take in new experiences through the lens of his will to power. This latter drive encourages the individual to close his eyes to much of the text of the world, much that is knowable. These two drives are only *apparently* opposite to one another because both are manifestations of the will to power.

The forms of power that animate this second drive are deception, craftiness, and multiplicity. These are the traits that Nietzsche identifies with femininity. According to Nietzsche, the “readiness of the spirit to deceive other spirits” is feminine, yet the contemplative type, the male mother, also exhibits this trait. The satisfaction with the limiting horizon which is the precondition for health is also a feminine trait in Nietzsche’s view. Also the enjoyment in the craftiness of masks with the feminine. In fact, Zarathustra suggests that woman is nothing but these masks: “Surface is the disposition of woman: a mobile, stormy film over shallow water” (Z, 179). But if masks help make life beautiful one might expect Nietzsche to praise her instead of insisting her soul is shallow. This seems to be an unwarranted criticism of woman. Obviously women are not, by virtue of being women, shallow.

One drive impels the seeker after knowledge to cling to the illusions necessary for *life* (the feminine side), while the other impels him to search for ideals above Man to

impose order on the world (the masculine side). The philosophers of the future will also experience the constant struggle and tension in the soul between the feminine drive that impels toward loving life and the masculine drive that seeks to conquer life and make it as profound as his will imagines it could be. In discussing the origin of values Zarathustra explains; “Good and evil have always been created by *lovers* and *creators*. The fire of love glows in the names of all the virtues, and the fire of wrath” (Z, 172, emphasis added). Which method of creating (exerting the will to power) is more valuable cannot be estimated. He continues; “For from the depths one loves only one’s child [the creation of woman] and work [the creation of man]; and where there is great love of oneself it is the sign of pregnancy: thus I found it to be” (Z, 273). Woman (as the lover) has a different role than man (as the creator) has in the origin of values. Zarathustra must preserve both types of creating (willing): “Thus I want man and woman: the one fit for war, the other fit to give birth, but *both fit to dance with head and limbs*” (Z, 322, emphasis added). Both types of individuals (lovers and creators) and types of willing (the masculine and feminine types) are prerequisites of the creation of the Übermensch. Without the two types, the will lacks the agitation that is necessary to spark creativity, fighting, and struggle. The last man, by contrast, is characterized by the absence of any strong desire for or against knowledge, beauty, or profundity.

### **Sexual love**

Sexual love is also a manifestation of the will to power. The importance of the body makes sexual differentiation one of the most obvious and crucial expressions of the will to power. Consider the sex act itself. Each party commands and obeys at the same time. Additionally, at the peak of the sex act, each individual forgets or loses himself, but at the same time, affirms himself. Each individual enjoys the loss of his individuality in the union, but simultaneously each individual asserts himself over the other. Although the experience is common to an extent, one can never share one’s body completely with another. One party will never experience the same exact sensations as the other. Just as

the philosopher seeks world mastery, the lover seeks to dominate the beloved, to possess the beloved, to make the beloved completely submit to his will. Nietzsche explains:

Sexual love betrays itself most clearly as a lust for possession: the lover desires unconditional and sole possession of the person for whom he longs; he desires equally unconditional power over the soul and over the body of the beloved; he alone wants to be loved and desires to live and rule in the other soul as supreme and supremely desirable (GS, 14).

Nietzsche asks; “Has my definition of love been heard? It is the only one worthy of a philosopher. Love--in its means, war; at bottom, the deadly hatred of the sexes” (EH, 267). Love is a battle, a struggle between two wills--each seeking mastery. This is why love and hatred are so closely related to one another. Both are expressions of the desire for dominance.

Nietzsche offers a simplified explanation of erotic love and philosophy in order to eliminate all other dualities. Love and hate are not opposites, but different manifestations of the same will. He explains; “Avarice and love: what different feelings these two terms evoke! Nevertheless it could be the same instinct that has two names” (GS, 14). All actions are essentially the same in that they are animated by the will to power. Nietzsche focuses on the thymotic aspect of love because this egoistic element of love is dying. He states, “love as *passion*...simply must be of noble origin” (BGE, 260, end). As an expression of the will to power, love is essentially egoistic, not selfless, sterile, or directed towards everyone equally. Nietzsche describes the lover:

[H]e alone wants to be loved and desires to live and rule in the other soul as supreme and supremely desirable. If one considers that this means nothing less than *excluding* the whole world from a precious good, from happiness and enjoyment; ...the lover aims at the impoverishment and deprivation of all competitors and would like to become the dragon guarding his golden hoard as the most inconsiderate and selfish of all “conquerors” and exploiters (GS, 14)

When in love, the lover experiences the most egoistic of all emotions. The (male) lover actually strives to possess the beloved exclusively and completely. Love is “the most ingenious expression of egoism” (ibid.) because it masks itself as self-sacrifice. Nietzsche teaches that love is nothing but the desire for the “impoverishment and deprivation of all

competitors” for the sake of the lover’s lust being fulfilled (ibid.). This is why “love of *one* is barbarism; for it is exercised at the expense of all others” (BGE, 67). Such single-minded devotion cannot be shared with everyone universally. The lover denies all others’ ability to share in the precious beloved. And since possession means “changing something new into ourselves” this means that the lover seeks to make the beloved like himself. The desire to spread one’s own influence animates the lover.

And, according to Nietzsche, even parental love is a manifestation of the thymotic desire to dominate others (cf. GS, 72; BGE, 194). Nietzsche explains that the “tremendous importance the individual accords to the sexual instinct is not a result of its importance for the species, but arises because procreation is the real achievement of the individual and consequently his highest interest, his highest expression of power (not judged from the consciousness but from the center of the whole individuation)” (WP, 680). Giving birth to and begetting the child is an expression of the will to power. Parents attempt to stamp the child with their own virtues. But often having a child achieves precisely the opposite; the child can actually make one feel quite powerless. Because the child has his own will, the parent may not be able to shape the child. The desire for power alone does not explain the attachment of a parent to the child.

Because this doctrine can explain both love and philosophy, the will to power characterizes more types of activities than any previous theory. The will to power can explain previous ideas and ideals, but those ideas cannot account for the will to power. However, Nietzsche’s descriptions of love and philosophy seem somewhat reductionistic. Real love is more than a thirst to possess another. His description of friendship sounds closer to a true, meaningful love than his description of the love between man and woman--an eternally hostile war. Nietzsche attributes much of what is involved in an erotic attachment to thymotic impulses. The will to power originates in an egoistic self-love which expresses itself in a conquest of the world and of human beings. Many of Nietzsche’s descriptions of the will to power miss the erotic component of the

**philosopher's love of the truth. He admits that in the philosopher there is a great deal of erotic tension, but many of his descriptions of the will to power do not fully capture this aspect of the philosopher. Nietzsche's description of the genius of the heart, however, does involve an erotic element, more so than his descriptions of the will to power. Nietzsche's genius of the heart is more than an individual who seeks to conquer the world; he is characterized by an erotic quality and nobility.**

Although the will to power may adequately describe much of what is involved in the love conquest, Nietzsche's description misses a some of the dimensions of love. Nietzsche's description completely misses the pleasure and fun involved in love and sex. Any pleasure involved in love seems insignificant to Nietzsche. Certainly there is a struggle of wills involved in the capturing and the keeping of the beloved. But love is more than a thymotic chase and struggle. If the desire for power were the only root of the great love affairs, it is difficult to see what is so desirable about the emotion of love. Why do human beings attach themselves to one another if power is the only thing they want? Moreover, if woman is simply a lying, clever, vindictive creature, it is difficult to see why man should be so enthralled by her. Nietzsche does not explain the attraction between the sexes completely. Nietzsche describes love as a painful, difficult battle of the wills. In fact, sex, women, and marriage are distractions from which the most authentic individuals abstain (cf. GM III: 7). Woman may actually be a distraction to man's pursuing more sublime goals.

Nietzsche also does not discuss whether man could be inspiration for man and women for women, nor does he address the possibility of the mutual attraction of man to man and woman to woman. Also surprisingly absent is any discussion of homosexuality. Nietzsche's will to power theory does not account for the sexual instinct or the love homosexuals experience. Because homosexuality cannot produce the child, the sex act is not a means to the child. Nor does homosexuality appear to be a means to the end of empowerment. Without including the possibility of homosexual love in his explanation of



love, his will to power theory is incomplete. Nevertheless, the will to power doctrine does go a great distance in describing human activity. Perhaps Nietzsche focuses on the thymotic aspect of the will to power because he finds it necessary to rebuild a kind of thymos in humans to combat the passivity of bourgeois man. Furthermore, the relationship between thymos and eros is a complicated one. It may be necessary to strengthen thymos before any hope of a deeper eros could arise. However, in his effort to reinvigorate man, Nietzsche offers a somewhat limited description of erotic love.

### **The Relationship Between the Body and Will**

Biology is not the sole basis on which Nietzsche distinguishes the wills of man and woman. Nietzsche also distinguishes high (ascending) and low (descending) types of humans, that is, masters (who are noble and healthy) and slaves (who are weak or sick). The difference between a master and a slave cannot be reduced to biological determinism. Masters feel an accumulation of power in commanding while a slave will feel more power through serving others. The distinction between masters and slaves introduces the same difficulty that the differentiation between man and woman does. Nietzsche seems to utilize a fixed standard; namely, "nature," to distinguish between master and slave wills and to differentiate masculine and feminine wills. If Nietzsche submits to such a standard, the Nietzschean system may be simply one more metaphysical system as Heidegger contended.

The will to power teaching provides the means to create the *Übermensch*; however, this doctrine alone does not provide Nietzsche with a means of transcending nihilism. The will to power as an explanation of all human activity does not answer the question of *why* one should will or *what* one should will. The doctrine merely attempts to explain what humans do. The will to power, along with the *Übermensch*, present an alternative to the life of the last man. Now Nietzsche must justify why one must choose the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche cannot transcend nihilism without some fixity or a solid foundation for this goal. He must maintain the distinction between high and low, masters and slaves, and man and woman because such distinctions help create conditions that are conducive to the

Übermensch's being willed. Nietzsche must still provide a reason to will--a reason to will the Übermensch instead of willing nothing. If all the permanent is merely a parable, there is no necessary reason why anyone should bother to will at all. Nietzsche's elaboration of the eternal recurrence of the same completes the Nietzschean project. Indeed, the eternal return of the same explains why Nietzsche sees the Übermensch as the only choiceworthy future. The eternal recurrence also helps resolve the possible contradictions in Nietzsche's attempt to present a fixed method of evaluation as well as a changeable one.

## CHAPTER 6: ETERNAL RECURRENCE

### The Eternal Return of the Same as a Scientific Fact

The eternal return of the same provides the reason why Nietzsche must will the separation of the sexes. The assumption has been that this strange cosmological theory, which no one actually believes anyway, has no bearing on the status of Nietzsche's assessment of woman. This is patently false. Nietzsche's comments on woman have no grounding without the eternal return of the same. Without consideration of the role of the eternal recurrence as a fundamental aspect of his system, Nietzsche's posturings on woman necessarily appear inconsequential and random. The failure find the connection between this most incomprehensible and dense aspect of the Nietzschean system with his discussions of woman explains the perpetually inadequate defenses of Nietzsche's perspectivism, the unfounded attacks of Nietzsche's so-called misogyny, and the ungroundable defenses of Nietzsche's supposed egalitarianism. Nietzsche's teaching on woman simply cannot be understood without consideration of the eternal return of the same as the final unifying part of the Nietzschean system.

Nietzsche offers his most comprehensive presentation of the eternal return of the same in *Zarathustra*, but his first mention of the doctrine appears in *Gay Science* 341 and he refers to this doctrine in his later texts as well.<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche understands the eternal recurrence to be a description of reality. He describes the eternal recurrence as "the most *scientific* of all possible hypotheses" (WP, 55). The eternal return is Nietzsche's hypothesis; it is a tentative explanation of the cosmos. As Lampert notes, textual evidence "from as early as 1881 and as late as 1888 contain arguments for the cosmological truth of eternal return" (Lampert, 258). To Nietzsche, the eternal recurrence is as "true" as evolution, the theory of gravity, or any other scientific fact. The eternal return of the same

<sup>94</sup> Cf. EH, 258, 273, 295, 305; WP 55, 417, 462, 617, 1041, 1050, 1053-1067.

is a fact, but as is the case with all facts, its significance is in its interpretation.<sup>95</sup> This fact can be interpreted as the most life-enervating of all facts or as the highest affirmation of life possible. Nietzsche promotes a scientific interpretation of the eternal recurrence, which provides him with the motivation to transcend nihilism.

The content of the eternal recurrence doctrine cannot be separated from the meaning that this doctrine has for Nietzsche. He does not intend this teaching for everyone's ears.<sup>96</sup> Zarathustra presents the doctrine, not to the masses, but to Zarathustra himself, the dwarf (Z, 269-272), and the animals (Z, 329-333).<sup>97</sup> Most people will not understand the eternal recurrence and its implications. In fact, Zarathustra's animals understand the eternal recurrence better than humans (cf., Z, 329-333). Zarathustra learned in the prologue that he is not a teacher of the masses, he quickly learns that he is not the mouth for their ears. These masses already want to become last men. Zarathustra tries to find companions like himself, but learns that he may be the only one who understands his teaching.

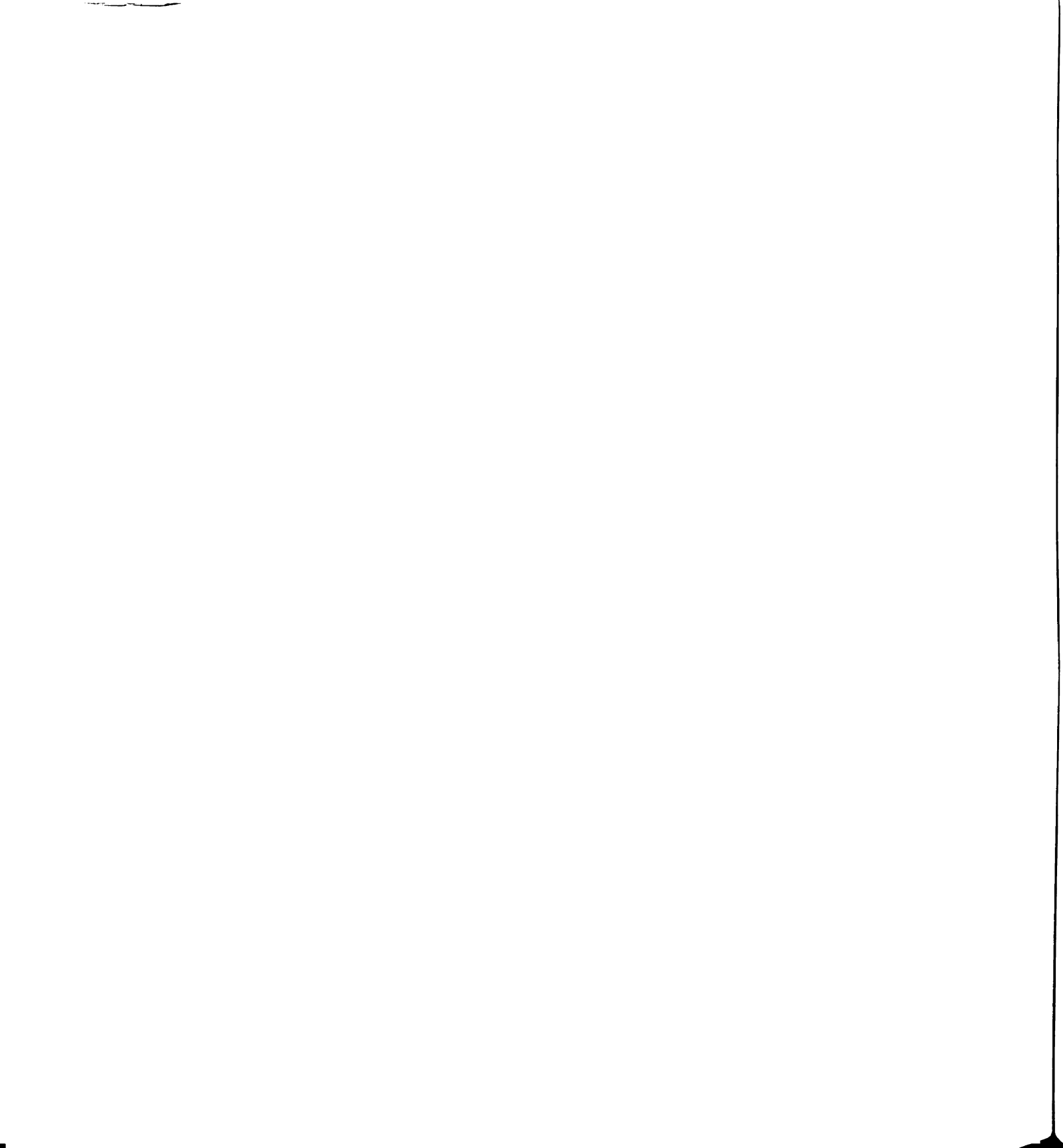
Companions the creator once sought, and children of his hope; and behold, it turned out that he could not find them, unless he first created them himself. Thus I am in the middle of my work, going to my children and returning from them: for his children's sake, Zarathustra must perfect himself. For from the depths one loves only one's child and work; and where there is great love of oneself it is the sign of pregnancy: thus I found it to be (Z, 273).

Zarathustra is concerned with his children; the "children of his hope" whom he creates (Z, 275). Nietzsche's children are those in the present and future generations who will become the creators of values--the free spirits (BGE 44, 227), attempters (BGE, 42), immoralists (BGE 32, 226), scholars (BGE 204-213), good Europeans (BGE 241), fearless ones (GS 343-383), and premature births (GS 382). The eternal recurrence is a teaching for these

<sup>95</sup>See chapter 3, pp. 47-48 for a discussion of the inseparability of text and interpretation.

<sup>96</sup>Cf., Z 152-153; BGE, 27, 30, 40, 43, 231, 253, 268, 289-290; EH, 260-261, 265, 308.

<sup>97</sup>The animals themselves articulate the doctrine of eternal recurrence to Zarathustra in this section.



individuals who recognize the seriousness of God's death and who consequently see in themselves the ability to will new ideals for the future.

Nietzsche attempts to instill in his children a life-affirming interpretation of reality. Nietzsche's understanding of the eternal recurrence provides a possibility of overcoming the paralysis that God's death left in human beings:

The strength to build becomes paralyzed; the courage to make plans that encompass the distant future is discouraged; those with a genius for organization become scarce: who would still dare to undertake projects that would require thousands of years for their completion? For what is dying out is the fundamental faith that would enable us to calculate, to promise, to anticipate the future in plans of such scope, and to sacrifice the future to them--namely, the faith that man has value and meaning only insofar as he is *a stone in a great edifice*; and to that end he must be *solid* first of all, a "stone"--and above all not an actor!" (GS, 356).

If these individuals fail to create a new goal for Man "the last man" will come to reign and all human history will have been in vain. With the proper understanding of the eternal recurrence, the motive to create new ideals is actualized.

### **Willing versus Affirming**

Although the eternal recurrence is a fact, Nietzsche speaks of the need, not only to *affirm* the doctrine, but also to *will* the eternal recurrence. *Affirming* the eternal return of the same means accepting the doctrine as an explanation of the world. This is an acceptance of eternal recurrence as a fact in the same way that the findings of modern natural science are accepted as facts. It is possible to recognize that the world recurs eternally without desiring the world to be an eternally recurring one. Thus, Nietzsche speaks also of the need to *will* his life-affirming interpretation of eternal recurrence even though it is a *fact*. In light of God's death, the eternal recurrence doctrine can be interpreted as the gravest of all facts and as proof of the meaninglessness of human life. Even Zarathustra cannot immediately embrace the doctrine. Zarathustra has to overcome his greatest danger, his nausea over the "rabble," before he can will the eternal recurrence. The theory of evolution, a theory already accepted as a modern scientific fact, offers a useful example of what Nietzsche means by willing a fact. To will the doctrine of

evolution means to select and promote a particular interpretation of the doctrine. Like the eternal recurrence, evolutionary theory can be interpreted in a life-denying manner, i.e., the way Darwin presents the doctrine, or, in a life-affirming manner, i.e., as Nietzsche (re)interprets it. The significance of evolutionary theory lies in the interpretation of it. To will the theory of evolution means to desire that evolutionary theory be the predominant explanation of the world. Similarly, *willing* the eternal return means the ability (willingness, or desire) to see all existence as eternally recurring. Willing the doctrine means to desire *this* to be the way of the world, to see the eternal recurrence as fixed unity or cosmos. Willing the doctrine is an act of volition. This willing means also that the individual wishes all of the implications of the eternal recurrence to be true. Nietzsche does not merely affirm, but *wills* the eternal return in a specific sense. Nietzsche posits the eternal return as a hypothesis, a possible explanation that he wants (wills) to be true. This doctrine enables Nietzsche to transcend nihilism, for if it is true, it means that what he wills is eternally fixed. The eternal recurrence overcomes the problem that humans are temporal beings while time is infinite.

### **What is the Eternal Recurrence of the Same?**

Nietzsche is not the first thinker to espouse the eternal recurrence, though he is the first to present a scientific interpretation of the eternal recurrence. According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche did not claim to be its originator. Nietzsche himself states that the “doctrine of the ‘eternal recurrence,’ ...*might* in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus. At least the Stoa has traces of it, and the Stoics inherited almost all of their principal notions from Heraclitus” (EH, 273-274). Kaufmann also cites a description of the eternal recurrence which was written by Heinrich Heine, “whom Nietzsche admired fervently” (Kaufmann, 317). Heine’s description is quite similar to Nietzsche’s and Nietzsche did in fact own Heine’s book (ibid.).<sup>98</sup> Since Nietzsche was familiar with Heine’s rendition of

<sup>98</sup>Heine’s book is entitled, “*Letzte Gedichte und Gedanken von H. Heine*, ed. Adolf Strodtmann, Hamburg 1869. See n. 18 of Kaufmann’s introduction to *The Gay Science* for further discussion of Heine and his book. Here Kaufmann discusses the controversy regarding whether Nietzsche had actually read

the eternal return of the same, it is possible that Nietzsche shaped his own interpretation after Heine's. Despite the similarity to Heine's articulation of the doctrine, Nietzsche presents an original interpretation of the eternal recurrence.

Nietzsche offers a relatively simple description of the eternal return of the same. As a scientific fact, it is not a self-contained truth, free of presuppositions, for there is not truth "in-itself" free of presuppositions (cf. GS, 344). Time is infinite, but there are only a limited number of human possibilities. Given that the limited number of combinations occur within the span of an infinite amount of time, Nietzsche concludes that every combination will repeat itself infinitely. In other words, every event, possibility, or combination that has already happened will happen again an infinite number of times. He introduces this idea in *The Gay Science*:

This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust! (GS, 341).

No individual is ever aware that he is living his life over again and therefore he does not change progressively each time the life plays itself again. Each time the cycle repeats itself, the sands inside the hourglass remain eternally the same. Zarathustra describes the recognition that events eternally recur:

Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before--what do you think...of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come? Therefore--itself too? For whatever *can* walk--in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more. (Z, 270).

His description of the eternal recurrence becomes even clearer in a later passage of Zarathustra:

Heine's book or not. Kaufmann concludes that Nietzsche did have knowledge of Heine's argument.



[A]ll things recur eternally, and we ourselves too; and that we have already existed an eternal number of times, and all things with us. You teach that there is a great year of becoming, a monster of a great year, which must, like an hourglass, turn over again and again so that it may run down and run out again; and all these years are alike in what is greatest as in what is smallest; and we ourselves are alike in every great year, in what is greatest as in what is smallest (Z, 332).<sup>99</sup>

The eternal recurrence means that human history cannot be understood as a straight line that progresses to a perfected end. As Zarathustra describes it, “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle” (Z, 270). As a circle, time has no clear beginning or endpoint. Life is an eternal repetition of everything that has already happened.

Nietzsche’s interpretation of the eternal recurrence presents an alternative to Heine’s understanding of the doctrine. Heine explains:

And she answered with a tender voice: “Let us be good friends.”--But what I have told you here, dear reader, that is not an event of yesterday or the day before. ...For time is infinite, but the things in time, the concrete bodies, are finite. They may indeed disperse into the smallest particles; but these particles, the atoms, have their determinate number, and the number of the configurations that, all of themselves, are formed out of them is also determinate. Now, however long a time may pass, according to the eternal laws governing the combinations of this eternal play of repetition, all configurations that have previously existed on this earth must yet meet, attract, repulse, kiss, and corrupt each other again. ...And thus it will happen one day that a man will be born again, just like me, and a woman will be born, just like Mary--only that it is to be hoped that the head of this man may contain a little less foolishness--and in a better land they will meet and contemplate each other a long time; and finally the woman will give her hand to the man and say with a tender voice: “Let us be good friends” (Kaufmann, 318-319).<sup>100</sup>

Heine’s passage contains two subtle, yet significant, differences from Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence doctrine. First, Heine suggests that when the cycle repeats itself, another individual “just like” the narrator and a woman “just like Mary” will be born. Nietzsche instead suggests that the narrator, Mary, and indeed all human beings will exist again *exactly* as they did in the past. To Nietzsche, recognition of the eternal recurrence means

<sup>99</sup>Zarathustra’s animals, not Zarathustra himself, give this description.

<sup>100</sup>Kaufmann offers a detailed account of the origin of the passage and Nietzsche’s familiarity with it in n. 9, p. 318 of his book *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*.

an individual's awareness that he will live *his own life* again an infinite number of times. Second, Heine suggests that each time the cycle repeats itself, the narrator, Mary, and all humans have the possibility of learning from the previous cycle(s). Heine similarly suggests the possibility that a "better land" and a man with "a little less foolishness" will come about in the future. Nietzsche's interpretation, however, does not allow for such progressive learning. Nietzsche does not think that we learn from the previous cycles. Events and people repeat themselves exactly as they occurred previously.

Although there is a fixed number of events that will recur eternally exactly as they happened the first time, no individual is aware of what those events are. The individual can only know what has happened in the past and that those things will recur. And those past events can be interpreted in an unlimited number of ways: "Rather has the world become 'infinite' for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations.*" (GS, 374). So there is a finite number of events, but potentially an infinite number of interpretations of those events. How one interprets the past influences what the future will be. Ignorant of what the future holds, human beings can create new "worlds" through (re)interpreting the events that have already occurred. The eternal recurrence means that although everything recurs, the repetition is in no way monotonous or redundant. When the world repeats a previous cycle, no one is aware of what has happened in that previous cycle. The individual is only aware of the events that make up the current cycle.

Kaufmann suggests that Heine's description is more playful than is Nietzsche's. In a sense, he is correct. Heine's vignette of this typical exchange of a man and a woman is charming and witty, while Nietzsche's initial presentation of the eternal recurrence is as the gravest of all events (GS, 341). To those free spirits who lack the will to create and who cannot affirm a world without a god, Nietzsche's eternal recurrence doctrine appears to offer proof of nihilism. Yet Kaufmann is incorrect in another sense. Nietzsche's articulation of the eternal recurrence also allows for the highest affirmation of life that is at



all possible. Nietzsche's account allows for a playful creativity that enables one to determine the future, a creativity that is immortal. While Nietzsche's initial description of the eternal recurrence may appear to be rather grave, his interpretation of the doctrine opens up possibilities that are just as, if not more, playful than Heine's. Nietzsche's interpretation offers humans a great ability to mold what their future will be and offers them an immortality to their willing.

Nietzsche's eternal recurrence doctrine is therefore consistent with what Nietzsche has taught about the will to power in a specific sense. Human beings strive to leave an imprint on the world through interpreting it. Their willing (or interpreting) does not change the past events that are already destined to recur; however, willing determines the significance and meaning of those past events. Although the number of human possibilities is limited and individuals cannot undo past events, humans can alter the future (of which they are ignorant) by creating new ways to look at past events. And this creation gives the individual an increased strength and power. The eternal recurrence makes willing crucially important because it means that what one wills will not only happen once, but an infinite number of times. Because we do not know what the future will be, we must decide what to make of it. Although the events of the future have already occurred an infinite number of times, at the moment the individual acts, he is unaware of what those future events have been (will be). In this sense the individual does determine the future. Unaware of what the future holds, by deciding to act in a certain way, he determines what will be. The individual can thus find the motivation to will.

This link between willing and the eternal recurrence also sheds light on why Nietzsche considers *Beyond Good and Evil* to be a "prelude to a philosophy of the future." The book presents a reinterpretation of history, a revaluation of democratic and Christian prejudices. Nietzsche interprets these events as he does in order to create the possibility of his ideal, the *Übermensch*. That past events can be interpreted in a variety of ways reveals a new role for the philosopher. All past philosophers have had to contend with history,

i.e., with past events that cannot be altered (as will all future philosophers). The new philosopher will instead “prepare great ventures and over-all attempts of discipline and cultivation by way of putting an end to that gruesome dominion of nonsense and accident that has so far been called ‘history’” (BGE, 203). Human willing, that is, creatively interpreting the past, enables humans to mold the future. New philosophers bear the responsibility of determining what the future of Man will be. Without these new philosophers, the last man is sure to populate the earth.

### **The Eagle and the Serpent--a Metaphor for Eternal Recurrence**

A recurring image of the eternal recurrence that appears in *Zarathustra* is of an eagle soaring in wide circles with a serpent hanging around its neck. As Lampert and Rosen both suggest, this image represents the circularity of time and the meaning of the eternal recurrence (Rosen, 75, Lampert, 29). With this image, Nietzsche presents the types of traits necessary to overcome nihilism: pride and cleverness. The eagle is the “proudest animal under the sun,” while the serpent represents the most clever animal under the sun (Z, 137).<sup>101</sup> Free spirits must be both clever and proud if they are to find the strength to create new goals in a godless world.

Particularly noteworthy about the metaphor of the eagle and the serpent is that this very image preserves the distinction between the masculine and feminine perspectives and suggests a need for both of these perspectives. The German term for eagle is a masculine term while the term for serpent is feminine. Nietzsche selects the serpent as one of Zarathustra’s companions because it clings to the earth and because of the contrast with biblical teachings. The serpent’s closeness to the earth suggests that the feminine perspective is closely tied to the earth. That is, the feminine perspective is closer to a human or earthly interpretation and a love of life than the masculine perspective. The

<sup>101</sup>Kaufmann translates the term “kluger” as “wiser” which Rosen argues, and I agree, is not the right word here (Rosen, 77). I choose to use the word “cleverer.” Another alternative is “prudent. However, a serpent does not traditionally conjure images of wisdom, reverence, or prudence. Rather, the serpent is a clever, sly, sneaky creature.

ability to give birth offers woman a more intimate relationship to life than man can have. She is more likely to cling to mere life than man. Because she is the source of life in a very real sense, she is closer to the earth and therefore she is more likely than man to affirm life as it is (in all its forms). In "Genesis" the serpent was condemned to crawl on the earth to be far from God. But this distance from God (or otherworldly things) indicates a closeness to the earth, a love of the earth. The cleverness that the serpent represents is a trait Nietzsche associates with the feminine perspective (cf. BGE, 239; HAH I: 411). As Rosen points out, the serpent has to convince the eagle to return to the earth to pick her up (Rosen, 77). This is similar to Nietzsche's argument that woman needs to coax man into creating ideals. Nietzsche also uses a snake as a symbol of the spirit of gravity and the spirit of resentment (cf. Z, 268-272). Since the serpent seems to represent the feminine, Nietzsche's image may also indicate that woman is more resentful than man.<sup>102</sup>

The eagle, on the other hand, flies above the earth. This image represents an overcoming, a striving to get beyond the mere earth. That he flies represents a transcendence of the human-all-too-human. The eagle has the pride (egoism) and courage to fly to unknown heights. The eagle represents the masculine traits needed by the creator. Males have created the ascetic ideals that taught humans to look above the earth for meaning. The image of an eagle lifting the serpent into the air suggests that the cleverness which gave birth to the life-denying ascetic ideal can be ennobled to create a new life-affirming goal. This goal will enable Man to esteem again, but an earthly goal instead of a divine one.

Nietzsche sees masculine pride and feminine cleverness as virtues because they are the traits that the creator needs to transcend nihilism. Nietzsche's cleverness enables him to create a new type of ideal in light of the fact that God is dead and everything recurs

<sup>102</sup>See the section entitled "Resentment and Willing" in chapter 4 for a discussion of woman and resentment. In that section I suggest that woman is not resentful in her essence. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does suggest that some traits of woman may incline her more strongly toward feelings of resentment than man.

eternally. Although cleverness is needed, pride should ennoble cleverness. Pride (a form of self-love) enables the creator to overcome resentment. Without an affirmation of oneself, one may never be able to free oneself from the resentment over the past. The creator needs to forget that all ideals are temporary and that he too as a mortal human is merely temporary. Cleverness enables one to trick oneself and others into that temporary forgetfulness that is needed for the creation of values. And, I would argue, Nietzsche's own doctrine of the eternal return of the same may be a product of his cleverness and pride. Humans must forget that ideals are only temporary if they are to be able to esteem. Zarathustra (and Nietzsche) becomes the teacher of the eternal return of the same because it gives humans the forgetfulness that is needed for the creation of a human goal. This will be explained below. The combination of masculine pride and feminine cleverness can together create a life-affirming ideal, a human ideal that celebrates the earth. The eternal return does not rely on a divine other worldly entity to verify its truth, in fact, the truth of the eternal recurrence may not be verifiable at all. In the "Prologue" Zarathustra wishes he were more clever, like the serpent. It is not coincidental that Zarathustra (a male) finds himself lacking the trait that Nietzsche associates with the feminine. Woman, or the feminine perspective, gives man a reason to love the earth. The creator needs to learn to esteem (to fly above the human-all-too-human) even though he is aware that God has died. Woman reminds man not to fly away, but to look to the earth for meaning. Together the masculine and feminine perspectives create the *Übermensch*. This ideal enables Man to continue striving to transcend himself, while at the same time, affirm the earth.

The eagle and the serpent, although traditional foes, are friendly towards one another (Lampert, 29). Zarathustra describes the image: "An eagle soared through the sky in wide circles, and on him there hung a serpent, not like prey but like a friend: for she kept herself wound around his neck" (Z, 137). While man and woman are not necessarily enemies, Nietzsche promotes an eternally hostile antagonism between the sexes (BGE, 238) and describes the "state of nature" as "the eternal war between the sexes" (EH, 267).

The symbolic presentation of the eternal recurrence suggests a need for both the masculine and feminine perspectives. The new world view that Nietzsche is creating (i.e., the will to power) involves a tension between two eternal perspectives--what Nietzsche calls the "Eternal Feminine" and the "Eternal Masculine." This is not the only struggle that Nietzsche insists on maintaining, but nonetheless, it is one of them. Man and woman are to be friends, like Zarathustra's serpent and eagle. But Nietzsche obfuscates the distinction between friends and enemies. The eagle and the serpent have a mutual need for one another, but they also have the potential to destroy one another. Without the serpent, the eagle flies away from the earth. This is the danger of not remaining loyal to the earth. The eagle may be unable to affirm an earthly goal and may become nihilistic. On the other hand, without the eagle, the serpent is bound by gravity and is likely unable to transcend herself. This is the danger of falling prey to the resentment that makes one unable to create a new ideal in a godless world. So, as Lampert and Rosen also argue, the eagle with the serpent around its neck represents the type of world view needed. The eternal return of the same is the new world view that Nietzsche creates.

Nietzsche does not abolish the man/woman or masculine/ feminine dualisms when he posits the eternal recurrence. Rather, the eternal return of the same provides Nietzsche with the motivation to cultivate the differences between the sexes. The erosion of sexual tension brings humans one step closer to becoming last men. Nietzsche's new ideal, represented by the eagle and the serpent, combines the highest parts of the masculine and feminine perspectives respectively. The pride of the warrior is masculine. The cleverness to create a new ideal in light of god's death is feminine.

### **The Implications of the Eternal Recurrence**

Nietzsche interprets the eternal recurrence as a replacement of all previous life-denying metaphysical interpretations of the earth. This means that the eternal recurrence replaces Darwinism, Christianity, and Hegelian faith in progress. Nietzsche does not want to permit the continuation of human evolution in its current direction (i.e., toward the



actualization of the last man). His recognition of the death of God means that Nietzsche denies any predetermined divine purpose for human beings. And, Nietzsche argues, human ideas do not necessarily progress. Modernity itself represents degeneration, not progress. Nietzsche's argument presupposes a notion of progress, but Nietzsche's notion is entirely different from modernity's backward sense of progress. Nietzsche challenges modernity's faith in human progress:

Mankind does *not* represent a development toward something better or stronger or higher in the sense accepted today. "Progress" is merely a modern idea, that is, a false idea. The European of today is vastly inferior in value to the European of the Renaissance: further development is altogether *not* according to any necessity in the direction of elevation, enhancement, or strength (AC, 571).

Instead of a linear progression, the development of Man is circular. Human ideals and ideas are connected to one another in the sense that they are born out of particular historical and social circumstances, but there is no clear or unclear beginning or ending to the creation of ideas. Time is a circle of achievements, mistakes, exploitations, advancements, and regressions. Human development "hesitates, takes so long, often turns back, and moves in circles" (BGE, 199). Nietzsche's reference to circles here brings to mind the eternal recurrence. The reason that there is no linear progression

is due to the fact that the herd instinct of obedience is inherited best, and at the expense of the art of commanding. If we imagine this instinct progressing for once to its ultimate excesses, then those who command and are independent would eventually be lacking altogether; or they would secretly suffer from a bad conscience and would find it necessary to deceive themselves before they could command--as if they, too, merely obeyed" (ibid.).

The weak outnumber the few exceptional individuals. When the weak organize themselves, the strong will always be in grave danger, due to the fact that "the strongest and most fortunate are weak when opposed by organized herd instincts, by the timidity of the weak, by the vast majority (WP, 685). In other words, there is no necessary reason to expect the future will be in any way superior to the present or the past. If the future is to transcend the past, this will take a conscious creative act of the will. If the future is to be any better than the present or the past, individuals must make it be so instead of passively

waiting for some future improvement to appear spontaneously.

The eternal recurrence, in presenting time as a circle, seems to undermine the notion of causation, or, at least, seems to make it irrelevant. The eternal recurrence denies (or makes irrelevant) a particular point in time when life began. Or, if that point in time existed, the eternal return doctrine means that it would be impossible to determine what that beginning point was. If time is a circle, Man cannot determine which events caused which events originally. Acceptance of the eternal recurrence means acceptance of the fact that the events simply happened as they did for no clear reason and without a discernable first cause. Chance may be the only explanation of why a past event occurred at a particular moment in time. There is no fixed mechanical process, no Nature, and certainly no omnipotent God that causes the movement of time. Nietzsche teaches that if anything exists at all as a cause, it is will to power which pushes history in one direction or another. The will to power cannot erase past events, nor can it keep past events from recurring; but, the will can “redeem those who lived in the past” and “recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’” through creatively interpreting the past (Z, 251). As Nietzsche understands the doctrine, the eternal recurrence provides free spirits like himself with the motivation to will creatively.

Creative willing by such extraordinary individuals can alter the type of human being who will be produced in the future. Real progress would mean the production of the highest types, the “production of the most powerful individuals, who will use the great mass of people as their tools (and indeed the most intelligent and most pliable tools).” (WP, 660). If mankind were left to evolve by itself, it would evolve into a massive, homogenous, passive herd of men. The greatest individuals can alter history by willing. They should will because what they will is going to be repeated eternally, just as the past events that they did not will are repeated for eternity. They cannot alter the fact that all events (what they choose to will and what they do not will) will eternally recur, nor can they alter the events that have already occurred. Moreover, their will to power does not

actually “push time,” which keeps rolling and rolling and recurring and recurring. The will to power describes the process by which these individuals can consciously improve themselves or allow themselves to degenerate further.

Because humans cannot physically alter past events, the will first appears to Man as a prisoner rather than the “liberator and joy-bringer” that Nietzsche recognizes it to be (Z, 251). So far, Man has felt trapped by the passage of time:

That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath; “that which was” is the name of the stone he cannot move. And so he moves stones out of wrath and displeasure, and he wreaks revenge on whatever does not feel wrath and displeasure as he does. The will, the liberator, took to hurting; and on all who can suffer he wreaks revenge for his inability to go backwards. This, indeed this alone, is what *revenge* is: the will’s ill will against time and its “it was” (Z, 251-252).

Such revenge gave birth to the ascetic ideal whose current form may turn the most creative spirits, the most exceptional individuals, into nihilists. Nietzsche teaches these free spirits that they can affirm themselves by creatively willing: “‘The will is a creator.’ All ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident--until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I willed it.’ Until the creative will says to it, ‘But this I will it; thus shall I will it’” (Z, 253). How these individuals understand the past will determine what the future will be. These individuals can reinterpret what was once understood as the result of accident and chance as a necessary step that leads toward their future goal.

Nietzsche does not offer a set reason why all things recur. To Nietzsche, the eternal return of the same is simply a cosmological fact. Because there is no divine entity by which Man can anchor his life, the eternal recurrence forces humans to look to themselves for meaning. The eternal recurrence provides the foundation for any meaning that Man could create. This is why Heidegger charges Nietzsche with creating a new metaphysics. For Nietzsche, the eternal recurrence replaces Christianity, the most recent form of the ascetic ideal. The eternal recurrence shifts human focus from otherworldly realms to the human realm of the here and now. The eternal recurrence does not deny or undermine the power that the Christian doctrine has had in the past, but recognizes its

limitations and reveals that we can no longer search for that type of ideal or the type of immortality offered by an omnipotent God. By teaching that the *Übermensch* is the ideal of the future, that the will to power is the means of creating the *Übermensch*, and that the eternal recurrence provides the motivation to will, Nietzsche gives Man a possibility of mastering the earth. Though no individual can erase past events or alter the order in which they have already occurred, the individual can become master by re-interpreting all events through the lens of his own will. Human will replaces the will of a false god. The individual will becomes, in a sense, the god. He can feel himself master all history as he creates his own purpose. The will can now be Man's liberator rather than a revenge-seeker. Recognition of the eternal recurrence gives Man the opportunity and the motivation to create his own destiny.

The eternal recurrence gives a kind of fixity to impermanence or becoming. It makes the impermanent, in a way, permanent. Although human beings are mortal, the fact that their lives will infinitely repeat themselves, exactly as they have lived them, gives a type of fixity and a kind of immortality to their impermanence. In other words, humans do not and cannot have immortality in the sense of never dying because death is a fundamental fact of human life. However, the eternal recurrence gives a type of immortality to human action because all human action will happen again in the future. So, although the death of God undermines the Christian type of immortality, a new type of fixity is offered by the eternal return doctrine. The fixity it offers is important because all humans, including the highest types of humans, want immortality. The desire for immortality is the reason that Man has created and bowed down to metaphysics for centuries. The quest for immortality impels the philosopher to create truths and the mother to have children. And if "immortality" is possible, human life appears to be inherently meaningful. The human quest for eternal meaning and eternal life has created all gods and all otherworldly ideals. But when all gods die, the possibility of meaning for human life seems to die with them. The eternal recurrence offers a possibility of overcoming the nihilistic consequence of the

death of God. The fixity offered by the eternal recurrence gives a significance to every action an individual takes. Not only do one's actions influence the current moment in time, but they repeatedly leave an impact every time they recur. The awareness that one's life eternally recurs can lead to the realization that one's choices have an eternal impact. Most people will not understand what the eternal recurrence means, but Nietzsche recognizes this consequence of the eternal recurrence, and teaches the other free spirits (who will be the philosophers of the future) to embrace his understanding of the eternal return of the same.

### **Is the Eternal Recurrence a New Metaphysics?**

As Nietzsche understands himself, he is not presenting another metaphysical system; he is a "godless anti-metaphysician" (GS, 344). He understands the eternal recurrence as an eternalization of this world, not the positing of an alternate world by which to judge this one. Yet Nietzsche cannot rule out the possibility that others will interpret the eternal recurrence differently than he does. The meaning of the eternal recurrence depends on the individual who wills the doctrine. There are potentially as many interpretations of the eternal recurrence as there are human beings. As discussed above, Nietzsche is not the originator of the eternal recurrence doctrine. The doctrine had existed for centuries prior to Nietzsche and had been understood quite differently. And because the meaning of the eternal recurrence lacks fixity, there is no guarantee that in future generations the eternal recurrence will provide the same significance that it offers Nietzsche and the other free spirits. There is no necessary reason why anyone should believe Nietzsche's articulation of the doctrine. If the eternal return of the same describes a type of fixed order to nature, that ordering is eternally open to various interpretations. To Nietzsche, the fixed order is not terribly relevant; what matters is the implication of that fixed order. Heidegger's rendition of the eternal recurrence as a metaphysical system is simply one possible perspectival understanding of the doctrine.

But Heidegger's understanding of the eternal return of the same is different from Nietzsche's and has different consequences. Nietzsche recognizes that an interpretation

like Heidegger's is possible, but still Nietzsche wills his own scientific understanding of the doctrine. And, since Nietzsche does understand himself to be explaining a cosmos that will ground the will to power, Heidegger's criticism is difficult to derail; indeed, it is a salient criticism. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's rendition of the eternal return of the same provides Nietzsche (and hopefully other free spirits) with the impetus to create the Übermensch. This means that Nietzsche recognizes the necessity of self-delusion on the part of the creators of the future. Nietzsche must forget that the eternal recurrence doctrine can be interpreted as nothing more than another metaphysical system. He must view the doctrine in light of the possibilities it creates. Nietzsche admits that occasionally he experiences a drive to illusion himself (BGE, 230). Perhaps "the occasional will of [Nietzsche's] spirit to let itself be deceived" enables Nietzsche to will the Übermensch (ibid.).

Because Nietzsche recognizes that the eternal recurrence gives a fixity to human impermanence, the eternal return *could* also give fixity to Nietzsche's understanding of the world as will to power. To be sure, Nietzsche does not understand the will to power to be merely one among many doctrines. Prior to Nietzsche humans were not understood as will to power and consequently chance/ accident has so far determined all that has happened. Even as Nietzsche articulates the will to power doctrine, this teaching has not yet been universally accepted, and it may never be accepted. When God died the "free spirits" like Nietzsche experienced freedom from all "though shalt." However, without a god there is no goal for which the individual should seek freedom. No one knows anymore why one *should* will. The eternal recurrence does not provide an explicit answer to the question of why one should will. However, if the individual longs for eternity and if the individual cares that his actions will recur, he will want to will.

Thus, the eternal recurrence does not undermine the will to power. When Nietzsche recognizes that his actions will be repeated an infinite number of times, he finds the motivation to will. The eternal recurrence doctrine teaches that human beings,



Nietzsche and other free spirits like him, have the potential to determine what Man will be. Because he recognizes himself as a consciously willing individual, Nietzsche understands himself as a “self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes’” (Z, 139). As Nietzsche sees it, without God, the only thing left is the will. Nietzsche must choose to will instead of falling into the abyss of nothingness. Nietzsche must take this path because he recognizes that the choice he makes will recur eternally. Since the thought of the last man is unpalatable and even nauseating to Nietzsche, he must select the option that impedes the production of the last man.

### **Löwith's Criticism**

Löwith would not agree that it is possible to salvage the will to power in light of the eternal return of the same. Löwith instead suggests that the very image Nietzsche constructs to represent the eternal return of the same reveals the impotence of willing. Löwith dichotomizes the doctrine of the eternal recurrence. He argues that Nietzsche presents both a cosmological theory and an ethical doctrine. Yet, Löwith argues, the eternal recurrence cannot be interpreted both ways simultaneously. He claims that Nietzsche's system falls apart because the cosmic necessity of the eternal return undermines any potential power the will to power has to change the world. He argues that the Nietzschean system falls apart when the will to power and the eternal recurrence are considered together. Löwith demonstrates the flaw in the system by scrutinizing the very image Nietzsche uses to represent the eternal return of the same:

In the curious configuration of the snake wound around the neck of the eagle, there already comes to light the forced contrivance of Nietzsche's whole teaching of a willing of the cosmic revolving. For how is that “friendship” between the proudest animal of the heights and the most sagacious animal of the earth (the friendship simulated by the double image of the animals) supposed to last if the eagle embodies the proud will to soar up into the heights, and the earthbound snake (which, however, is also wound around the sun) embodies the eternal recurrence of the same?-- unless the eternal recurrence of the same could be willed with the wings of pride because this individual willing complies with the cosmic will. The “self-willing” of the ring of the eternal recurrence, however, is as little proud willing as the circling of the eagle makes it into a being wound around itself. The *one* word “will” obscures the irreconcilability of “being thus and not different” with a willed “turn of necessity.” And did not



Zarathustra himself have a sound presentiment, expressed in the last sentence of the Prologue, that one day the sagacity of the snake could abandon him, and then his pride will fly with folly? In Zarathustra's very last speech, the talk is no longer of a snake but only of Zarathustra's eagle and of a laughing lion. The lion, as a predator, symbolizes the metamorphosis from "Thou shalt" to "I will" in the first speech, and thus precisely does not bring the redemptive solution, of the proclamation of which is the often-interrupted but lasting theme of *Zarathustra* (Löwith, 185-186).

Löwith contends that if everything has already happened an infinite number of times, the individual must deceive himself into the illusion that he is not merely playing out a life that has already been determined. If the eternal recurrence describes a cosmic necessity as Nietzsche suggests, the motivation to impose oneself pridefully on a world that has already been determined an infinite number of times would be lacking. If everything that will happen has already happened innumerable times, Nietzsche may be delusional to think that willing matters. Willing the eternal recurrence is simply a compliance with the cosmic necessity of the eternal recurrence, according to Löwith. When he wills, the individual needs to seduce himself into believing that his willing has not actually already happened an infinite number of times.

Perhaps this problem can be solved by considering that in addition to the ignorance regarding what the future will hold, Nietzsche also does not know if these events have already occurred. In theory, they could have already occurred a million times. However, it is also possible that this particular moment is the first time that the cycle has ever occurred. There was, after all, a first moment in which the cycle began. We may be unable to determine whether the world always existed or whether it came about at one particular moment, however, if there is a finite number of events that eternally recur, there must have been a first time that those events happened. And, if this is the first time that events are occurring, for obvious reasons, willing matters. The individual who wills knows that the first time he willed that his will actually mattered. Ignorance of the position in the cycle makes the will important. However, Nietzsche's articulation of the doctrine implies that the events have already occurred an infinite number of times. If it is possible to determine that

the individual is living in a cycle that merely repeats the previous cycles, then willing would be delusional.

Löwith sums up this difficulty by explaining that “a teaching about man is groundless if it does not have as a supporting basis either a metaphysical God or the Physis of the world; for man does not exist through his own powers. And because for Nietzsche the transworldly God was dead, he had to ask anew the old cosmological question about the eternity of the world, as opposed to its single creation” (Löwith, 187). Man cannot will himself into being. Man can will interpretations of the world, but he cannot will himself. He cannot will the fact that he is to be a willing being. Nietzsche tries to make Man the ground of his teaching about man, or more precisely, an imagined possibility, the *Übermensch*. The eternal recurrence is the physis of the world, but it is man (Nietzsche in particular) who determines that ground and gives it his interpretation. Only man’s will can determine the physis of the world. The order of the world as an eternally recurring one may be a cosmic necessity, but the interpretation of that cosmic necessity is within man’s power. Additionally, only man can determine what role god or gods will play in this world.

But even if the cycle has already occurred an infinite number of times, Nietzsche would insist that the individual still has the power to determine the future. The key to Nietzsche’s theory is the ignorance of the future. It is irrelevant that the future has already occurred if humans have no way of knowing which particular events constitute the future. So while it may be true that in a way the individual is not determining the future (because the eternal recurrence is a cosmic necessity), Nietzsche would say that it is also true that in a way the individual is determining the future (because he is ignorant of the content of the future). Humans must decide what to will. This means that humans who actively will gods and ideals will feel as if they are creating the future. Through this creating they will experience an amazing feeling of power. Even though this requires self-delusion, it may simply be the case that delusion is a necessary aspect of human life, according to

Nietzsche.

An additional difficulty to which Löwith refers, is the fact that the eternal recurrence doctrine is “absurd to all modern (natural-scientific, historical, and existential) thought” (Löwith, 187). Löwith contends that there is little or no reason to believe this rendition of reality. Bernd Magnus similarly suggests that another strange feature of Nietzsche’s doctrine is that it is not verifiable. Magnus explains:

One puzzle is, that recurrence theory appears to be unverifiable in principle. If cosmic episodes are said to recur in completely identical fashion, how could one know that? What evidence could one adduce? Any attempt to verify the theory at one instant would be a repetition of the identical attempt to verify it at a previous (earlier) instant. Any evidence adduced in one cosmic episode which is designed to show that it *is* a recurrence has an identical counterpart in the same earlier configuration, according to the theory. But that is as much as to say that there is nothing shown. Rather we must assume that an item of evidence at instant *t* is identical to that very item of evidence at instant *t*<sub>1</sub>, etc. The theory cannot be verified. It must be assumed. But if assumed, how can it be known?” (Magnus, 66-67).

This unverifiability is part of Nietzsche’s genius. He attempted to construct a theory, or myth, that could solve the problem of nihilism. Nietzsche created a theory for a world in which scientific theory and physics reigns. Notice that the theory does not settle whether the world has always existed or whether it came to be at a particular moment. It makes that question almost irrelevant. The theory is not falsifiable, but it is based on an assumption--as are all theories, according to Nietzsche. He has managed to create a theory that offers eternity, though perhaps not the eternity for which we long. Nietzsche hoped that this understanding of the world would become the dominant one; he obviously misjudged. Whether the world always existed as an eternally recurring one or whether the world came about at some point and came to be characterized by the eternal recurrence is not verifiable by scientific knowledge alone. Indeed, Nietzsche’s explanation of his recognition that all life eternally recurs sounds closer to a diviner of oracles than a philosopher seeking the truth. Ultimately, Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal recurrence must be accepted on faith instead of complete knowledge.

## **The Greatest Weight or the Highest Affirmation of Life?**

Given these implications, Nietzsche suggests that free spirits may grasp the eternal recurrence in one of two fundamental ways. First, the individual who is free of all gods may view the doctrine as the ultimate affirmation of life, or secondly, as the greatest weight imaginable. Nietzsche explains to other free spirits;

If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?  
(GS, 341).

The effect that the eternal recurrence has depends on the strength of individual who perceives it. The first possibility is that the eternal recurrence changes the godless individual (the free spirit). Acknowledging that the world eternally recurs will transform the free spirit because the doctrine provides the utmost significance to human life. The eternal return of the same means that the free spirit must reconcile himself with the fact that every action he takes will be repeated eternally. The theory adds gravity to the individual's actions in the sense that he will be destined to repeat his actions infinitely. His choices are immortal; they are truly important because they have an eternal impact on history. Nietzsche does not understand the eternal recurrence as dismal. In fact, Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence as the "highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable" (EH, 295).

The danger, however, is that the awareness of the eternal recurrence will crush the free spirit, that is, it can lead to the belief in the utter meaninglessness of life and a confirmation of atheism. The free spirit who grasps the implications of the death of God is like the madman left without a light to lead his way (GS, 125). If such an individual cannot muster up the strength within himself, he will become the nihilistic lion who does nothing more than destroy old tablets of values. In this case, the free spirit cannot affirm the eternal return of the same. Such an individual lacks the will to create playfully like the child (Z,

138-139). His fate is a burden that he suffers. This type of individual understands the eternal recurrence to mean that he really cannot and does not control his own destiny. Who he is, what he has been, and what he will be may have already been determined and has happened an infinite number of times. This very free spirit is unable to revere any type of ideal and feels inconsequential, like a speck of dust in a chaotic world. Everything that has ever happened seems to be meaningless. Those free spirits who are unable or have not yet created a new ideal to esteem may fall prey to this nihilistic interpretation of the eternal recurrence.

When viewed in this way, the eternal recurrence can be seen as proof of the utter meaninglessness of human life because it uncovers a limit to the will to power which is simply unbearable to some free spirits. The eternal recurrence seems to nullify the significance of the will to power. One cannot choose the historical and social conditions into which one is born. Those conditions shape who one is. Nor can the individual alter even a single incident that happened in the past. This fact reveals a great limit to the will--it cannot will backwards. And if all events are predetermined and will recur, human willing appears to have no impact on the world; willing appears to be unable to change the world. Everything that happens has already happened an infinite number of times in the past. The individual has already been what he can be. A similar feeling of helplessness led to the creation of the ascetic ideal. Dannhauser explains; "Nietzsche thinks of previous philosophies as the will's *reaction* to its own impotence before the passing of time, the revenge of the will to power on time by the creation of fictitious eternal beings" (Dannhauser, 1972, 846; cf. Z, 251-253). But these free spirits are free of the ascetic ideal because all gods are dead. They are no longer able to esteem a god, yet are completely incapable of finding any type of meaning.

In "The Soothsayer," Zarathustra discusses the danger of this negative (nihilistic) interpretation of his eternal return teaching. Zarathustra heard a soothsayer speak:

A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: "All is empty, all is the same, all has been!" And from all the hills it echoed: "All is empty, all is the same,



all has been!” Indeed we have harvested: but why did all our fruit turn rotten and brown? What fell down from the evil moon last night? In vain was all our work; our wine has turned to poison; an evil eye has seared our fields and hearts (Z, 245).

The eternal recurrence is the doctrine to which Zarathustra refers. All that has been before, every pattern, every choice, every event will repeat itself. The accompanying faith that Zarathustra predicts is nihilism, that is, the faith that everything is in vain and life simply has no meaning. If everything is bound to recur so that the present has already occurred an infinite number of times, everything has already been predetermined. The danger of the eternal recurrence teaching is that the individuals who are free from all metaphysical ideals will have nothing to esteem and will be unable to create a new estimable goal to revere. That is, the gravest danger is that these free spirits, who have the most potential and creative spirit to transcend themselves, may become last men. This threat is real since “the basic fact of the human will” is that “*it needs a goal--and it will rather will nothingness than not will*” (GM: III: 1). Nietzsche fears that the free spirits will remain completely free of the ascetic ideal without anything for which to live.

Even the strongest individuals may be unable to bear the thought of the eternal recurrence because they lack the strength, character, courage, and nobility to create values in light of the death of God. They need something to believe in to replace their belief in nothing. In the absence of God, free spirits still experience a spiritual need that must be met. Nietzsche explains that “the religious instinct is indeed in the process of growing powerfully--but the theistic satisfaction it refuses with deep suspicion” (BGE, 53). This religious instinct to esteem a higher being as a justification for existence is ingrained in humans due to the centuries of human obedience to gods. Humans even sacrificed their love of self, their animalistic nature, in order to revere these false gods. Nietzsche notes that “during the moral epoch of mankind, one sacrificed to one’s god one’s own strongest instincts, one’s ‘nature’: *this* festive joy lights up the cruel eyes of the ascetic, the ‘anti-natural’ enthusiast” (BGE, 55). But free spirits can no longer find satisfaction in esteeming a god because they recognize that the foundation of all gods have been uprooted. They

force themselves to accept that their self-denial was nothing more than folly. They still need to esteem something, but they know that all gods are false ideals. So they dedicate themselves to uncovering even the most ugly truths, the ungroundable nature of all goals, ideals, and gods. Nihilism may become the faith of these most promising individuals.

Nietzsche explains why this is the path now open:

Finally--what remained to be sacrificed. At long last, did one not have to sacrifice for once whatever is comforting, holy, healing; all hope, all faith in hidden harmony, in future blessings and justices? Didn't<sup>103</sup> one have to sacrifice God himself and, from cruelty against oneself, worship the stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, the nothing? To sacrifice God for the nothing--this paradoxical mystery of the final cruelty was reserved for the generation that is now coming up: all of us already know something of this.--(BGE, 55)

Recognition of the eternal recurrence could lead to nihilism, but Nietzsche teaches that it should lead to the *Übermensch* who has faith in *himself*. Nietzsche teaches the free spirit to have faith in himself instead of faith in the nothing. When the free spirit learns to turn to himself instead of searching for a god that does not exist he can become the new philosopher who creates a new goal to fill the void that the death of god has left. Those who cannot create their own goals should follow Nietzsche and have faith in the *Übermensch* as the new ideal. The belief in the *Übermensch* as the goal and the will to power as the means to that goal is the faith that is to accompany the eternal return doctrine.

Löwith offers a helpful description of the dual nature of the eternal recurrence.

The metaphor of the eternal recurrence is therefore equatable with something twofold: on the one hand, with an "ethical gravity" by means of which human existence that has become goalless obtains a goal again, beyond itself; and on the other hand, with a natural-scientific "fact" in the goalless self-contained existence of the world of forces. Consequently, the teaching of the recurrence presents itself first as the fixing of an ideal goal for the willing man--and then it replaces the Christian belief in immortality with the will to self-eternalization--and second as the ascertainment of a physical fact in the unwillful being-thus-and-not-different of the physical world. With the latter, the teaching replaces ancient cosmology with modern physics (Löwith, 83).

This dichotomy helps explain why the doctrine can be interpreted as the greatest weight or the highest affirmation imaginable. First, the eternal recurrence provides Nietzsche (and

<sup>103</sup>Kaufmann does not capitalize this sentence in his translation, but I do.



perhaps other free spirits with) a reason to create a new set of values, a new goal for himself and humanity. The eternal recurrence replaces God, or all “creation” stories,” all of which depend on some kind of God, or gods, or a first cause or prime mover. Because time is a circle according to the eternal recurrence doctrine, the beginning of time becomes indistinguishable. Only human beings can determine what the future will be. The eternal recurrence does not supply a specific code of ethics itself; rather, it makes possible a faith that is not based on a god, but on human will. The eternal recurrence is the replacement for religion, or one might say, it makes possible the only type of faith in a world where God is dead. The doctrine opens the possibility of a religion of self-glorification, a celebration of oneself. The free spirit, the future new philosopher, has faith in himself and in his will as the sole source of the future goals that humanity will revere. The recognition that his actions and his life will recur an infinite number of times gives him an immortality and consequently a crucial importance to each decision made. Awareness of the consequences of the eternal return could lead such an individual to the ultimate affirmation of life. The highest affirmation is the Yes to have everything that was and is to be repeated into all eternity. This means an affirmation of every horrible event that has been determined by chance. The ultimate affirmation of life is to will the eternal recurrence in the manner in which Nietzsche does.

But Löwith thinks the system falls apart at this point because the eternal recurrence is also a cosmological fact. Löwith contends that if the future has already been determined by a series of past necessities, the human will has no power to alter the future. The individuals who have courage and self-awareness will affirm the eternal recurrence. They will accept the cosmological necessity of eternal recurrence, which means they affirm every chance, necessity, or accident *as it was* and desire nothing to be different. However, Nietzsche does not seem to agree that the system falls apart. Nietzsche insists that the strongest individuals will follow their egoism; they will as an expression of their ownmost self. The only way that they can will is to delude themselves into thinking that they actually

are changing the future. They will in order to achieve the “self-eternalization” to which Lowith refers above. Their willing is an imprinting of themselves on the future that will recur. Creation is a type of game for these individuals. No set code of ethics prompts their willing; rather, their egoism prompts the creation of values. Their desire to create the type of life that they would want to live infinitely inspires their willing. If one is authentic, one will find the eternal recurrence exhilarating. This is why Nietzsche describes the eternal return as the “ultimate, most joyous, most wantonly extravagant Yes to life” which “represents not only the highest insight but also the *deepest*, that which is most strictly confirmed and born out by truth and science. Nothing in existence may be subtracted, nothing is dispensable” (EH, 272). The authentic individual lives in such a way that he wants and craves that every action be repeated. He chooses each action in full awareness of the fact that the action will infinitely recur. Although he cannot alter the physical facts that have occurred, nor the fact that they will infinitely recur, he does not condemn the past. He clings to the past because it has helped to mold him into the creative, willing being that he is and because it leads to the future he envisages. The recognition of the eternal recurrence opens up the possibility of individuals living authentic lives. The authentic individual lives without regrets.

The eternal return does not present an ethical metaphysics in the manner of Christianity; rather, the doctrine offers the recognition that every action, choice, contemplation in some way contributes to who an individual is. Zarathustra explains; “What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents” (Z, 264). The authentic individual knows who he is and what he wants to be (which is the same as who he is). Nietzsche adds; “Not the intensity but the duration of high feelings makes high men” (BGE, 72). The reason the authentic individual must consider whether he will want this experience to recur is that it is part of his cumulative self. Thus, his choices matter. If he loves himself, he must love all his actions including his mistakes. But if he cannot bear

the thought of his experiences recurring, if he cannot will the eternal return of the same, this means he suffers life.

Nietzsche does not interpret the eternal recurrence as a fixed ethical or metaphysical doctrine. Nietzsche would not say that one *should* live an authentic life, but the free spirits who recognize the implications of their actions *will* necessarily live authentic lives.

Nietzsche recognizes that there is no free will, only strong and weak wills. Those who understand the degeneration that could come feel a great responsibility to the future.

Nietzsche explains:

[A]nyone who has the rare eye for the over-all danger that "man" himself *degenerates*; anyone who, like us, has recognized the monstrous fortuity that has so far had its way and play regarding the future of man--a game in which no hand, and not even a finger, of God took part as a player; anyone who fathoms the calamity that lies concealed in the absurd guilelessness and blind confidence of "modern ideas" and even more in the whole Christian-European morality--suffers from an anxiety that is past all comparisons. With a single glance he sees what, given a favorable accumulation and increase of forces and tasks, might yet *be made of man*; he knows with all the knowledge of his conscience how man is still unexhausted for the greatest possibilities and how often the type "man" has already confronted enigmatic decisions and new paths--he knows still better from his most painful memories what wretched things have so far usually broken a being of the highest rank that was in the process of becoming, so that it broke, sank, and became contemptible.

The *over-all degeneration of man... is possible*, there is no doubt of it. Anyone who has once thought through this possibility to the end knows one kind of nausea that other men don't know--but perhaps also a new *task!*-- (BGE 203)

But is the eternal recurrence at all involved in this? Unaware of whether such degeneration will occur, Nietzsche motivates himself to will humanity toward the *Übermensch* instead. He is aware that what will happen in the future has already happened a number of times; however, he has the motivation to will because he can see a danger that he cannot allow to happen, even if the last man has already arisen in the future. At the moment he decides to will a new task for humanity, Nietzsche must forget that the future has already occurred. Nietzsche's ability to envisage what the type "Man" could be impels him to reject the path that leads to the production of the last man and also to create the path that leads to the *Übermensch*. In a sense, Nietzsche has no choice but to rebel against the possibility of the

last man ruling the earth.

The eternal recurrence, combined with the awareness of the will to power and the malleable nature of human beings, means that the free spirit can become a new type of philosopher who molds human beings in one direction or another. But without God, the free spirit is also left without an answer to the question of why he should bother to create in one direction or another. Nietzsche does not provide a set answer to that question. Willing does not alter the fact that life will eternally recur, but through willing the individual can interpret the past in a new way. In this manner the individual creates meaning for himself (and perhaps others as well). The individual who loves himself wills in order to promote himself. Nietzsche explains what willing means to the noble individual:

The noble type of man experiences *itself* as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, "what is harmful to me is harmful in itself"; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is *value-creating*. Everything it knows as part of itself it honors: such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give and bestow: the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power. The noble human being honors himself as one who is powerful, also as one who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness (BGE, 260).

The noble individual wills because of a creative overflow. His willing is a gift to himself and to the future generations who benefit from his life-affirming will (cf. Z, 186-188).

### **What Happens to the Will to Power and the Übermensch Doctrines?**

Nietzsche teaches that the eternal recurrence should not lead to faith in nihilism, but to a triumph over nihilism. For Nietzsche, the eternal return of the same does not nullify the significance of willing, nor does it undermine the crucial importance of creating the Übermensch. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence as "the highest *formula* of affirmation that is at all attainable" (EH, emphasis added). The doctrine is a *formula* for affirmation; it is not the highest *thing* that one can affirm, for that is the Übermensch. One will not select the Übermensch without some motivation to do so. The

eternal recurrence of the same provides the formula or the framework for that affirmation. The will to power is the means of creating the Übermensch and accepting (affirming) the eternal recurrence. The eternal recurrence provides the motivation to will, while the Übermensch is the goal toward which one can now turn, the goal that is to be willed. Nietzsche intends to create the possibility of other free spirits becoming

the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo*--not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle, and not only to a spectacle but at bottom to him who needs precisely this spectacle--and who makes it necessary because again and again he needs himself--and makes himself necessary---- (BGE 56).

Nietzsche hopes that such individuals will create a future that enables them to affirm every detail, every accident, every minutia that has so far occurred. Humans are ignorant of what the future will be even though the future has already happened an infinite number of times. Due to that ignorance, human willing matters. Nietzsche does not know if the last man will arise or not, but the nauseating possibility that a race of last men probably will arise inspires Nietzsche's task to create the conditions so that a different kind of being will come about--the Übermensch. Nietzsche can only affirm everything that was and is if he creates this new goal. Because Nietzsche loves life, loves willing, and loves himself and other creative spirits, he must create this new goal for humanity.

### **Prerequisites For Acceptance of the Eternal Recurrence**

To be able to will the eternal recurrence as Nietzsche understands it, the free spirit can no longer believe in metaphysical goals. Nietzsche explains,

To *endure* the idea of the recurrence one needs: freedom from morality; new means against the fact of *pain* (pain conceived as a tool, as the father of pleasure; there is no cumulative consciousness of displeasure); the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity; abolition of the "will"; abolition of "knowledge-in-itself."

Greatest elevation of the consciousness of strength in man, as he creates the overman (WP, 1060).

The destruction of all gods and otherworldly ideals is the "No-saying, *No-doing* part" of Nietzsche's task (EH, 310). Zarathustra uses the image of the destroying lion for this

phase of the task (Z, 138-139). Nietzsche and the other free spirits recognize that the fundamental basis for the existence of Christianity has already been undermined, but before they can accept the eternal return of the same they must free their hearts from the need for such ideals. These false goals denigrate the creative capacity of human willing. Only when Nietzsche becomes “deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers” can he “become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*” (BGE, 230).

This freedom *from* all past metaphysics enables the free spirit to be authentic, that is, it gives him the opportunity to will his own personal goal. Nietzsche describes the egoism of the noble individual as “that unshakable faith that to a being such as ‘we are’ other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves. The noble soul accepts this fact of its egoism without any question mark” (BGE, 265). Such an individual can only bear the gravity of the eternal recurrence if he has faith in himself and love of himself as a creator of values. The free spirits who are no longer bound by God, but who are unable to esteem anything else, will become nihilists. Because these individuals are unable to create, they prefer to will nothingness instead of willing the eternal recurrence. The authentic individual, on the other hand, sees himself as the ordering finger of the law because he chooses what his goal shall be. He is “the judge, the avenger, and the victim of [his] own law” (Z, 226). He determines what of the past is worth preserving and uses that past to shape the future. So, in the end, Nietzsche remains consistent with his most salient teaching of “The Use and Abuse of History.”

The ability to will the eternal recurrence means the ability to love one’s fate. Nietzsche defines greatness as “amor fati”: “My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it--all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary--but *love* it” (EH, 258). The eternal

recurrence means that who an individual is has already been determined an infinite number of times. So far, chance or fate has determined the character of human beings. Amor fati is the ability to love the circumstances and personality into which one is thrown even though he has no control over the past, or over the fact that the past events will recur eternally.

The authentic individual, like the child, “has nothing yet of the past to disown and plays in a happy blindness between the walls of the past and the future” (H, 6). The child has a forgetfulness that adults lack. The child follows his egoistic impulses because he has not yet learned to suppress the instincts. The child does not know how to act other than out of love for himself. This is not a conscious love either. It is an unconscious impulse to make the world bend to whatever game he is playing.

### **The Relationship Between the Eternal Recurrence and the Eternal Dichotomy of the “Masculine” and “Feminine”**

The eternal return of the same provides the reason why Nietzsche insists on maintaining the dichotomy of the sexes. There will no longer be any extraordinary individuals if this dichotomy is not maintained. Even though everything recurs, Nietzsche stresses the necessity of the “Eternal Feminine,” and of something “Eternally-and-Necessarily-Feminine” (BGE, 239). Nietzsche describes himself as the “first psychologist of the eternally feminine” (EH, 266). He also speaks of the “Eternal Masculine” and the “Eternally Objective,” but he focuses on the “Eternal Feminine” more directly. Furthermore, he describes eternity (Z, 340-343), life (Z, 220-222), truth (BGE, preface), wisdom (Z, 221), and happiness as women, respectively. But what the future will be like is unknown by Nietzsche, though he has a pretty good idea of where it is headed, at least in its broad outlines. Nietzsche currently sees the continuing erosion of the feminine perspective at the hands of Christianity and liberal democracy (BGE, 239). If sex can no longer exert a powerful influence over human life, Nietzsche does not see what will be left to inspire human willing. Nietzsche sees the feminine as “eternal” and “necessary” because without this fundamental perspective, Nietzsche’s ideal cannot be actualized.

## **Eternally Hostile War Between the Sexes**

Nietzsche also claims that the relationship between man and woman involves (and should always be characterized by) an eternally antagonistic misunderstanding of one another. Their mutual misunderstanding is the root of the perpetual antagonism between man and woman that has been the prime motivation for masculine and feminine willing. Even though the antagonisms that have characterized sexual relations in the past will eternally recur, Nietzsche promotes the continuation of this tension in the future. Nietzsche recognizes that the relationship between man and woman does not have to be an eternally hostile tension, but he wills that it should be. Modernity differs from all other epochs in that it threatens to erode this antagonism completely. Indeed, modernity is quickly creating a condition where the roles of man and woman are interchangeable. Manliness is no longer cultivated as a masculine virtue; it is considered either a male vice or a trait that women too can acquire. Femininity is seen as the enslavement of woman rather than as the cultivation of womanly character. To Nietzsche, this erosion of sexual distinctions between man and woman is the clearest evidence possible of the coming of the last man. And the plausibility of this view, when considered in the light of our present reality, is startling.

Nietzsche hopes to overturn the Enlightenment's faith in the equality of the sexes in the interests of establishing a hierarchy, or "pathos of distance," in society. He discusses the goal of establishing a hierarchical arrangement in BGE 257. But this aphorism does not mention women at all. The antagonism between the sexes is merely one prerequisite for the hierarchy that Nietzsche intends to cultivate. Nietzsche encourages an eternally hostile war of the sexes because it will create the conditions that are less hostile to the *Übermensch*. He also advocates conventional slavery. Previous philosophers had to contend with the degenerative effects of democracy. Socrates too had to poke and prod the sluggish, decadent horse of Athens (Plato, 1984, 30e). But there is one fundamental difference between the democracies with which previous philosophers had to contend and the post-Enlightenment democracies that Nietzsche faces. Prior to Nietzsche's time, different roles



were ascribed to man and woman. And those different roles cultivated distinct masculine and feminine “natures,” each with their own attributes which were very different from the other. These distinct creative energies promoted struggle, passion, love, and drama. In previous forms of democracy, sexual difference was at least a vestige of the “pathos of distance” that all democracies eventually destroy. Nietzsche considers the cultivation of distinct masculine and feminine energies as absolutely crucial to the future of humanity.

Those of us who understand that Nietzsche is not some fanatic, or lunatic, or both, find Nietzsche’s condemnation of egalitarianism especially troubling. We hope to find a way to use Nietzsche’s provocative suggestions to ennoble liberal democratic politics. Some of us might ask how we can maintain the tension that vitalizes masculine and feminine creativity while promoting mutual respect and equality between the sexes. But Nietzsche insists that liberal democrats cannot have it both ways--we cannot “have our cake and eat it too.” Democratic societies necessarily become homogenous societies. The focus on equal rights protection has a leveling effect on both sexes, and society is thus altered for the worse. As Shapiro eloquently states; “Nietzsche’s thoughts remain ‘out of season.’ They are just easier for us to praise and respect when the season is in our past, rather than in our lives.”<sup>104</sup>

Nietzsche adamantly opposes egalitarianism and especially the modern attempt to establish complete equality of the sexes. Nietzsche is concerned with the structure of society because his project is an attempt to bring about the creative genius. Only from a clash among a wealth of types can the *Übermensch* be achieved; therefore, Nietzsche must preserve distinction, opposition, suffering and struggle. Nietzsche insists that the tension between the sexes must be the root of that opposition. Unfortunately, that tension cannot be adequately cultivated and promoted in an egalitarian, tolerant, liberal democratic society. And Nietzsche warns that without that tension, humanity is bound to become a race of last men. Nietzsche cannot will the eternal recurrence if the last man becomes the destiny of

<sup>104</sup>This quotation is taken from Shapiro’s unpublished manuscript.

Mankind. The necessity of an eternally hostile war between the sexes can only be adequately understood in terms of the eternal recurrence of the same.

Without an adequate understanding of the eternal recurrence, there is no clear reason why one ought to will, nor is there any urgency in determining what one should will. The failure of scholars to articulate the eternal recurrence as Nietzsche presents it accounts for why so many strange analyses of his comments on women exist. The eternal recurrence gives a coherence to the Nietzschean system. As Heidegger and Löwith indicate, there are some serious difficulties with the doctrine. However, without the eternal recurrence to give some continuity and grounding to the system, Nietzsche's own truths about women simply do not matter--they would be nothing more than a random posturing. The eternal recurrence is a doctrine that is intended to give people the motivation to select the *Übermensch*. It is simply not possible to appreciate his prescription for the sexes and the urgency of promoting femininity and masculinity without acknowledging the way in which each part of the Nietzschean system fits together. Of course, Nietzsche was simply incorrect that it would have the effect that he hoped. Very few people understand the doctrine. If they cannot understand the doctrine, they cannot understand Nietzsche's vision and his goal will not be attained.

## CHAPTER 7: NIETZSCHE'S "TRUTHS" ABOUT WOMAN

### Do Nietzsche's Observations Warrant a Privileged Status?

Nietzsche discusses what the relationship between the sexes should be in chapter seven of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which is entitled "Our Virtues." This is one of two sections in the book that utilizes the first person. The transcendent virtues Nietzsche prescribes include, above all, the proper disposition toward the problem of man and woman. One's virtue can be demonstrated by the manner in which the thinker understands the fundamental differences between the sexes. Prescribing what the respective roles of man and woman should be constitutes a "cardinal problem" for Nietzsche (BGE, 231). "Our Virtues" focuses on the need to alter woman's nature from what it is becoming. The defects of modernity announce themselves to Nietzsche most pointedly when he sees what women are actually becoming--men.

Just as Nietzsche is about to articulate his truths about women he makes a personal confession regarding the truths about woman that he is about to enumerate. He explains:

Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does which also does not merely "preserve"--as physiologists know. But at the bottom of us, really "deep down," there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions. Whenever a cardinal problem is at stake, there speaks an unchangeable "this is I"; about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only finish learning--only discover ultimately how this is "settled in him." At times we find certain solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in *us*; some call them henceforth *their* "convictions." Later--we see them only as steps to self-knowledge, signposts to the problem we *are*--rather, to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual *fatum*, to what is *unteachable* very "deep down" (BGE, 231).

Nietzsche refers to "an unchangeable 'this is I,'" some fixed "spiritual *fatum*" about each individual that cannot be altered by education. The unchangeable quality is the will as Zarathustra explains: "Indeed, in me there is something invulnerable and unburi-able, something that explodes rock: that is *my will*. Silent and unchanged it strides through the years. It would walk its way on my feet, my old will, and its mind is hard of heart and invulnerable" (Z, 224). And an essential component of each individual's will is its particular understanding of sexual difference. In the discussion that follows (BGE, 232-

239), Nietzsche distinguishes what the roles of each sex ought to be. Nietzsche's disclaimer draws attention to his perspectivism. Immediately before exploring the topic of women, he introduces, indeed he *highlights*, a serious problem: the status of these "truths" Nietzsche is about to articulate.<sup>105</sup>

By admitting that these are only *his* truths, that they reveal the great stupidity *he* is, Nietzsche contrasts himself with all previous philosophers:

They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic (as opposed to the mystics of every rank, who are more honest and doltish--and talk of "inspiration"); while at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of "inspiration"--most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract--that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact. They are all advocates who resent the name, and for the most part even wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize "truths" -- and *very* far from having the courage of the conscience that admits this, precisely this, to itself; very far from having the good taste of the courage which also lets this be known, whether to warn an enemy or friend, or, from exuberance, to mock itself (BGE, 5).

Nietzsche, unlike previous philosophers, admits that whenever a cardinal problem is at stake, a deep conviction--a "this is I" in every thinker determines how the individual will understand himself and the world. For example, every individual carries in himself a notion of what man is and a notion about what woman is and this inclination cannot be altered by education.<sup>106</sup> Nietzsche's truths about woman are not absolute "truths," but are based on his "this is I," a gut feeling, an inclination, or unchangeable disposition. Indeed, *all truths* are based on some unchangeable quality deep down in the individual.

<sup>105</sup>Recall that Nietzsche also introduced the problem of nature in *The Gay Science* just as he was about to discuss woman (GS, 59).

<sup>106</sup>Oliver (1994) and Kofman (1994) suggest that the "this is I" about woman comes from the individual's relationship with his or her mother. This interpretation stems from Nietzsche's comment that "Everyone bears within him a picture of woman derived from his mother: it is this which determines whether, in his dealings with women, he respects them or despises them or is in general indifferent to them" (HAH I: 380). Oliver further suggests that one never overcomes one's relationship with one's mother, that one's view of woman is inevitably determined by this relationship. But this is an unfounded assumption in light of Nietzsche's comments here. In BGE 231, Nietzsche suggests that there is an unteachable gut inclination regarding man and woman. He suggests that education, even the rearing by the mother, cannot alter one's inclination toward or against women. Nietzsche suggests the will is unchangeable.

Apparently, this unchangeable quality and not “evident and universally valid insights” is “the ground of all worthwhile understanding or knowledge” (Strauss, 190). Nietzsche explains further; “we shall presumably have only virtues which have learned to get along best with our most secret and cordial inclinations, with our most ardent needs” (BGE, 214).<sup>107</sup> And Nietzsche’s most ardent need is to prevent the actualization of the last man. Nietzsche’s truths represent the solution to such fundamental problems that “we free, *very* free spirits” (BGE, 230) face. He continues: “At times we find solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in *us*.” (BGE, 231). Others who are disposed to believe Nietzsche’s truths about man and woman (presumably because they are similarly constituted to Nietzsche) will call these truths *their* convictions. In actuality, these truths reveal who *Nietzsche* is. These truths are steps to self-knowledge for Nietzsche and this is his purpose in enumerating them.

Nietzsche’s personal confession begs the question of whether Nietzsche understands himself to be describing woman’s unchangeable essence. Nietzsche admits that these truths express his idiosyncratic will; however, that his truths are subjective expressions of his will does not discredit them. “Truths” are “former *positings* of values, creations of value which have become dominant” (BGE, 211). He recognizes that “truths” are temporary values created by humans in order to provide meaning to humans for a fixed period of time. This definition is consistent with Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence teaching. “Truths” are fixed temporarily, but will ultimately be transcended by the creative geniuses who will replace old, degenerating ones. Although “truths” are not permanent in the sense of never dying, all positings of value that become “truths” are fixed in the sense that they eternally recur. Nietzsche’s truths, however, are not yet dominant; hence, they have not

<sup>107</sup>Nietzsche’s disclaimer is not a mere demonstration of the virtue of honesty as Clark contends, nor is it an attempt to redeem his anti-egalitarian comments on woman as Kaufmann contends. Kaufmann states; “The embarrassing contrast with Nietzsche’s own remarks in section 230, toward the end of the paragraph..., speaks for itself. If anything redeems section 232, and much of the remainder of Part VII, it is surely the disclaimer in 231. (BGE, 232, N. 23). Most likely he discusses the virtue of intellectual probity, or cruelty turned against oneself (cf. Strauss, 188-189; cf. BGE, 230).

yet been undermined. Notice that Nietzsche does not put quotation marks around the term “truths” when he refers to his own truths. This is because his truths are not yet dead. In “Our Virtues” Nietzsche discusses what he considers to be the proper role of women; he is prescribing to nature what it should be, just as the noble Stoics did (BGE, 9). Nietzsche would like his understanding of the sexes to become the dominant truth about man and woman. That is, Nietzsche *creates* these truths; they are not fixed, predetermined truths that Nietzsche “discovers.” If they were, Nietzsche would have no urgency in articulating and defending them.

Nietzsche only uses the word “nature” in one aphorism (BGE, 239) of “Our Virtues.” And he only uses it outside of quotation marks once in this aphorism. When Nietzsche uses quotation marks around the term he is not referring to his understanding of nature that he hopes to cultivate, but the understanding of nature that had previously had power but is now dead. Nietzsche presents his transvaluation of the current “nature” of (nineteenth century, bourgeois, liberal feminist) woman. Nietzsche offers pointers toward a more noble type of woman who properly embodies the feminine will. What woman has learned from the Enlightenment has degraded her, and consequently man as well. But with the proper teachings, i.e., Nietzsche's teachings, both man and woman can be improved and ennobled. Nietzsche accurately predicts a dangerous path toward homogenization. He intends to overturn the Enlightenment project, the consequence of which would be to establish complete equality between the sexes.

### **Critique of Universal Education**

Nietzsche argues for unequal distribution of education and political rights. Over half of the population is female and that half should not have the same access to education as man. This is because education intended for everyone is necessarily defective. Nietzsche explains; “That everyone may learn to read, in the long run corrupts not only writing but also thinking” (Z, 152). If everyone receives the same education, books will be written on a lower level to accommodate the common, ordinary, and less subtle minds. In

the end the overall level of education will be lowered. Furthermore, when men and women receive the same education, they will generally have to refer to a level of experience that all human beings as human beings share. This means that universal education will focus on the lowest aspects of humans, meaning the basic human needs for comfort, security, food, and drink, i.e., satisfaction of the most basic biological functions. Ironically, although the focus is on these biological needs, such an education necessarily denigrates what Nietzsche considers to be the most important aspects of human biology--those traits that distinguish one human from the next. Because the education can only address their commonalities, it must remain on a neutral "objective" level.

The goal of such an education is not to teach the greatest minds to think about the most important questions, but to be fair, to give all people the same tools with which to compete with one another. Universal education flattens the souls of those who receive it because it is necessarily sterile and uninspiring. "'Higher education' and huge numbers--that is a contradiction to start with. All higher education belongs only to the exception: one must be privileged to have a right to so high a privilege. All great, all beautiful things can never be common property" (TI, 510). Most people are not noble, most do not possess genius. Attempting to teach the entire population as if all had the same potential degrades the greatest minds. Such universal education debases literature, art, and thinking because only the clash of differences, idiosyncracies, and personal thoughts unleash the creative potential of human beings. The struggle between the masculine and feminine ways of thinking is a potential source of tremendous passion and extraordinary creations. And since one's sexuality is so much a part of who one is, to drain masculine and feminine subjectivity out of the educational process is to corrupt those who receive it. Failing to educate the distinct needs and predilections that sex and sexuality impose on man and woman causes the influence and passion of those drives to dwindle.

Nietzsche's argument merely refers to the leveling effects of universal education. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not recommend educating only the smartest, most talented

individuals regardless of whether they are male or female.<sup>108</sup> Nietzsche does not explore this option. He recommends excluding women altogether. Nietzsche argues that even if women are capable of such an education, which today is undeniable, they should be denied access to it. And the only type of education he prescribes is finishing school for girls (BGE, 234). Nietzsche's rejection of universal education for women is more than a condemnation of modern education. Nowhere does Nietzsche say that women are incapable of learning a more genuine type of education than modernity has to offer; indeed, they are. The difficulty to which Nietzsche points is not that women are incapable of enlightenment, but that they are all too capable of it. When women receive education equal to that received by men, the dichotomy of the sexes cannot survive. When educated women enter the work force and prove themselves to be quite capable of these pursuits (as they are), very few are left to focus primarily on the cultivation of strong children. Society suffers, children suffer, and man suffers from the extension of education to women. The effects of such an education are especially denigrating to women, insists Nietzsche.

In the end, such education produces the businessman, the scientist, the scholar, the educated individual, but not a *woman*. Nietzsche illustrates the contradiction produced in the soul of the literary female: "The literary female: unsatisfied, excited, her heart and entrails void, ever listening, full of painful curiosity, to the imperative, which whispers from the depths of her organism, '*aut liberi aut libri*' ['Either children or books.']" (TI, 531). Granting equal education to woman radically alters the life choices that woman faces. Nietzsche illustrates this with the juxtaposition of two of her most important alternatives: children or books. Book writing is only one example of a type of career

<sup>108</sup>In an essay entitled "Modern Man and his Categories of Thought," C.S Lewis offers a reason why it may not be desirable to teach the most promising males and females in the same classroom. Lewis notes that the mixing of the sexes in the classroom "reduces the amount of serious argument about ideas" (Lewis, 62-63). Not only is the general level of education lowered when it is offered universally to all, but when the sexes are taught together in the classroom, the character of scholarship is altered. Both sexes become too concerned with impressing one another rather than with enlightening themselves. Nietzsche would agree with Lewis that single-sex education is preferable to mixed classes, though Nietzsche is clearly not a proponent of universal education in general.



woman may obtain, but Nietzsche's argument would apply to other careers as well.

History offers several fine examples of women who have quite capably allowed their literary genius to flower. Virginia Woolf, George Sand, Simone DeBeauvoir, and Jane Austen are a few examples. Nietzsche would quickly point out that none of these women bore children. Virginia Woolf voices a similar point in her analysis of the lives of George Eliot, Jane Austen, and the Bronte Sisters. In her attempt to determine what made these women capable of producing great novels, Woolf notes that "four more incongruous characters could not have met together in a room" (Woolf, 66). Woolf immediately adds "Save for the possibly relevant fact that not one of them had a child" (ibid. ). In fact, Virginia Woolf also had no children. Woolf raises the question that Nietzsche introduces, namely, are literary females sterile? To say that these women could not have children because they were sterile is a hasty generalization. For instance, Simone DeBeauvoir was quite capable of bearing. Nevertheless, it is striking that none of these women had children. Their creative outlet was literature, not the production of the child. Nietzsche would argue that one could scarcely find a woman who does both well, and history has born out this notion.

Nietzsche implies that woman placing emphasis on intellectual pursuits is contradictory for woman, but not for man (TI, 531). A real woman does not choose between children and books, according to Nietzsche. There is no choice for the real woman. The child is her goal. Nietzsche fails to note that many great men have failed to produce children. Though Socrates had children, his family life was far from fulfilling. Moreover, Socrates's children were rather mediocre. Nietzsche himself had no children. Nietzsche surely does not consider Socrates, the genius of the heart, or himself sterile. Consequently, Nietzsche is on very shaky ground when he asserts that woman should not attempt to allow their creative genius to flower. Working mothers today clearly demonstrate that it is possible to have a career and a child. But Nietzsche's argument that one may not reach the peak in both areas simultaneously has some merit.

Nietzsche correctly suggests that woman's receiving the same educational opportunities as men demotes the importance of the child. Children are no longer self-evidently of primary importance for woman, nor are they necessarily of *any* importance to her, according to Nietzsche. Once she is granted the same access to education and careers as man, woman must now decide whether family or career should be her focus. Nietzsche presents the issue as an either/or scenario. In part, Nietzsche has historical evidence to support his point. Nietzsche would add that deep down all women know that this is an either/or choice, even if women today are likely to want to do it all. Her heart will be in one more than the other if she chooses both. She will either do a mediocre job with both, or she will give one precedence over the other. The educated woman is faced with no attractive alternatives. If woman chooses the career, she denies her maternal inclinations, and if she chooses to be a mother, she fails to live up to her intellectual potential. Over time, as woman is taught to choose career (as she is taught today), her desire for the child grows weaker. Nietzsche fears that the ultimate consequence of the emancipation of woman is the erosion of the strong *need* and *desire* of women to cultivate children.

Woman's notion of the family-centered life is fading away, if she sees it as an option at all.

Nietzsche's argument rules out the possibility of a woman like J.K. Rowling who manages both to be a single mother and write best-selling children's books. Surely this woman is a living example of a woman who can have a successful career and be a good mother to her children. But J.K. Rowling is not a typical woman and her situation is rare. Often the career undermines the rearing of children, as we see quite clearly today. Many children of dual-income families are now raised in day care centers instead of at home. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not grant that some careers are conducive to the rearing of children, and interestingly, writing books may be one of them. Nietzsche correctly notes that the denigration of raising a family to one option among many for woman carries psychological consequences that transforms woman's essence. If woman does not have to be driven by the desire to have children, if woman is intellectually, morally, and socially

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capable of pursuing other avenues of interest, feminists see no *necessary* reason why woman ought to be bound to domesticity. Woman no longer understands herself as having a destiny or purpose because she is a woman, she now forces herself to make the choice between career and family. Nietzsche contends that the necessity of making this choice today changes women--for the worse. Yet Nietzsche would argue that even if she could be "liberated" from this deep need and desire for the child, to do so would be dangerous because it turns woman into a slavish and resentful being. Whereas the availability of more options is supposed to be liberating and empowering, their availability puts women in a precarious position. As many, who find themselves stuck in the very position that Nietzsche describes, feel they should not have to choose between family and career (or, as Nietzsche sees it, between femininity and sterility), resentment ensues. Woman becomes angry at her feminine inclinations so she tries to repress them in one way or another. Nietzsche understands her choice of career to be the active denial of femininity.

Nietzsche is wrong to imply that having children must be woman's only role, because not all women want to have children, even if women have a biological predisposition to have children. Nor should all women have children, for the fact that women can have children does not mean that they all make good mothers. Most will not produce the type of children that Nietzsche hopes to cultivate anyway. Moreover, he does not discuss the fact that many women may feel resentful if forced into the role of mother and wife. Nietzsche would respond as Rousseau does: "Women, you say, do not always produce children? No, but their proper purpose is to produce them" (Rousseau, 362). Nietzsche argues that woman can be cultivated in such a way as to desire the child more strongly because with the proper enforcement, woman could have a greater likelihood of producing a stronger baby. Women are resentful of having to fulfill this role because she has been taught by feminists to be resentful. This is the immediate consequence of universal education opening up these possibilities for woman. One would expect Nietzsche to add that their resentment is the result of a particular prejudice, namely, the belief that

family is a burden and industry, politics, and an active life in the public realm are choiceworthy for their own sake. A final criticism of Nietzsche's prescription is that it is quite possible for a woman to be feminine without having a child. Nietzsche understands femininity as woman's means to the child, but it is possible that women might enjoy their femininity for its own sake.

Not only does universal education erode the unique talents, drives, and instincts that distinguish woman from man, but such education teaches her to make the same mistakes males are accustomed to making. Nietzsche's argument is plausible because education began as an effort to teach males. Universal education is nothing more than expanding that teaching to women. Woman learns to participate in the intellectual pursuits of the sterile (male) scholars. George Sand, whom Nietzsche understands as an indictment against universal education, took the name and the attire of man and failed to produce any children (cf. BGE, 233). Nietzsche laments that "there are enough imbecilic friends and corrupters of woman among the scholarly asses of the male sex who advise woman to defeminize herself in this way and to imitate all the stupidities with which 'man' in Europe, European 'manliness,' is sick: they would like to reduce woman to the level of 'general education'" (BGE, 239). Providing woman with this type of education "reduces" her, that is, makes her less than she could (should) be. At the prompting of man, woman begins to examine herself scientifically, that is, she studies "woman as such" as a historical phenomenon. She drops her veils and learns to treat her instincts and her femininity as products of historical and social conditions to be denounced, rather than as inexplicable impulses that deserve respect. In so doing she uncovers the feminine secrets that have always been the source of her greatest strength. What man has always perceived as incomprehensible and admirable about woman she reveals as nothing more than a socially constructed illusion, an illusion that can be changed. By uncovering the origin of her roles, she kills man's idealization of woman. She also kills her own self-idealization. The power of woman dies just like any other historical phenomenon when it is completely understood.

Democratic enlightenment amounts to “the breaking of woman’s magic spell” over man (BGE, 239). The scientific probing of woman by woman reduces the feminine attributes to what is thinkable rationally. When she reveals her hidden desires and cravings, she weakens her ability to inspire man.

Although Nietzsche does not make the suggestion, a potential solution to the problem Nietzsche faces (the potential erosion of femininity) would be to educate men and women in separate classrooms. But a serious difficulty would still remain. Who would decide what women are taught--men or women? It is not clear in what specific ways Nietzsche would want to educate woman beyond maternal duties. He would still recommend that she stay at home, so the education would be little else than a finishing school. It would be difficult to determine a basis for differentiating the “appropriate” teachings for woman from those that are appropriate for man.

### **What Does the “Enlightened” Woman Abandon?**

Nietzsche sees no difficulty in excluding women from education altogether, for women do not really want to be educated. Nietzsche questions in all seriousness “whether woman really *wants* enlightenment about herself--whether she *can* will it” (BGE, 232). He implies that woman is simply not intellectually curious, she does not want to understand herself, and that it may not be in her best interest to follow such scholarly pursuits. Nietzsche is wrong to imply that all women lack intellectual curiosity, and he is further incorrect to suggest an incongruity between intellectual curiosity and femininity. But again, an important teaching that is worthy of our attention stems from these assertions. Intellectual pursuits are incompatible with feminine modesty because too much self-knowledge undermines femininity. Nietzsche does not outline the reasons why, but perhaps it is possible to speculate based upon what we have already seen. When woman learns that intellectually she can achieve the same things as man, she sees that she can protect herself (economically) just as well as man can. She also has medical technology (like birth control, hormone therapy, abortion) at her disposal to control or tame her

physical longings and make her body bend toward her new goal. It becomes less clear to her why she needs a man (unless she happens to want a child). She has no reason to appear to be modest or feminine at all, because, after all, modesty does not get one a job. And if her need for a man becomes weaker, so too does her desire to be feminine. She no longer needs to be a woman because in the social and political world she finds it more useful to be considered merely as a person.

Woman should be the woman behind the man and the mother behind the children who exerts her power behind the scenes. She needs to cultivate modesty, the feminine virtue par excellence which has always been woman's key virtue, in order to take this role. Without modesty, only the ugly raw qualities and functions stand. Nietzsche explains:

Woman has much reason for shame; so much pedantry, superficiality, schoolmarmishness, petty presumption, petty licentiousness and immodesty lies concealed in woman--one only needs to study her behavior with children!--and so far all this was at bottom best repressed and kept under control by *fear* of man. Woe when "the eternally boring in woman"<sup>109</sup> -- she is rich in that!--is permitted to venture forth! When she begins to unlearn thoroughly and on principle her prudence and art--of grace, of play, of chasing away worries, of lightening burdens and taking things lightly--and her subtle aptitude for agreeable desires! (BGE, 232).

When woman becomes educated (which to Nietzsche means immodest), she loses the ability to fear man in any profound sense, for presumably she knows what he does.

Woman learns to act like men, to be outspoken and bold in placing even the most superficial demands. Consequently, woman loses her feminine traits which include the arts of grace, play, and chasing away worries--all of which lighten *man's* burdens. Woman's modesty is a mask, though it is an agreeable one. Her use of illusion, masks, and play increases man's drive to be masterful, domineering, and conquering. Nietzsche suggests here that woman ought to be modest because her immodesty is potentially dangerous *to man's* disposition. Her modesty helps to lighten *man's* load as it enables him to fantasize about her and what he would like woman to be. Beneath the surface, woman is presumptuous, immodest, and shameful. Though this is far from a flattering assessment,

<sup>109</sup>See note 57 above.

men do not fare much better in Nietzsche's perspective. She delights in her power over children, a power that she never doubts is fundamentally hers: "Deep in her heart, no mother doubts that the child she has borne is her property" (BGE, 194). In BGE 232, Nietzsche stresses woman's behavior with children because woman's highlighting this power in particular has the potential to break man's spirits. Woman may not doubt the child is her own, but man may very well doubt that he is the child's father. Formerly woman needed to convince man that the child was in fact his. Man needs to create parental rights in order to have influence over the child, whereas woman, by virtue of carrying the child in her own body, does not need any rights. She experiences her authority over the child in housing and nourishing the fetus for nine months. Thus man needs woman to be modest (and appear to take a secondary role) in order to mask his own potential inferiority complex so that he can accentuate his masterful qualities. And when woman succeeds in her modesty, "no father contests his own right to subject it [the child] to his concepts and valuations. Indeed, formerly it seemed fair for fathers (among the ancient Germans, for example) to decide on the life or death of the newborn as they saw fit" (BGE, 194). The father makes the child his own by exerting his brute strength and possibly artificial authority over the child. He becomes the *de facto* master of the child in this way. But because his authority rests on woman's assuming a secondary role, the modest woman actually has power *over man*.

Nietzsche's next paragraph elaborates what woman ought to be modest about:

Even now female voices are heard which--holy Aristophanes!--are frightening: they threaten with medical explicitness what woman *wants* from man, first and last. Is it not in the worst taste when woman sets about becoming scientific that way? So far enlightenment of this sort was fortunately man's affair, man's lot--we remained "among ourselves" in this; and whatever women write about "woman," we may in the end reserve a healthy suspicion whether woman really *wants* enlightenment about herself--whether she *can* will it-- (BGE, 232).

This advice to women comes from Nietzsche's concern for *man's* well being, that is, for man's achieving the maximum accumulation of power. Nietzsche notes (what Allan Bloom describes as) woman's "scientific concentration on the coarse material facts of sex--sex, not



eros or love” (Bloom, 1993, 40).<sup>110</sup> She changes from the lover with her “art of enchantment” to the scientific human with her “method of disenchantment” (ibid.). Bloom, like Nietzsche, criticizes this demystification. Nietzsche is correct to notice that women who shed their modesty move to the opposite extreme; they become medically explicit in expressing their sexual needs. This openness is the inevitable result of the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies. Woman’s outspoken quest becomes a search for the perfect orgasm or sperm donor. More and more women make clear that men are only useful to them insofar as they are bank accounts, sex toys, or sperm donors. In fact, being a single parent has become an ideal for some.

One danger of woman’s sexual liberation is the elimination of the lover for the sake of (multiple) sexual partners. Her explicitness also enables males to get sex without commitment, but man loses more than he gains when woman becomes the object of lust instead of the object of love, admiration, and devotion. Nietzsche does not explicitly make this point, though it is a logical extension of assertions he does make. Even the last man has sex, but this sex is only a *little* pleasure, not inspired or meaningful in any way (cf. Z, 130). Such sex is of no use to Nietzsche. As Zarathustra indicates in his speech “On Chastity,” the rarest individuals are characterized by chastity, but their chastity is not a repression of shallow lust. The chastity, in which only the most extraordinary spirits should partake, unleashes a heightened creative tension in the soul of man and woman.

Man needs woman to be enthralled with him. Her sexual explicitness makes him an unimportant or insignificant means to fulfilling her appetites. Man can no longer see woman as the sublime object of admiration that he needs her to be. Nietzsche continues:

Unless a woman seeks a new adornment for herself that way--I do think adorning herself is part of the Eternal-Feminine?--she surely wants to inspire fear of herself--perhaps she seeks mastery. But she does not *want* truth: what is truth to woman? From the beginning, nothing has been more alien, repugnant, and hostile to woman than truth--her great art is the lie, her

<sup>110</sup>Bloom is not discussing Nietzsche or Nietzsche’s view of women in this passage, but eros. He scrutinizes the modern degradation of true erotic longing for the sake of raw sex. Nevertheless, Bloom’s description of the focus on coarse raw sex certainly helps elaborate Nietzsche’s point in BGE 232.

highest concern is mere appearance and beauty. Let us men confess it: we honor and love precisely *this* art and *this* instinct in woman--we who have a hard time and for our relief like to associate with beings under whose hands, eyes, and tender follies our seriousness, our gravity and profundity almost appear to us like folly (BGE, 232).

There is some sense in Nietzsche's describing woman's adorning herself as part of the Eternal Feminine. She is the fairer sex and as such may be inclined to enhance that beauty and/ or spread beauty outside of herself. By beautifying herself, she makes herself a pleasant distraction for man. Her adornment gives profound men the strength to continue striving; she keeps these men from losing themselves in the profundity or gravity of their pursuits. This is the same reason that Zarathustra counsels woman; "Go to it, women [Frauen], discover the child in man!" (Z, 178). The child is "hidden" in man and will not come out without woman. Apparently, man may not be able to cultivate his childlike creativity without woman. And woman's adornment not only provides beneficial aspirations in man, but this skill is the key to woman's gaining ascendancy over men. Nietzsche recognizes that in seeking adornments for herself, woman seeks mastery. Nietzsche does not say what she masters, though the clear implication is that woman masters man in this manner.

Nietzsche also suggests that woman needs this adornment because the truth is so repugnant to her. Woman does not seek knowledge--she does not have the deep desire to know as some profound men do. Nietzsche does not explain *which* truth or truths are so disagreeable to woman, nor does he elaborate *why* truth is so repugnant to woman. Furthermore, Nietzsche does not make clear whether woman lies primarily to herself, to others, or to both. From what has already been discussed, we know that woman must hide from men her truths beneath her beautiful surface (i.e., her natural functions) because these are truths that *men* do not see as beautiful (cf. GS, 66). And man's assessment may convince her that she is ugly beneath the surface. If this is the case, she would want to hide woman's truths, or in most extreme cases, deny her natural functions altogether. But this suggestion does not seem to be consistent with Nietzsche's other assertions that

woman longs for the child and wants the child in a more profound way than does man. Still, there is no clear reason why woman would want to flee from truth into illusion more readily than man would. Are man's natural functions any more attractive? Nietzsche does not discuss them, perhaps because man is not primarily determined by his natural functions in the way that woman is. Woman may be more prone than man to cling to comforting illusions because her physical vulnerability or vulnerability to rape, but this is not so clear. Nietzsche does not present this argument either. A third possibility is that Nietzsche means that truth is repugnant to woman because she actually needs illusion in order to attain power. Woman does not empower herself by uncovering her hidden secrets. A later aphorism entitled "*Among women*" provides solid evidence of this third possibility: "Truth? Oh, you don't know truth! Is it not an attempt to assassinate all our *pudeurs*?" (TI, 468).<sup>111</sup> Interestingly, she would need to understand something about man in order to manipulate him with her coquetry. Whereas some men seek mastery by understanding the world, woman should focus on people; she must know men and make sure that man does not understand her. If truth is so repugnant to woman, one wonders how she ever gains enough understanding of man to be able to manipulate him in the ways Nietzsche recommends.

Nietzsche has suggested already that if woman were to recognize the deleterious consequences of becoming a reductionistic "truth"-seeker like man, she could never intentionally choose this path (cf. BGE, 232). She unlearns her feminine ability to create the beautiful illusion that sparks the imagination of males (and herself). Man, it seems, is incapable of conjuring the illusions that he needs without woman. And when woman ceases to be cunning, creative, seductive, she becomes unable to enliven his affection and passion. But man *should* overestimate and misunderstand woman's capabilities, for this animates a longing in man's soul. Her mystery excites his most masculine qualities--his creative curiosity, his sexual passion, and his desire to protect, rule, and dominate. Her

<sup>111</sup>The French term "*pudeur*" means "modesty."

beautiful mysteriousness implies to him an inherent (and profound) meaning to life--a meaning that he creates and she represents. Moreover, Nietzsche explains; "There is an innocence in lying which is the sign of good faith in a cause" (BGE, 180). Her ability to lie is indicative of a much needed faith and Nietzsche's project is an attempt to cultivate faith toward a worthy goal. When woman's incomprehensible feminine quality erodes, when her ability to adorn herself is abandoned, so too does man's masculinity wither away. And this deleterious sterilization of man harms woman insofar as women need (desire) masculine or manly men. When man overestimates woman, she correspondingly overestimates man.

Women, on the other hand, have always underestimated and will continue to underestimate other women. Nietzsche asks:

has ever a woman conceded profundity to a woman's head, or justice to a woman's heart? And is it not true that on the whole "woman" has so far been despised most by woman herself--and by no means by us?

We men wish that woman should not go on compromising herself through enlightenment--just as it was man's thoughtfulness and consideration for woman that found expression in the church decree: *mulier taceat in ecclesial*. It was for woman's good when Napoleon gave the all too eloquent Madame de Staël to understand: *mulier taceat in politicis!* And I think it is a real friend of women that counsels them today: *mulier taceat de muliere!*<sup>112</sup> (BGE, 232).

Woman does not consider other women profound or just because she understands their motivations. Perhaps she sees the truths beneath the surface of woman and she too judges them to be unattractive qualities; she understands how women manipulate others. This inability to consider other women profound or just provides an additional reason why women cannot be friends.<sup>113</sup> Woman understands other women too well. Obviously

<sup>112</sup>The three italicized phrases in this aphorism translate as follows: "Woman should be silent in church" (BGE, 232, n. 24); "Woman should be silent when it comes to politics" (BGE, 232, n. 25); "Woman should be silent about woman" (BGE, 232, n. 26).

<sup>113</sup>The either/or choice between career or family has created a new reason why women have difficulty being friends with other women. Working mothers and stay-at-home mothers experience a great deal of resentment toward one another. Both groups feel as if the other negatively judges them and this makes the two types of women incapable of befriending one another. Nietzsche does not discuss this point, though he would not be surprised by this phenomenon.

women can befriend other women, however Nietzsche may be correct to note that a distrust or fear of manipulation may wound female friendships.

Nietzsche does not make clear whether woman is capable of seeing man as profound. If too much understanding undermines one's ability to admire and aspire, one would expect the fact that woman understands man better than man does (cf. Z, 178) to undermine her ability to perceive man as profound. Woman would have to be terribly clever to convince man that she perceives him as such, for she must pretend to overestimate him. Perhaps Nietzsche implies that woman may be able to perceive man as profound because man is indeed more profound than woman in Nietzsche's view. But Nietzsche states that *woman* judges woman too harshly; men may not do so to the same degree.<sup>114</sup> He thus leaves open the possibility that a man could judge woman to be profound. This possibility is confirmed in *Twilight of the Idols* where he states; "Women are considered profound. Why? Because one never fathoms their depths. Women aren't even shallow" (TI, 470). Man's failure to comprehend woman makes him able to see her as profound, though the implication of this statement is that woman would not seem so profound if man truly understood her. Nietzsche's Zarathustra counsels; "About woman one should speak only to men" to keep open the possibility of admiring woman (Z, 177). Nietzsche advises woman to be silent about women because she has nothing positive to say (BGE, 232). Men are more capable of defending women than are women. Nevertheless, man has the potential of seeing woman as profound, but woman does not. If Nietzsche is correct, this is a strong indictment against the feminist movement, for he denies the possibility of sisterhood. This is also an astounding statement given the degree of harshness in Nietzsche's own discussion of woman. By keeping woman silent, man is free to construct what ever image of femininity that he would like to make. Incidentally, allowing

<sup>114</sup>Incidentally, Nietzsche also leaves open the possibility that *man* may judge other men as profound. Nietzsche himself judges other men like Napoleon to be profound. The reason could be the fact that man does not understand other men to the same degree that woman understands other women (cf. Z, 178).

only men to speak of women will also give men the power to mold woman's character. Woman's silence makes her a profound, mysterious delight, whereas her berating other women can only hurt the position of woman in the public realm, in the private sphere, and most importantly from Nietzsche's perspective, in the hearts of men.

Nietzsche suggests that woman's mastery, which is to be attained through her femininity, is not completely self-reliant. He teaches her that feminine mastery depends on her making man serve her and she must construct the proper image in order to achieve this. But he correspondingly teaches that man needs to rely on woman as well. Man must believe that she needs his protection, whether she in fact needs that protection or not. Woman seeking self-reliance is not in itself a bad thing in Nietzsche's assessment, but the consequent erosion of masculinity and femininity is dangerous. Destroying femininity (and inevitably masculinity as well) means destroying woman's (and thus man's) strength.

### **Criticism of Feminism**

The goals of the feminist movement are therefore backwards because woman loses more (power) than she gains in attaining equal rights. Nietzsche notes:

Since the French Revolution, woman's influence in Europe has *decreased* proportionately as her rights and claims have increased; and the "emancipation of woman," insofar as that is demanded and promoted by women themselves (and not merely by shallow males) is thus seen to be an odd symptom of the increasing weakening and dulling of the most feminine instincts (BGE, 239).

In attaining rights protection woman forfeits her real strength (feminine wiles and subtlety) (cf. HAH I: 425).<sup>115</sup> Woman no longer feels the need to cultivate her feminine strength, for she has rights protection, which is a mediocre tool at best. Rather than strengthening woman's ability to command others, the feminist fight for equal rights achieves just the opposite. Nietzsche continues; "Woman wants to become self-reliant--and for that reason she is beginning to enlighten men about 'woman as such': *this* is one of the worst

<sup>115</sup>In *Feminism Without Illusions*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese criticizes feminists for focusing too heavily on attaining individual rights that are the same as men. The unintended result has been that the community of women is ignored. Thus, women are not really freer when they attain equal rights, they are simply bound by a new set of expectations.

developments of the general *uglification* of Europe” (BGE, 232). Because woman wants financial self-reliance she thinks that she must prove to man that she is quite capable of protecting herself. She must demonstrate that she does not need man. Nietzsche does not criticize woman’s seeking an amount of self-reliance, *but the manner in which she seeks it*. Woman necessarily seeks mastery and power because she “is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power” (BGE, 259). When woman asserts herself in the realm of political rights, she reveals too much about herself to man. She steals from man his ability to idealize her. Teaching man that “woman as such” does not need his protection is not the road to mastery, but the road to enslavement. Competing with man for the same jobs and education causes woman to

lose the sense for the ground on which [she] is most certain of victory; to neglect practice with [her] proper weapons; to let [her]self go before men, perhaps even “to the point of writing a book,” when formerly [she] disciplined [her]self to subtle and cunning humility; to work with virtuous audacity against men’s faith in a basically different ideal that he takes to be *concealed* in woman, something Eternally-and-Necessarily-Feminine-- (BGE, 239).

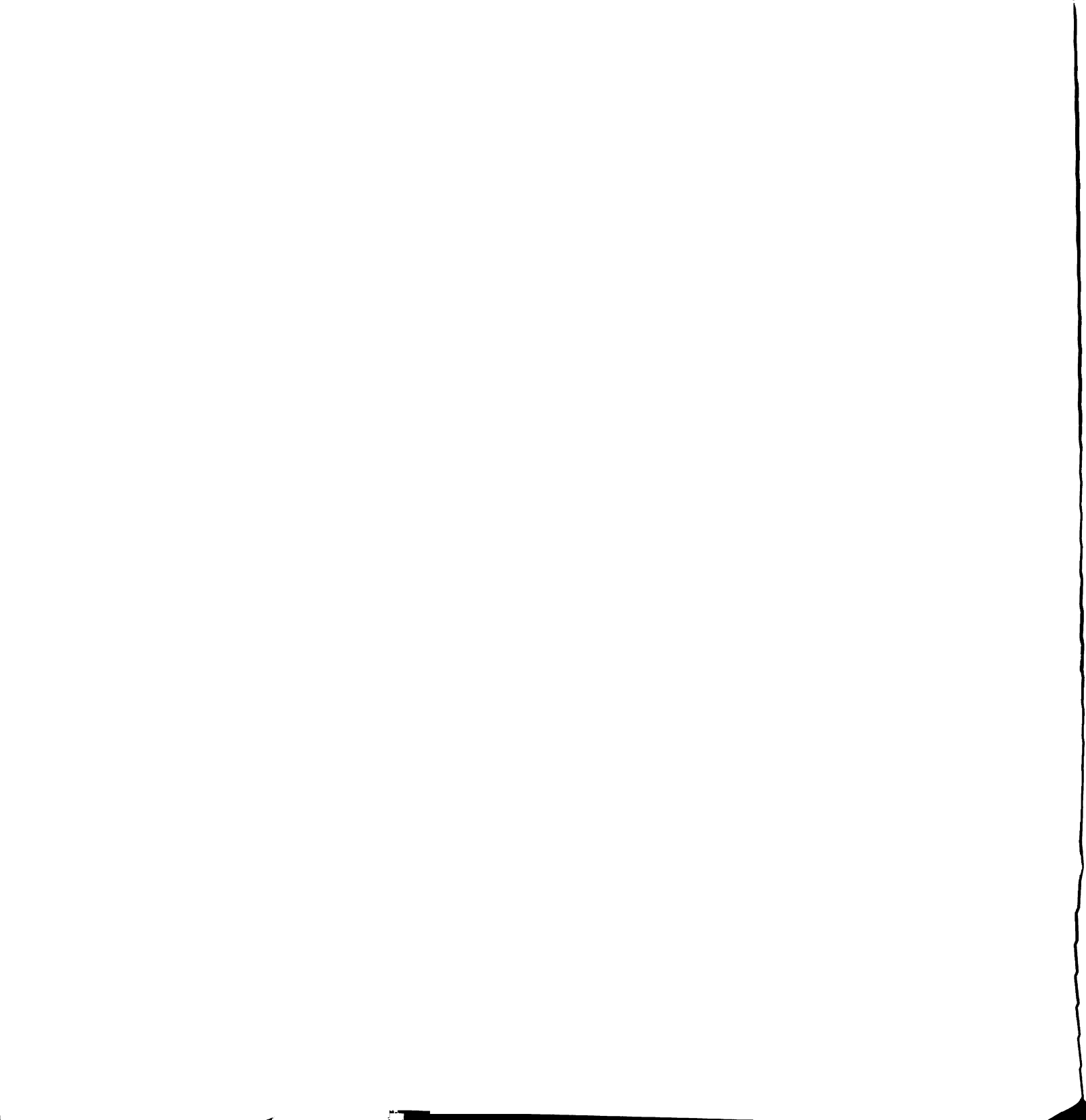
Woman teaches man that she is something less than he expects her to be, that she can be just like him. The power of woman has never come from cultivating the commonalities she shares with man, but from man’s failure to understand her. When woman is most different from man, she is able to influence him the most. But when she becomes more like man (or a human being who happens to have ovaries) she transforms herself into just another obstacle to man. He is no longer able to see her as rare or precious or even worth his admiration and attention because she constantly reminds him either that she is just like him, or that she does not need or want him. Her influence has always been rooted in those aspects that distinguish her from man. These traits have made men able to look outside of themselves and look upward toward some distant goal. But when woman ventures into the public realm, the differences between the sexes gradually disappear, and neither man nor woman continue to search for those distant stars.

Feminism may even be the most denigrating and debilitating form of slave morality

on the scene today. The resentful herd of women (and men as well) declares the biological differences between the sexes to be unfair or unjust. They argue that women should not be made to suffer more than men or even suffer at all due to their biology, nor should women have different opportunities than men. Rights protection undermines those differences. Hoff Sommers suggests that these feminists perpetuate the “myth of the fragile girl” in order to attain these rights (Hoff Sommers, 17-20). Despite the fact that girls and women by the early 1990s were “flourishing in unprecedented ways,” that is, they were attaining more rights and opportunities than ever before, Hoff Sommers contends that the feminists continued and continue to exaggerate the sufferings and weaknesses of young women today (ibid., 20). Feminists perpetuated the “myth of the fragile girl” in order to elicit special protections from the rest of society. Notice that as Hoff Sommers describes them, feminists actually do what Nietzsche suggests all women do; they exaggerate their weaknesses (GS, 66). Whereas exaggeration is not in itself bad, this particular exaggeration of weakness is not an affirmation of the female body, of femininity, or of woman. In fact, these feminists do not affirm anything in Nietzsche’s view. Feminism, as Nietzsche explicitly suggests and as Hoff Sommers seems to imply, is a renunciation of femininity. The purpose of the movement is to present femininity as an unnecessary burden. These feminists want to minimize the influence of femininity and the female body. Ultimately they want the body to be completely unimportant.

Moreover, feminism is a rejection of masculine strength. Nietzsche would say that the domination of society by feminism and feminist theories is a result of the emasculation of males. Men treat women with too much so-called “respect” because they lack the courage and strength to express real manliness as men once did in aristocratic times (BGE, 239). Men’s shallow deference is *not* respectful of woman in Nietzsche’s view. True respect would be to insist that women remain feminine and ladylike by facilitating her *unequal* rights. Chivalrous deeds would be one way man could demonstrate respect of woman. Even the enslavement of woman by means of concubinage would constitute





genuine respect, according to Nietzsche. Instead, these emasculated males demonstrate that masculine inclinations are evil and ought to be eliminated altogether. Nietzsche is simply correct to notice this trend that began early in the feminist movement but continues today through the rhetoric of such well-known feminists as Carol Gilligan and Gloria Steinem. Hoff Summers criticizes these views in her book *The War Against Boys*:

The belief that boys are being wrongly “masculinized” is inspiring a movement to “construct boyhood” in ways that will render boys less competitive, more emotionally expressive, more nurturing--more, in short, like girls. Gloria Steinem summarizes the views of many in the boys-should-be-changed camp when she says, “We need to raise boys like we raise girls”<sup>116</sup> (Hoff Summers, 44).

Feminists thus encourage both women and men to shed their sexuality. Sex as such is an obstacle to the attainment of equal rights. These feminists expect men to reject masculinity in exchange for universal equal rights. This open rejection of manliness is simply one of the means to the end they seek--the elimination of strong individuals altogether.

Nietzsche perceives woman’s fight for equal rights as an attempt to become like man, or more accurately, a sterile representation of man. Seeking to be treated as man’s equal really means attempting to be (treated) like a man (or a shallow image of a man) instead of a woman. They desire to be treated as society has thus far treated males, which means that they actively seek to become like these males. This is because, they argue, men have been given unfair precedence and women want the benefits that males have received from that treatment. In the interests of demonstrating herself to be man’s equal, woman must prove herself to be quite capable of shedding her feminine qualities in order to be domineering, ambitious, economically independent and self-reliant. So according to Nietzsche, women themselves condemn femininity in favor of a watered-down semblance of masculinity. Nietzsche teaches that if woman genuinely understood herself, she would cling to her femininity and would most assuredly *never* fight for “equal rights” or complete independence from man. She would never want to be treated like man because she is

<sup>116</sup>Hoff Summers quotes Steinem’s comments from an ABC News Special entitled “Men, Women and the Sex Difference” which aired on February 1, 1995.

fundamentally different from him. According to Nietzsche, not only can woman only be an imperfect copy of man, but man is not even a worthy model for emulation (BGE, 239).

Unexpectedly, the erosion of femininity harms woman even more than it harms man. Nietzsche explains:

That woman ventures forth when the aspect of man that inspires fear--let us say more precisely, when the *man* in man is no longer desired and cultivated--that is fair enough, also comprehensible enough. What is harder to comprehend is that, by the same token--woman degenerates. This is what is happening today: let us not deceive ourselves about that (BGE, 239).

Feminism teaches women first and foremost to be self-reliant and independent, that they do not need a man to be complete. The “enlightened” woman thus seeks financial stability and the right to get a job.<sup>117</sup> But as Nietzsche sees it, this amounts to little more than attaining “economic and legal self-reliance of a clerk: ‘woman as clerk’ is inscribed on the gate to the modern society that is taking shape now” (BGE, 239). The “liberated” woman mistakenly believes that pursuing the same utilitarian goals as males will give her the strength to achieve mastery (over others, over man, and perhaps over her fears). Woman wants to become “‘cultivated’ and, as is said, make the weaker sex strong through culture--as if history did not teach us as impressively as possible that making men ‘cultivated’ and making the weak--weakening, splintering, and sickly over the force of the will--have always kept pace” (BGE, 239). Ultimately, she wants to become man’s *equal*, which means that she seeks the *same* education, the *same* rights, and the *same* careers as man.

Nietzsche argues that both man and woman degenerate when they are treated the same because they become the same. Becoming the same does not mean that men attain feminine attributes and women attain the manly virtues. Pursuing man’s goals forces woman to ignore the fact that she has a different body and therefore has different needs, drives, and inclinations than man. “As she thus takes possession of new rights, aspires to become ‘master’ and writes the progress of woman upon her standards and banners, the

<sup>117</sup>This is the precise goal of Gail Evans’ book and, given the positive reception her book has received, it is reasonable to conclude that many women hold this same view.

opposite development is taking place with terrible clarity: *woman is retrogressing*" (BGE, 239). It is impossible to fulfill desires and inclinations that one refuses to admit exist. A defeminized woman fails to affirm her inclinations and consequently is a weak, unsatisfied, and shallow woman. If mastery and power is her goal, as Nietzsche contends that it is, she is failing in this regard. Woman is regressing from the goal that Nietzsche thinks she should help produce--the *Übermensch*.

One might expect woman to blossom when freed from the bonds of male dominance, but Nietzsche suggests that the exact opposite is the case. He concludes that woman should maintain her secondary role, not only for the sake of man and for the sake of society as we have discussed, but for her own sake. When man no longer worships and protects her, woman begins to underestimate herself as well. Woman becomes disenchanted with herself as she disenchants men. And because the self-reliant woman no longer needs man's protection, i.e., she no longer needs man to be manly (although she may truly prefer a manly man), he becomes weak. As men become more "objective" and less passionate, feminine women are no longer cultivated (BGE, 239). Nietzsche explains in a reference to Goethe's *Faust*:

As a very discerning scholar has remarked, the educated men of present-day Germany resemble a cross between Mephistopheles and Wagner, but certainly do not resemble Faustus, whom their grandfathers (in their youth at least) felt rumbling within them. For two reasons, therefore--to continue this proposition --*Gretchen*s are no longer suited to them. And because they are no longer desired they are, it seems, dying out (HAH I: 408).

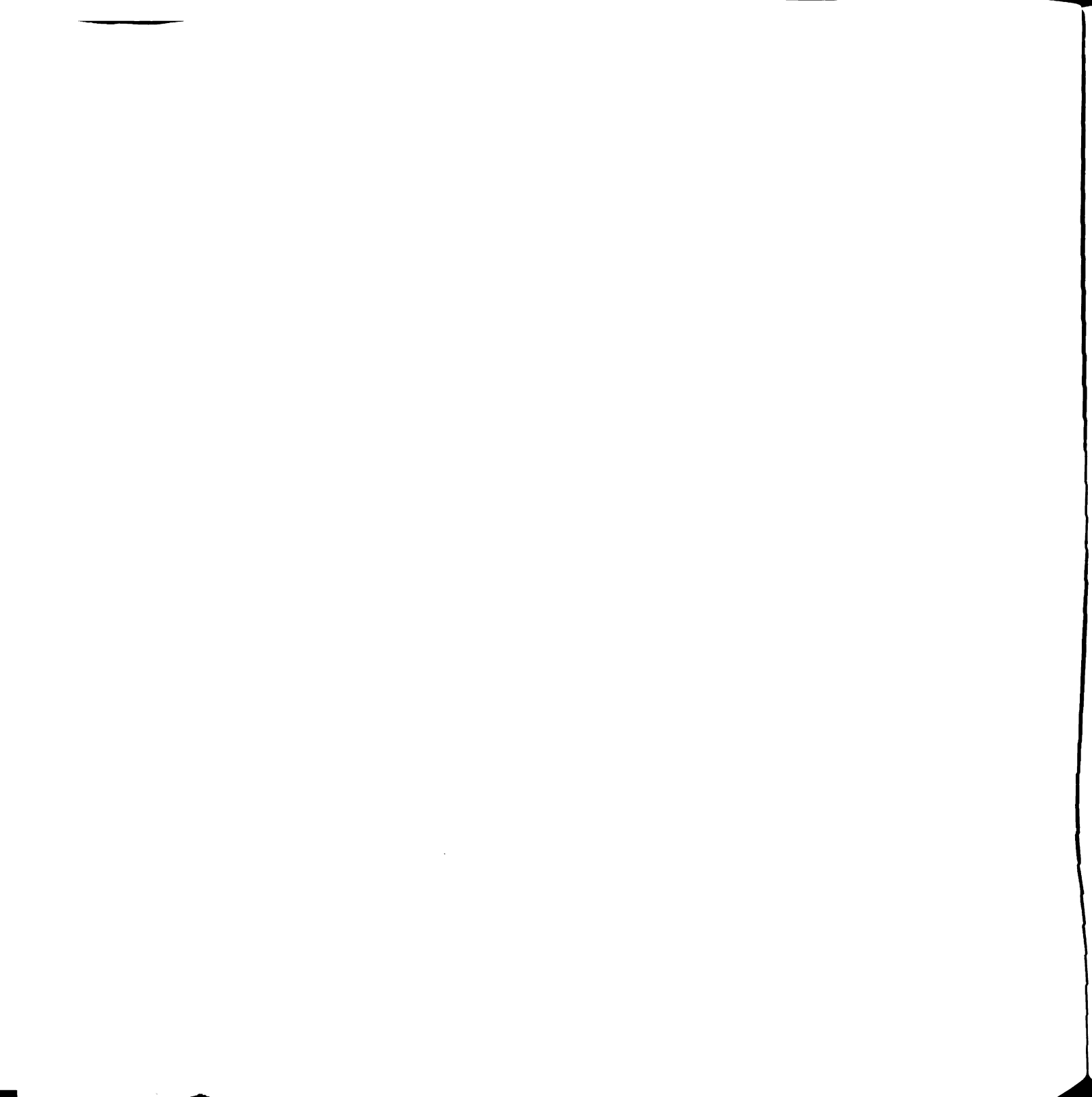
Men, being weak themselves, no longer seek strong women. Nietzsche finds it especially disturbing that women fall prey to this masculine stupidity.

The knee-jerk reaction against this Nietzschean criticism is to find a way for woman to pursue the same goals as men *and* affirm her femininity. Nietzsche says no. He argues that woman necessarily abandons her body, which means she also abandons her traditional feminine, maternal, and wifely duties, in order to cling to her newly acquired rights. These new rights, really *entitlements* in the feminist view, become more important to woman than any duty. Woman can now be anything she wants to be and she has little concern for what

she ought to be. Sex becomes merely one trait among many, one fact that can easily be overcome or controlled. New medicines and technologies come to woman's beck and call ensuring her triumph over her body. Equal rights and equal respect from men on behalf of those rights replace love, devotion, duty, and protection. When woman asserts herself in the public sphere she necessarily deprives man of his traditional role as her protector.

Feminists refuse to acknowledge that attaining these rights actually transform women and men. Oliver insists (without argument) that Nietzsche is wrong to argue that the feminist "denies her sexuality, castrates herself in order to imitate man" (Oliver, 1998, 68-69). Oliver boldly retorts; "I think Nietzsche's opinion is unjustified because clearly *not all* feminists imitate men. There are multitudes of feminisms (as evidenced by the different essays of this volume)" (ibid., 79, n. 8, emphasis added). Clearly, by Oliver's own admission, *some* feminists imitate men and these are the feminists Nietzsche berates.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, one wonders *how many* feminists follow this path (A few? Many? Most?). Oliver does not (cannot) respond to Nietzsche's assessment of those feminists who do imitate men. She cannot deny that these women renounce their femininity. These feminists may indeed be the real misogynists themselves because they deny that woman's perfection takes a different form than man's. Furthermore, Freudian analyses of Nietzsche's rejection of feminism are also unsound. Nietzsche does not present the that all women secretly desire to have what is missing, namely a penis. Nietzsche actually argues that women who genuinely understand themselves do not want to be men at all. *Defeminized* women are not the same as men without penises. And woman as woman is not essentially castrated. Defeminized, egalitarian, feminist, "enlightened,"

<sup>118</sup>In a section entitled "They [men] can have sex, you [women] can't," Evans suggests that the working woman ought to castrate herself, though she does not use those terms (Evans, 2000, 124-126). A key rule for the professional woman is to leave the sexuality out of the workplace. That is, she must shed her femininity for at least 50% of her day, but probably more. The inherent assumption is that a woman's sexuality is an insignificant aspect of her that she would willingly sacrifice if she knew that title, promotion, or a raise would be her reward. While this may be necessary for earning the key to executive board room, denying feminine inclinations most likely leads woman to a much greater dissatisfaction than the failure to get that raise or promotion could ever leave.



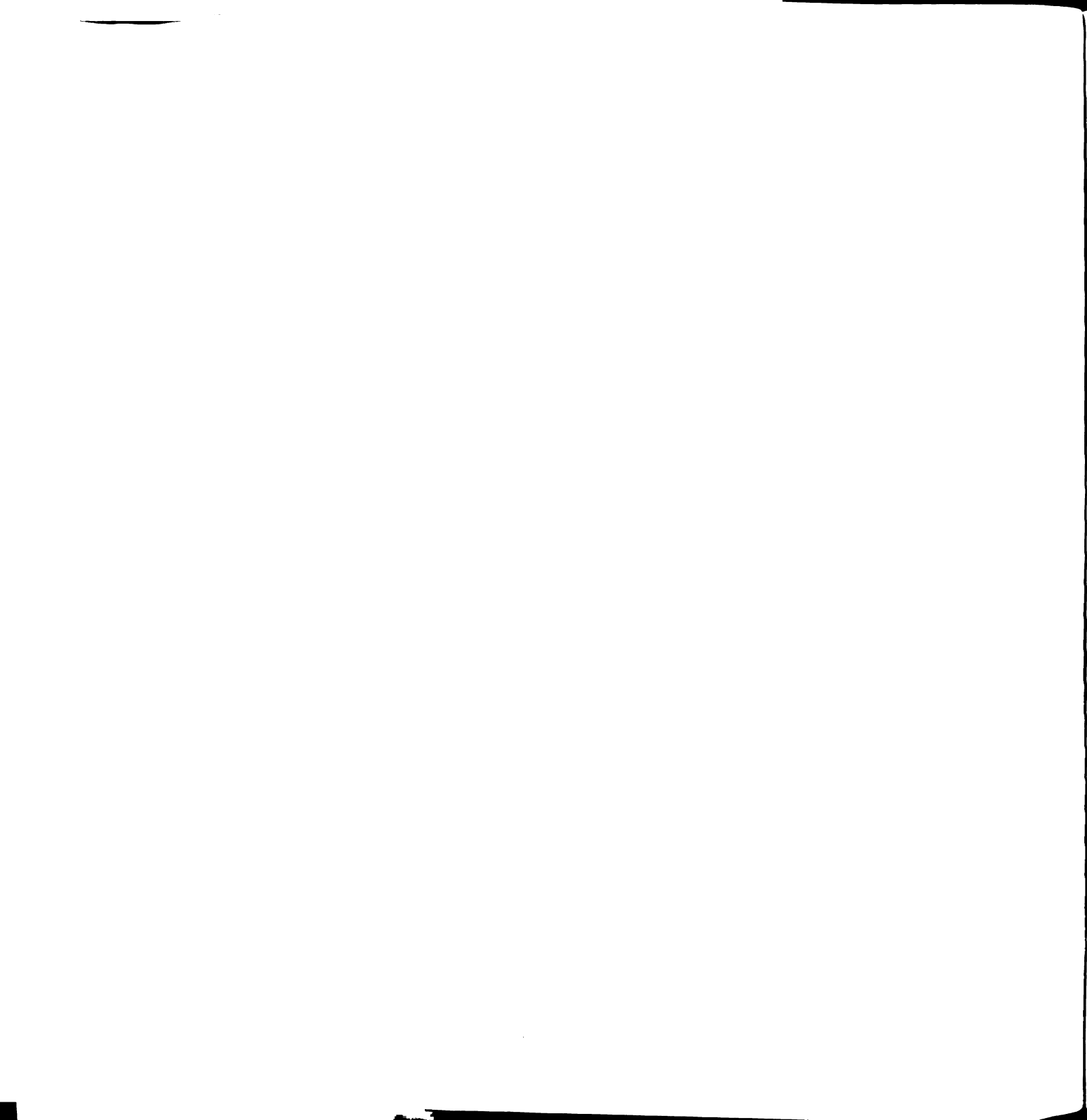
“liberated” woman is castrated.

Nietzsche’s critique of feminism is an extension of his critiques of equality, objectivity, and historicism. Nietzsche explains:

To go wrong on the fundamental problem of “man and woman,” to deny the most abysmal antagonism between them and the necessity of an eternally hostile tension, to dream perhaps of equal rights, equal education, equal claims and obligations--that is a *typical* sign of shallowness, and a thinker who has proved shallow in this dangerous place--shallow in his instinct--may be considered altogether suspicious, even more--betrayed, exposed: probably he will be too “short” for all fundamental problems of life, of the life yet to come, too, and incapable of attaining *any* depth. A man [Mann], on the other hand, who has depth, in his spirit as well as in his desires, including that depth of benevolence which is capable of severity and hardness and easily mistaken for them, must always think about woman as *Oriental*s do: he must conceive of woman as a possession, as property that can be locked, as something predestined for service and achieving her perfection in that. Here he must base himself on the tremendous reason of Asia, on Asia’s superiority in the instincts, as the Greeks did formerly, who were Asia’s best heirs and students: as is well known, from Homer’s time to the age of Pericles, as their culture *increased* along with the range of their powers, they also gradually became *more severe*, in brief, more Oriental, against woman. *How* necessary, *how* logical, *how* humanely desirable even, this was--is worth pondering (BGE, 238).

Nietzsche makes the archaic suggestion that deep and serious men should conceive of women as concubines, that is, view women as slaves, with few or no rights, who live to service men. Even those of us who reject this prescription should nevertheless consider Nietzsche’s reasoning behind it. He does not say that *all* men should view women this way, but only that *profound* men should ponder how *necessary*, *logical*, and *desirable* it is to treat women severely. In other words, the men upon whom Nietzsche relies to build a new future for humanity must conceive of women in this way. It should also be said that this harsh treatment is not only reserved for women; Nietzsche suggests all kinds of conventional slavery as instrumental in strengthening culture. The greatest individuals are necessarily “Nourished on innocent things” (Z, 304), but the potential profundity and greatness of these few individuals who offer hope for the future far outweighs the innocent and weak men and women who must be sacrificed for their sake.

With this in mind, let us consider why Nietzsche might consider this particular conception of woman as *necessary* for himself and other profound spirits. Understanding





woman as intended for the role of concubine may protect these men from too heavy a focus on trying to win a woman's heart. They are not to lose themselves in worthless human love or lust but will harness their sexual energy in order to orient themselves toward higher pursuits. Viewing women as servants would create the image of women as pretty little ornaments or playthings intended for the delight of men (cf. Z, 178). Conceiving women as these beautiful and delicate servants can provide these men with an escape from the danger or gravity of their thoughts (BGE, 232). They are a resting place for the creative spirits from the weight of their thoughts. These men experience the ever-present danger of viewing earth and life as an ailment they suffer, from which they seek an escape (Z, 304). The beauty and sweetness of young concubines rescues these men from their heavy weight. Nietzsche explains; "Heavy, heavy-spirited people become lighter precisely through what makes others heavier, through hatred and love" (BGE, 90). Although Nietzsche has a new conception of what love is and the role that love should play in the life of the most profound spirits, he recognizes that these men need women in this specific sense.

In the aphorism just preceding his suggestion of this treatment for women Nietzsche explains that so far men have so far viewed women as intended to fill this subservient role: "Men have so far treated women like birds who had strayed to them from some height: as something more refined and vulnerable, wilder, stranger, sweeter, and more soulful--but as something one has to lock up lest it fly away" (BGE, 237a). He likens women to birds, just as Zarathustra does (cf. Z, 169). And as birds who are light, they fly, they defy the "spirit of gravity" that constantly dogs these men. Even Zarathustra delights in the sight of the dancing young girls dancing with each other. In "The Dancing Song" Zarathustra speaks to them; "Do not cease dancing, you lovely girls! No killjoy has come to you with evil eyes, no enemy of girls. God's advocate am I before the devil: but the devil is the spirit of gravity. How could I, you lightfooted ones, be an enemy of godlike dances" Or of girls' feet with pretty ankles?" (Z, 219-220). This speech comes

between “The Night Song” in which Zarathustra laments and “The Tomb Song” in which Zarathustra becomes sorrowful at the thought of past mistakes and future dangers.

Dancing girls are a vacation from his heavy thoughts that tear to pieces. To repeat, these men *need* women.

Enslaving women to the most profound men is *logical* to Nietzsche because societies with this arrangement have achieved the desired effect, namely, a strong culture. Nietzsche argues that treatment of women and strong culture are not merely correlated, but the proper cultivation of the female will is a means of instituting the necessary changes. Although profound men are to delight in the beauty of the women, they are not to lose themselves in a love of woman. They have grander pursuits that transcend human love. Finally, the arrangement is *desirable* insofar as Nietzsche’s goal of the *Übermensch* is desirable. If his ideal is to be achieved, a hierarchy is needed which involves harsh treatment and even unjust treatment of multitudes of people. Nietzsche here suggests that conceiving women as subordinates may be desirable so that males who have depth and profundity can serve or become the *Übermensch*. Of course if one is not convinced that the last man is a danger and the *Übermensch* must be created, there would be no necessary, logical, or desirable reason to institute the enslavement of women.

The reigning orthodoxy today argues that culture can only be strong when women are granted equal treatment with men. Nietzsche argues that the converse is the case--a weak culture is too humane toward women. And the man who wishes to cultivate a strong culture must consider woman as a possession intended to serve him. Nietzsche’s discussion here seems to take for granted that the profound individuals are male. He does not discuss how a woman of profound spirit ought to conceive other men. Instead, Nietzsche contrasts the type of man who seeks equal rights for women with the man of depth in his spirit and desires (BGE, 238). A shallow and sterile pity for woman lies underneath the movement for her equal rights, according to Nietzsche, and profound men must transcend this lowly passion. Nietzsche does not say that woman will reach her

perfection in providing this service to man; he simply says that man must *conceive of her* this way. Nietzsche also does not say that women should settle for this type of treatment, though he does assert that woman wants to be possessed by man (GS, 363). Since he hopes to cultivate an abysmally hostile tension between the sexes, her willful refusal to consider herself as man's servant would help enliven such a tension. Caging woman as a rare and precious bird makes (what Nietzsche considers to be) the most attractive feminine qualities necessary, for these are her only protection against man's will. Her femininity is not only a powerful protective device; it is also a strong offensive weapon with which she can make man bend to her will (if her will is a strong will). Still, this feminine power over man does not really make woman self-reliant. Her mastery depends upon man serving her (and her appearing to serve him).

### **What is Feminine?**

Modesty is the tool par excellence of femininity. Nietzsche promotes a renewed emphasis on this virtue because it empowers woman (and man) by promoting the differentiation of the sexes. Any side effects are coincidental and not Nietzsche's concern. Modesty is crucial because it awakens a longing for something beyond immediate self-gratification and yet does not necessarily repress the passions. Modesty can lead to a more meaningful fulfillment of those very passions. However, Nietzsche does not argue that modesty is the key to woman's fulfillment, nor does he present a full explanation for why *this* virtue is decisive. He also leaves out a thorough description of the psychological consequences of this virtue. Allan Bloom, however, eloquently describes the influence of modesty on sexual differentiation. Bloom explains:

Modesty in the old dispensation was *the* female virtue, because it governed the powerful desire that related men to women, providing a gratification in harmony with the procreation and rearing of children, the risk and responsibility of which fell naturally--that is, biologically--on women. Although modesty impeded sexual intercourse, its result was to make such gratification central to a serious life and to enhance the delicate interplay between the sexes, which makes acquiescence of the will as important as possession of the body. Diminution or suppression of modesty certainly makes attaining the end of desire easier--which was the intention of the sexual revolution--but it also dismantles the structure of involvement and

attachment, reducing sex to the thing-in-itself. This is where feminism enters.

*Female modesty extends sexual differentiation from the sexual act to the whole of life. It makes men and women always men and women.* The consciousness of directedness toward one another, and its attractions and inhibitions, inform every common deed. As long as modesty operates, men and women together are never just lawyers or pilots together. They have something else, always potentially very important, in common--ultimate ends, or as they say, "life goals." Is winning the case or landing this plane what is most important, or is it love and family? As lawyers or pilots, men and women are the same, subservient to the one goal. As lovers or parents they are very different, but inwardly related by sharing the naturally given end of continuing the species. Yet their working together immediately poses the questions of "roles" and, hence, "priorities," in a way that men working together or women working together does not. Modesty is a constant reminder of their peculiar relatedness and its outer forms and inner sentiments, which impede the self's free creation or capitalism's technical division of labor. It is a voice constantly repeating that a man and a woman have a work to do together that is far different from that found in the marketplace, and of a far greater importance" (Bloom, 101-102, emphasis added).

Aspects of Bloom's argument are consistent with many of Nietzsche's concerns. Bloom explains the way in which woman's modesty makes women want to be women and men want to be men, a desire in both sexes that Nietzsche warns is dying. Modesty keeps both man and woman from ever becoming purely objective humans because, Bloom argues, it reminds them of their complementarity. Modesty reminds both men and women that woman is vulnerable to pregnancy (and rape) and teaches them not to belittle its consequences. This vulnerability means that woman, whether just or unjust, bears more responsibility for protecting herself and for creating the type of child that needs to be produced. She must make sure that man does not violate her (or the child) and her femininity serves as a tool to keep man's passions (and her own) from becoming tyrannical. To man, woman's vulnerability means that woman needs a protector, that she is in danger and incomplete without him. Modesty protects (against unwanted pregnancy, rape and sexually transmitted diseases) because it transforms man's sexual urges into feelings of love, devotion, and admiration. Man sees woman as woman and feels a desire to protect her as a delicate creature. The man who can easily be sexually gratified sees woman as a sex object (a means to an end), but the man who must earn her can learn to

idealize woman. Today many women rebel against this idealization because they argue it leads to expectations that she cannot or does not want to fulfill. However, by shedding her modesty completely, she sheds the possibility of a fulfilling or meaningful relationship, according to Bloom. Modesty awakens and enlivens the imagination. The erosion of modesty corresponds with the erosion of the belief in eternal love, the debasement of marriage, and the end of healthy illusions.

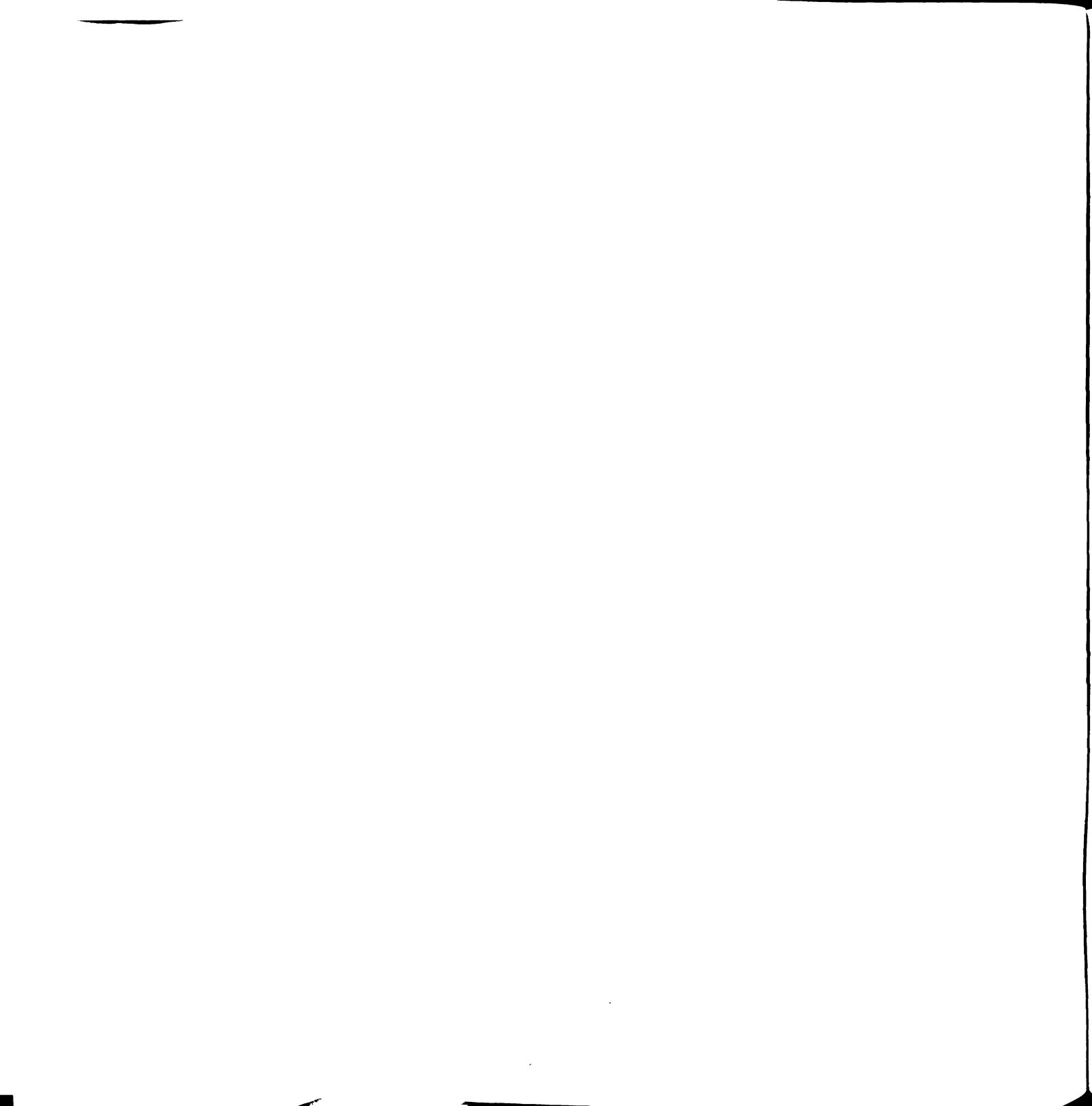
Nietzsche would likely agree with Bloom's assessment of the powerful influence that modesty has on marriage even though maintaining the romance of marriage is not Nietzsche's concern. Although Nietzsche intends to redefine marriage and family, like Bloom, he is concerned with the stability of marriage and the need for a solid foundation. Bloom explains that the foundation of marriage has been the fact that man and woman have relegated themselves to different parental roles and responsibilities. Eliminating those different roles has the effect of debasing the family. "As lawyers or pilots, men and women are the same, subservient to the one goal. As lovers or parents they are very different, but inwardly related by sharing the naturally given end of continuing the species. Yet their working together immediately poses the questions of "roles" and, hence, "priorities," in a way that men working together or women working together does not" (Bloom, *ibid.*). Interestingly, Nietzsche wants them to be oriented toward the same goal, the *Übermensch*, but to have different roles in its actualization and each may conceive of the *Übermensch* differently. Another difference is that Nietzsche, unlike Bloom, does not understand the end of continuing the species as "naturally given." Nietzsche has selected what that meaning of procreation shall be. But both Bloom and Nietzsche are concerned with recapturing some meaning beyond mere bodily pleasures and raw sex. Both agree that the struggle between man and woman should call forth hopes "and the glance of eternity" (Z, 169). Unlike Bloom, Nietzsche focuses too heavily on the power dimension of the relationship.

## Equality and Sameness

Establishing concubinage as a means to the Nietzschean goal is yet another unacceptable prescription. Instead of treating man and woman the same, which levels both sexes, Nietzsche recommends a reversal in the treatment of women: treat women as pets. Nietzsche is not the first to warn of the homogenization of society, though he does go further than other thinkers in his prescriptions for woman. Tocqueville, like Nietzsche, warned; "The ills produced by extreme equality only become apparent little by little; they gradually insinuate themselves into the body social; they are only occasionally noticed, and when they do become excessive, habit has already made them pass unfelt" (Tocqueville, 505). Indeed, as liberal democracy "progresses" toward a more egalitarian society which treats people the same, everyone becomes alike even in their thinking: "Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse" (Z, 130).<sup>119</sup> And this practice leads to the belief that all human beings are not merely equals, but that there are no essential distinctions among individuals that ought to be maintained.<sup>120</sup> This elimination of the differentiation into different human types is the reason that Nietzsche considers the doctrine of equality to be the most "poisonous poison anywhere" (TI, 553). Nietzsche explains: "Democracy represents the disbelief in great human beings and an elite society: 'Everyone is equal to everyone else.' 'At bottom we are one and all self-seeking cattle and mob.'" (WP, 752). There soon will be no more great

<sup>119</sup>Tocqueville calls this phenomenon the "theory of equality applied to brains" (Tocqueville, 247). The result of providing everyone with equal access to education is "So few ignorant and so few learned" (Tocqueville, 55). In general, universal education results in a greater number of people who are educated, but educated at a mediocre level. The cultivation of genius is extraordinarily rare in such circumstances.

<sup>120</sup>Nussbaum insists that Nietzsche is simply wrong to suggest that liberal egalitarians seek to ignore all differences. She argues; "But of course liberal egalitarians don't deny that differences among people exist in abundance, including differences of achievement. What they hold is that many of these differences, if not all, should be irrelevant for the purposes of the distribution of basic resources" (Nussbaum, 11). Nietzsche's point is that most differences should be relevant because pretending that they are as irrelevant actually helps those differences disappear. When one no longer believes that such differences matter, they become less pronounced and ultimately are eliminated. But nobody wants a woman who is indistinguishable from a man, or a man who is indistinguishable from a woman.



men or great women, but only vulgar, ordinary, common human beings. To protect the most extraordinary individuals from extinction, Nietzsche recommends treating equals as equals, but unequals as unequals (i.e., differently from one another): “‘Equal to the equal, unequal to the unequal’--*that* would be the true slogan of justice; and also its corollary: ‘Never make equal what is unequal.’” (TI, 553).

### **Why an Aristocracy is Needed: The “Pathos of Distance”**

Nietzsche concludes that the structure of society must be altered radically.

Democracy has nowhere to go but toward the last man. Nietzsche must “*create conditions that require stronger men* who for their part need, and consequently will *have*, a morality (more clearly: a physical-spiritual discipline) *that makes them strong!*”(WP, 981).

Nietzsche teaches that *only* when there has been a aristocratic hierarchy has Man improved himself. He explains;

Every enhancement of the type “man” has so far been the work of an aristocratic society--and it will be so again and again--a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata---when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance--that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either--the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states--in brief, simply the enhancement of the type “man,” the continual “self-overcoming of man,” to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense” (BGE, 257).

And in *Twilight of the idols*, he gives another useful description:

The cleavage between man and man, status and status, the plurality of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out--what I call the *pathos of distance*, that is characteristic of every strong age. The strength to withstand tension, the width of the tensions between extremes, becomes ever smaller today; finally, the extremes themselves become blurred to the point of similarity (TI, 540).

He hopes to re-establish a hierarchy, or in Nietzsche’s words a “pathos of distance” in society so that the few human beings with potential can become stronger. “The order of castes, the *order of rank*, merely formulates the highest law of life; the separation of



...types is necessary for the preservation of society, to make possible the higher and the highest types. The *inequality* of rights is the first condition for the existence of any rights at all” (AC, 57, 646). In addition to unequal rights, Nietzsche presents several ways he hopes to cultivate the “pathos of distance,” including promoting aristocracy, a rigorous order of rank, conventional slavery, and, most important for our purposes, an eternally hostile war between the sexes. The structure of the soul’s internal longing mimics the structure of society. Nietzsche does not mention the eternally hostile war between the sexes in BGE 257 or in AC 57; however, a logical extension of his comments in these two passages imply that the mutual misunderstanding of the sexes will create the conditions that make the production of the creative type possible. Love (understood as the will to power), sex (for procreation), and (unromantic) marriage are all prescribed in order to recapture the “pathos of distance.”

### **Transvaluation of Neighbor love and Christian Friendship**

To combat the leveling effect that egalitarianism has had, man and woman must be as different from one another as possible. Man should take a primary role in the public realm of business, industry, and politics, while woman should focus on service to the family. This way they can achieve the proper kind of love which is not characterized by “*equal rights*” because in love, “these do not exist” (GS, 363). The lover does not want to be the beloved’s equal, but her lover. Man and woman (or the lover and the beloved) are different and as such are incommensurable. When man and woman are different from each other, their relationship is characterized by struggle and not a state of repose or a peaceful contentment of the heart. Such passive love reflects the bourgeois passivity that Nietzsche combats. The sterile Christian teaching of neighbor love robs sexual love of its passion, struggle, striving, longing, and creativity. Rather than an active striving to improve oneself, neighbor love is a passive, impotent compassion (BGE 104).

To have compassion for others is to accept them as they are; it is to see the ugly flaws and embrace them anyway. Nietzsche counsels instead; “Your compassion should

be a guess--to know first whether your friend wants compassion. ...Compassion for the friend should conceal itself under a hard shell, and you should break a tooth on it. That way it will have delicacy and sweetness" (Z, 169). Friends and lovers are not to be characterized by the degree to which they make the other comfortable and peaceful, but to the degree that they inspire. Friendship is to be difficult just as love is. They are to be hard toward one another, to act harshly when warranted. Neighbor love, on the other hand, weakens the courage to improve oneself and protects the weak who fail to love themselves. Consequently, companionship is sought for physical comfort, and little else beyond that. "One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth" (Z, 129). Moderns no longer experience what real passionate love entails--an exclusive devotion toward something or someone worthy of that devotion. But this love can only be cultivated if someone or something is created that will be deserving of it. The love that Nietzsche proposes is similar to, if not identical with the type of friendship he proposes:

I teach you not the neighbor, but the friend. The friend should be the festival of the earth to you and an anticipation of the overman. I teach you the friend and his overflowing heart. But one must learn to be a sponge if one wants to be loved by hearts that overflow. I teach you the friend in whom the world stands completed, a bowl of goodness--the creating friend who always has a completed world to give away. And as the world rolled apart for him, it rolls together again in circles for him,...

Let the future and the farthest be for you the sauce of our today: in your friend you shall love the overman as your cause.

My brothers, love of the neighbor I do not recommend to you: I recommend to you love of the farthest (Z, 173-174).

Such a friend/ enemy inspires a longing for the *Übermensch*. Similarly, the unique fit of the lover and the beloved should glorify the individuality of each partner as it animates them to devote themselves toward a transcendent goal.

Similar to his counsel that the best friend is also one's worst enemy, love should be understood as "the deadly hatred of the sexes" (EH, 267).<sup>121</sup> With this definition,

<sup>121</sup>Rousseau agrees with Nietzsche that man and woman should be as different from one another as possible. However, Rousseau promotes their differences in order to achieve a harmonious unity rather than a struggle. He states; "In the harmony which reigns between them, everything tends to the common end; they do not know who contributes more. Each follows the prompting of the other; each obeys, and both are masters" (Rousseau, 377). Rousseau aims to promote the differences so that a compatibility

Nietzsche obscures the distinction between love and hate. The love he hopes to promote is a continual striving, pushing, and longing; it does not consist in peaceful rest or repose of mind. This description of love is very close to his understanding of the will to power, “the unexhausted procreative will of life” (Z, 226).<sup>122</sup> As the sexes’ love/hate impels them to master one another, their love/hate “brings the high and concealed characteristics of the lover into the light--what is rare and exceptional in him” (BGE, 163). Struggle unleashes an individual’s strength and depth of his character. Uncovering the rare qualities of the beloved motivates the lover to overcome or transcend himself. Man and woman are to be in a type of rivalry with one another--both striving to be better than they already are (and better than each other) (cf. BGE, 102). The hatred for one another also enables each to overcome the contentment characteristic of the last man.

Man and woman as lovers are to be each other’s enemies, but in “a friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him with your heart when you resist him” (Z, 168). Challenging one another is a sign of respect, not contempt. Zarathustra explains; “You may have only enemies whom you can hate, not enemies you despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes too” (Z, 160). A real enemy is not a weak or inconsequential person. If a woman is to be a man’s true enemy, her strength of will must be comparable to his. In his description of woman as man’s eternally hostile enemy, Nietzsche indicates that he could hate her as an enemy of whom he could be proud; he sees woman as a potentially worthy opponent for man. This does not mean that Nietzsche considers all men and all women to be equal, but it is possible that an individual woman could be equal (that is, exhibit a similar strength of will) to an individual man. When man and woman perfect their respective natures, each is characterized by a force of will that rivals the other’s. That the  
between the sexes will result.

<sup>122</sup>Cf. pp. 142-145 above.

respective wills of man and woman can be of a comparable strength stems from Nietzsche's suggestion that man and woman are to hate, but not to despise one another. He explains; "One does not hate as long as one still despises, *but only those whom one esteems equal or higher*" (BGE, 173, emphasis added). In loving (hating) each other, the sexes esteem themselves and each other. If one of the lovers (one's opponent) is pitiful or an unworthy opponent, then no genuine battle exists. And if no genuine battle exists, it does not seem that the eternally hostile tension could be strong enough to give birth to the Übermensch. Nietzsche explains:

Being *able* to be an enemy, *being* an enemy--perhaps that presupposes a strong nature; in any case, it belongs to every strong nature. It needs objects of resistance; hence it *looks for* what resists: the *aggressive* pathos belongs just as necessarily to strength as vengefulness and rancor belong to weakness. Woman, for example, is vengeful: that is due to her weakness, as much as is her susceptibility to the distress of others.

The strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they require: every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent--or problem; for a warlike philosopher challenges problems, too, to single combat. The task is *not* simply to master what happens to resist, but what requires us to stake all our strength, suppleness, and fighting skill--opponents that are our *equals*.

Equality before the enemy: the first presupposition of an *honest* duel. Where one feels contempt, one *cannot* wage war; where one commands, where one sees something beneath oneself, one has no business waging war (EH, 231-232).

One needs to have a strong will if one is to be a worthy opponent, but democracy tends to weaken rather than strengthen the individual. Woman is not to be strong in the way that liberal democrats understand strength (i.e., due to wealth, occupation, or public honors). Nietzsche wants woman to become stronger because when she is strong, man is forced to become stronger as well. In the eternally hostile war between the sexes, in which both sexes strive to transcend themselves and the other, the power struggle will shift from time to time. It is difficult to envision a genuine struggle in which woman clearly would be the slave and man clearly would be the master. Such a contest would not seem capable of producing the turmoil and tension necessary.

But this sounds dangerously close to egalitarianism and as we have taken great pains to establish, Nietzsche is not an egalitarian. Women are to be women and men are to

be men; only in this way can either hope to attain any strength. An individual man and woman as enemies are to be *equals*, but not similar to one another. Nietzsche intends man and woman for different purposes. As enemies, the force of their respective wills rivals one another, but woman has a feminine will while man has masculine strength. A woman can only be a worthy opponent to a man if she exhibits a different type of strength than man.

### **Love and Duality**

If Nietzsche is to cultivate the type of love needed, a duality of the sexes must be maintained. In a section entitled "*Love and duality*" Nietzsche asks; "What is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours? If love is to bridge these antitheses through joy it may not deny or seek to abolish them. --Even self-love presupposes an unblendable duality (or multiplicity) in one person" (HAH II: 75). Masculinity and femininity are not to be blended into some type of universal androgyny; rather, they are to be cultivated as rival forces. Even the individual is to be understood as a cauldron of contrasting forces. To be manly is to challenge one's feminine inclinations and promote the masculine ones, while to be feminine is to master the masculine inclinations and affirm the feminine ones. To love oneself means to know oneself and to affirm those aspects that rule, but to rule oneself means to force obedience from the other traits. The love between man and woman should be understood in a similar manner. Each partner, animated by a longing for something beyond the merely human, tyrannizes the other partner. In seeking to glorify and eternalize themselves, each partner battles the other in hopes of producing the new distant goal. If the profound love between man and woman is to be possible, the differences between the sexes must be as great as possible. The greater the differences between the two, the deeper their antagonistic love will be. "*Difference engenders hatred*",<sup>123</sup> which explains why the

<sup>123</sup>In the German manuscript and in Kaufmann's translation, this quote appears in French: "*Différence engendre haine*" (BGE, 263).

democratic movement seeks to make everyone alike (BGE, 263). In hopes of creating perpetual peace, democrats, Christians, and other egalitarians unconsciously seek to homogenize the human species. On the contrary, Nietzsche teaches that the tension between the masculine and the feminine perspectives can improve the human species, that is, create a greater likelihood of producing the *Übermensch*.

Due to their different perspectives, man and woman perpetually misunderstand (and therefore hate) one another. Nietzsche explains: "The same affects in man and woman are yet different in *tempo*: therefore man and woman do not cease to misunderstand each other." (BGE, 85). He adds that the "sexes deceive themselves about each other--because at bottom they honor and love only themselves (or their own ideal, to put it more pleasantly). Thus man likes woman peaceful--but woman is *essentially* unpeaceful, like a cat, however well she may have trained herself to seem peaceable" (BGE, 131). The failure to understand one another accentuates the unique attributes of each sex. Genius in man or woman can only be cultivated through the promotion of masculinity and femininity, according to Nietzsche.

The dynamics of the opposition of man and woman are similar to the forces that gave birth to the great peoples of the world. The extraordinary feature of an individual's will is its ability to distinguish itself from other wills. The egocentrism and ethnocentrism of the greatest nations have kept those nations from understanding one another. Zarathustra explains, "Never did one neighbor understand the other: ever was his soul amazed at the neighbor's delusion and wickedness" (Z, 170). The failure to understand one another and the desire to distinguish oneself as a people from the neighbor together created great peoples. The selfish pride of these nations is responsible for any strength and mastery those nations achieved. Ethnocentrism is the real root of any people's strength, according to Nietzsche. Similarly, egoism is the root of the love/ hate between man and woman. But the democratic and Christian movements destroy any real distinction among peoples. In fact, the desire to distinguish oneself is a prideful sin according to Christian

morality. Nietzsche patterns the relationship between man and woman after the relationships among the great peoples. What made the Greeks, the Jews, the Persians and the Germans great were their differences, not their similarities (Z, 171). Now one must create *individuals* with the strength to find more meaningful goals. The willingness to fight against one another as enemies in the interests of glorifying and strengthening oneself is what Nietzsche hopes to promote in the individual man and woman.

The failure of the sexes to understand one another leads each sex to fear the other. This fear is instrumental in producing reverence in the hearts of man and woman, respectively. The fear also impels each to hide their unattractive or lowly qualities (cf. BGE, 232). The reluctance to rely on compulsion or fear in favor of compassion is indicative of democratic decadence. Nietzsche notices that in “no age has the weaker sex been treated with as much respect by men as in ours: that belongs to the democratic inclination and basic taste” (BGE, 239). When man “respects” woman by giving her equal rights, woman “unlearns her *fear* of man: but the woman who ‘unlearns fear’ surrenders her most womanly instincts” (BGE, 239). Fear of man is an essential element of femininity. Fear is essential to the feminine character due to woman’s comparable weakness and vulnerability to rape. Insofar as woman understands her purpose to be intimately connect to the production of a child, she would fear being raped by any man who is not worthy of the task. Modesty, which can make man desire to protect rather than harm woman, is her best tool against rape. Although woman’s modesty and fear seem to be in service of man, if woman desires a child, or if she seeks protection against rape, these traits actually serve her own needs.

Nietzsche’s advice that woman should be manipulative and cunning toward man is more than a distasteful or degrading suggestion. Nietzsche is explaining to woman how she may best influence man:

What, in spite of all fear, elicits pity for this dangerous and beautiful cat “woman” is that she appears to suffer more, to be more vulnerable, more in need of love, and more condemned to disappointment than any other animal. Fear and pity: with these feelings man has so far confronted

woman, always with one foot in tragedy which tears to pieces as it enchants (BGE, 239).

As Nietzsche understands it, when woman approaches man in this manner she gains the upper hand. Of course, woman *can* challenge man by competing to fill the same roles as him. But woman does not constitute a genuine enemy to man in this role. Sharpening her femininity makes her much more powerful against man. Nietzsche teaches the woman who wants real power to highlight her physical vulnerability.

Woman's physical vulnerability also helps produce a reverence for man's strength. Man possesses the physical strength she needs. She can imagine man as her protector and as the child's protector. She can esteem one who has the physical strength to rape, but who would never condescend to committing such an act. And she is quite aware that she must use her feminine wiles to deter man from committing violence against her. She can admire his willingness to fight in order to protect her. Nietzsche laments the fact that man is no longer worthy of her fear because "European 'manliness,' is sick" (BGE, 239). Nietzsche puts the term "manliness" in quotes because modernity has so weakened man by eroding his masculinity that "manliness" is a quality of the past. The democratic spirit has killed the faith in "manliness" (and modesty) as a virtue.<sup>124</sup> A major part of Nietzsche's criticism of modernity is woman's inability to fear man and man's inability to fear woman. She no longer fears him because she no longer respects him. The converse is likewise the case. Zarathustra explains this in a parable: "Whom does woman hate most? Thus spoke the iron to the magnet: 'I hate you most because you attract, but you are not strong enough to pull me to you'" (Z, 178). Man's masculine qualities, his physical strength, his daring courage, his ability to fight and protect, in short, his manliness, attract woman to him. Nietzsche does not encourage the enslavement of all women to men, but woman should

<sup>124</sup>This is the central theme of Hoff Sommers' book *The War Against Boys*. She suggests, for example, that what was once called "rough and tumble" play is now considered aggression. And this, she argues, has led to the elimination of recess (Hoff Summers, 94-95).



fear man's manliness. Woman can only cultivate her feminine strength when she fears and respects man.

If woman is to be a worthy match for man, *he* must fear *her*. Nietzsche does not simply subordinate woman to man in counseling her to fear him because he also tells man to fear her. Zarathustra declares; "Let man fear woman when she loves: then she makes any sacrifice, and everything else seems without value to her. Let man fear woman when she hates: for deep down in his soul man is merely evil, while woman is bad" (Z, 178). Man fears woman when she loves and hates because he cannot understand the forms these passions take in her: "man and woman have different conceptions of love; and it is one of the conditions of love in both sexes that neither sex presupposes the same feeling and the same concept of 'love' in the other" (GS, 363). Nietzsche continues:

A woman's passion in its unconditional renunciation of rights of her own presupposes precisely that on the other side there is no equal pathos, no equal will to renunciation; for if both partners felt impelled by love to renounce themselves, we should then get--I do not know what; perhaps an empty space? (ibid.).

Nietzsche is correct to note that man and woman understand love differently from one another, and that woman in love does not concern herself with rights, but with love.

Because man and woman love differently from one another, there is a tendency to create tension in the relationship and Nietzsche would like to intensify that struggle. The lovers misunderstanding of one another can lead to an unsettling fear, a fear that the lover may not return one's affection. This fear is instrumental in creating longing and devotion from the partners. Nietzsche explains: "Discovering that one is loved in return really ought to disenchant the lover with the beloved. 'What? this person is modest enough to love even you? Or stupid enough? Or--or--'" (BGE, 102). The relationship to be cultivated is to be disconcerting to both lovers.

The root of man's fear in love also stems from the limitations of his body. Man fears what he cannot understand; he fears any experience that he cannot reduce into "human-all-too-human" facts. Woman is the embodiment of the chaotic impulses that

challenge man's orientation toward the world. She is not easy to tame. Man's inability to control woman impels his desire to control the world. Because his drives are different than hers, he can never fully comprehend woman. Thus he should remain in awe and fear of her: "What inspires respect for woman, and often enough even fear, is her *nature*, which is more 'natural' than man's, the genuine, cunning suppleness of a beast of prey, the tiger's claw under the glove, the naïveté of her egoism, her uneducability and inner wildness, the incomprehensibility, scope, and movement of her desires and virtues--" (BGE, 239). But what is it about woman that makes her egoism naive, her inner wildness spring forth, and her desires appear as incomprehensible to men? Woman's ability to impose herself on the world by giving birth arouses in woman an amazingly ferocious thymotic passion. When her child is threatened, she can become a savage beast who is prepared to kill or sacrifice her life for the sake of her child (who is an extension of herself). Woman's naive egoism consists in the fact that she may not even recognize that the sacrifices she makes for the child are motivated by her selfish desire for power. Man is puzzled by the fact that just as woman appears as a beast of prey prepared to defend her child, she can also appear to be a helpless, suffering creature in need of his strength and love. Woman's strange combination of weakness, beauty, and amazing strength befuddles man. So while on the one hand man perceives woman as a delicate bird in need of his protection because of her physical weakness, he also fears her because she is inexplicable. His deep fear of her attaches man to woman most strongly (GS, 69).

Perhaps the only tool he has to subordinate her is his physical strength (cf. BGE 238). Nietzsche teaches profound men to subordinate women because:

Woman wants to be taken and accepted as a possession, wants to be absorbed into the concept of possession, possessed. Consequently, she wants someone who *takes*, who does not give himself or give himself away; on the contrary, he is supposed to become richer in "himself"--through the accretion of strength, happiness, and faith given him by the woman who gives herself. Woman gives herself away, man acquires more--I do not see how one can get around this natural opposition by means of social contracts or with the best will in the world to be just, desirable as it may be not to remind oneself constantly how harsh, terrible, enigmatic, and immoral this antagonism is (GS, 363).

This passage leads Appel to the conclusion that “However much of a challenge they may pose to their male partners, healthy women are said to find their deepest fulfillment in service to deserving men” (Appel, 95). The decisive word in Appel’s description is “deserving.” Most men will not be worthy of the love of a real woman. Appel’s conclusion is thus for the most part correct, yet one should keep in mind that Nietzsche also admires woman’s naive egoism. Her willful sacrifices in love need not be understood as slavish devotion. Woman can empower and glorify *herself* by finding a man worthy of her, and by producing an extraordinary child with whom she can change the world. Additionally, Appel’s discussion seems to leave out the consideration of Napoleon’s mother as Napoleon’s master.<sup>125</sup>

Appel contends that woman’s way of loving is inferior to the way that man loves. This is the reason, Appel argues, that feminist commentators have shied away from discussing his description of feminine love accurately. Feminist scholars patently reject the idea that woman belongs in a submissive role. To demonstrate that Nietzsche understands feminine love to be inferior to masculine love, Appel cites Nietzsche’s assertion that “A man who loves like a woman becomes a slave; while a woman who loves like a woman becomes *a more perfect woman*” (GS, 363). But it is not so clear that this type of feminine love is simply inferior, as Appel argues. Nietzsche is arguing that there are two different types of love that ought to be maintained and ought to challenge one another. Man should love like a man and woman should love like a woman. Their respective strengths come from their different ways of loving. A man who loves like a woman is unmanly and therefore slavish. In light of the goal that Nietzsche aims to achieve, the womanly type of loving is absolutely necessary. Such reverence is difficult to maintain because it must be spawned by a person, object, or ideal that is worthy of it. This means that the lover must be creative; the lover may have to construct a person, object, or ideal that is worthy of love,

<sup>125</sup>See my discussion of Napoleon’s mother on pp. 102, 104-105, 114, 133.

just as Napoleon's mother did and as Zarathustra attempts to do.

Furthermore, in a letter to Peter Gast Nietzsche writes; "one ceases to love oneself *aright* when one *ceases* to give oneself exercise in loving others, wherefore the latter (the ceasing) is to be strongly advised against (from my own experience)" (Let, 1880, 173). Man's way of loving (understood as taking for oneself) is incomplete, just as is woman's way (understood as giving oneself). A fundamental duality is needed to create the proper type of profound love that Nietzsche envisions. There must be an inward and an outward love. Love of self is the foundation for the ability to give anything worthwhile to another. The creative spirit is a giver and a taker. His "gift-giving virtue is the highest virtue" (Z, 186). Zarathustra explains;

Verily, I have found you out, my disciples: you strive, as I do, for the gift-giving virtue. What would you have in common with cats and wolves? This is your thirst: to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to pile up all the riches in your soul. Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to give. You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love. Verily, such a gift-giving love must approach all values as a robber; but whole and holy I call this selfishness (Z, 186-187).

The noble selfishness of the creative spirit is a combination of femininity which knows how to give, and masculinity which knows how to take. The virtue combines the highest elements of the masculine and the feminine ways of loving to produce a noble type of longing.

### **Nietzsche's New Definition of Marriage**

When the sexes are differentiated from one another and are able to fear one another, they also honor each other and crave one another. Man and woman have reverence for the respective masculine or feminine traits that they lack themselves or that they do not understand. Man should believe that the "Eternal-Feminine attracts us *higher*" while every nobler woman "believes the same thing about the Eternal-Masculine-" (BGE, 236). Woman is to believe that the admirable traits of the Eternal Masculine can draw her higher. She is to view man as profound because she cannot view woman as profound. Man is to

believe that the desirable qualities of the Eternal Feminine can draw him higher by making him dream, hope, and ultimately conquer. On the contrary, Ophelia Schutte contends that Nietzsche reverses the picture. She claims that Nietzsche reverses Goethe's "The eternal feminine draws us higher" (Schutte, 1984, 187). Schutte's suggestion that Nietzsche relegates woman to the low is misguided. Schutte's suggestion misses the implication of an eternally hostile war of the sexes. Nietzsche's characterization of a book by Lou Andreas-Salomé in a letter to Franz Overbeck in 1885 supports this interpretation. He states; "What a contrast between the girlish and sentimental form and the strong-willed and knowledgeable content! There is loftiness in it; and even if it is not really the eternal feminine which draws this pseudo-maiden ever onward, then perhaps it is--the eternal masculine. And there are a hundred echoes of our Tautenburg conversations in it" (Let, 1885, 249). Though his comment seems to imply that she should be drawn upward by the Eternal Feminine, he suggests that the Eternal Masculine is her inspiration. The result is her strong will and insight combined with girlish qualities. Salomé's reverence for the Eternal Masculine produces a work that is worthy of Nietzsche's admiration. Man and woman being the same (i.e., any type of egalitarian relationship between them) precludes this type of reverence.

Human beings revere and admire what they cannot be or what they hope to become. And since "To esteem is to create" (Z, 171), the mutual reverence lays the ground for the creation of the *Übermensch*. Their love/hate and fear/reverence for one another arouses deep passion in each partner. The passion created from their mutual fear makes possible their esteeming and creating a mutual goal. Zarathustra describes the proper marriage as "the will of two to create the one that is more than those who created it. Reverence for each other, as for those willing with such a will, is what I name marriage" (Z, 182). He continues, "Over and beyond yourselves you shall love one day. Thus *learn* first to love....Bitterness lies in the cup of even the best love: thus it arouses longing for the overman; thus it arouses your thirst, creator. Thirst for the creator, an arrow and longing

for the overman..." (Z, 183). There is bitterness in the love between man and woman because this love makes each of them long to overcome themselves. Each experiences contempt for their own respective unimproved states. But there is also creative potential in their love and an exhilarating thirst for what each of them could become. Both experience a longing inspired by the other. Man and woman should direct their longing toward the creation of a new type that is to transcend each of them--the Übermensch.

Nietzsche's understanding of what a marriage between man and woman should be is to replace the modern understanding of marriage. One might expect Nietzsche to present a type of egalitarian marriage if the partners' strength is to rival one another in the manner I have suggested. Nietzsche's understanding of marriage is far from the romantic egalitarian type that prevails nowadays. "Modern marriage has lost its meaning--consequently one abolishes it" (TI, 544). What purpose does marriage serve? This is no longer an easy question for man or woman to answer. When man and woman become independent entities, who strictly speaking do not need one another, the reason for marriage becomes unclear. The purpose behind marriage was always connected to the drive and/or the need to produce children. He defines the flaw in modern marriage:

Never, absolutely never, can an institution be founded on an idiosyncrasy; one cannot, as I have said, found marriage on "love"--it can be founded on the sex drive, on the property drive (wife and child as property), on the drive to dominate, which continually organizes for itself the smallest structure of domination, the family, and which needs children and heirs to hold fast--physiologically too--to an attained measure of power, influence, and wealth, in order to prepare for long-range tasks, for a solidarity of instinct between the centuries. Marriage as an institution involves the affirmation of the largest and most enduring form of organization: when society cannot affirm itself as a whole, down to the most distant generations, then marriage has altogether no meaning" (TI, 544).

The astounding number of divorces today is solid evidence of the weakness of romanticism as the foundation of any type of goal. Bloom provides a helpful explanation of the specific way in which modern marriage has degenerated. He attributes the weak state of modern marriage to the "inharmoniousness" of each partner's respective goals in marriage:

The inharmoniousness of final ends finds its most concrete expression in the female career, which is now precisely the same as the male career.

There are two equal careers in almost every household composed of educated persons under thirty-five. And those careers are not mere means to family ends. They are personal fulfillments. In this nomadic country it is more than likely that one of the partners will be forced, or have the opportunity, to take a job in a city other than the one where his or her spouse works. What to do? They can stay together with one partner sacrificing his career to the other, they can commute, or they can separate. None of these solutions is satisfactory. More important, what is going to happen is unpredictable. Is it the marriage or the career that will count most? ...The result is that both marriage and career are devalued (Bloom, 127).

Nietzsche does not refer to woman's career as a problem in his assessment of marriage, and he would not be terribly troubled by the possibility of bourgeois careers being devalued. However, Nietzsche would agree with Bloom's assessment of marriage, in a specific sense. The decision to marry and have a family becomes merely one option among many for woman and man. To Nietzsche, "that which the all-too-many, the superfluous, call marriage--alas, what shall I name that? Alas, this poverty of the soul in pair! Alas, this filth of the soul in pair! Alas, this wretched contentment in pair!" (Z, 182). People no longer know the real meaning of marriage, especially now that couples no longer understand marriage as a prerequisite for children, or children as a prerequisite for marriage. Consequently, Nietzsche asks of the cases where the child is produced; "What child would not have cause to weep over its parents?" (ibid.).

Ultimately, Nietzsche hopes to breed a kind of love that transcends the quest for possession; a higher type of love. This type of marriage, friendship, requires a certain distance between partners. Schutte provides a critical description of this distance:

Nietzsche's order of rank is the attempted institutionalization and objectification of a highly distanced and alienated view of human relations. A compulsive distance among individuals (even among those of the highest rank) is required. Even friends must obey the rules of distance dictated by the order of rank. Nietzsche's Zarathustra teaches that the friend must always be regarded as standing at a height. He counsels that one must never reveal one's true nature to one's friend. The point of the disguise is to cover up all of the weaknesses that make one human, as well as to exclude the possibility of love and compassion from the friendship. Men who do not live up to Zarathustra's model of friendship are devalued to the status of women and animals. (Schutte, 1984, 184-185).

Strictly speaking, one cannot be a friend with someone of a different rank. One should





only befriend one's (conventional and natural) equal. But there is even a type of distance between two genuine friends. A friend must be regarded as standing from a height because only a person whom one could admire is worthy of friendship. The lover too must be regarded as standing at a height. Both partners must maintain this looking upward, for if they do not inspire one another to look up, they will look down. Schutte is wrong that those incapable of this friendship are "devalued to the status of women and animals." Not all women, though perhaps most, are of such a low status in Nietzsche's view. But Schutte's implicit criticism that the pleasure of friendship seems to be missing is strong.

This relationship should draw one out of oneself, but should not violate one's individuality. The distance required between friends (or partners) is a natural result of Nietzsche's focus on radical individuality. One's body cannot be shared completely with another, and neither, Nietzsche contends, can one's personal thoughts and ideals. Nietzsche would say that the distance is needed so that neither partner underestimates himself or loses himself in the other. The tendency to exaggerate the worth of the friend or lover may lead one to lose oneself. Nietzsche correctly notes the tendency of the friend or lover to overestimate others to the detriment of himself. This is the result of the lovers' heightened imagination. For this reason, Nietzsche counsels solitude to the most profound and creative types that are to be bred.

### **An Alternative: Solitude**

The greatest individuals must ultimately flee from the herd for "Where solitude ceases the market place begins; and where the market place begins the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of the poisonous flies begins too" (Z, 163). But that Nietzsche counsels solitude to the greatest begs the question of the extent to which the creator needs friends or lovers. Solitude allows one to convalesce from the banality of the many. On the contrary, friendship (in the Nietzschean sense) keeps one from suffering in solitude. Love and friendship are merely resting places for the creators.

Zarathustra's journey begins when he leaves his solitude which he had enjoyed for

ten years. But “a change came over his heart” and he leaves his home to “go down” to speak to the people (Z, 121). He explains his task; “To lure many away from the herd, for that I have come. The people and the herd shall be angry with me: Zarathustra wants to be called a robber by the shepherds” (Z, 135). Solitude is needed because “the individual himself is still the most recent invention” (Z, 171). The individual must be nurtured, which is why Zarathustra “shall sing [his] song” to hermits, “to the lonesome and the twosome; and whoever still has ears for the unheard-of--his heart shall become heavy with my happiness” (Z, 136). And to these hermits Zarathustra says; “Flee my friend into solitude.” (Z, 163).

Solitude can become a dangerous suffering for the hermit. Zarathustra warns:

Today you are still suffering from the many, being one: today your courage and your hopes are still whole. But the time will come when solitude will make you weary, when your pride will double up and your courage gnash its teeth. And you will cry, “I am alone!” The time will come when that which seems high to you will no longer be in sight, and that which seems low will be all-too-near; even what seems sublime to you will frighten you like a ghost. And you will cry, “All is false!” (Z, 175).

Although there is a healthy type of solitude that gives the creator relief from the lowness of the masses, there is also a dangerous type of solitude from which the hermit suffers. Its origin is “bad love of yourselves [which] turns your solitude into a prison” (Z, 173).

Nietzsche recognizes the radical aloneness of this solitude in a letter to Franz Overbeck in 1888: “The perpetual lack of really refreshing and *healing human love*, the absurd isolation which it entails, making almost any residue of a connection with people merely something that wounds one--that is all very bad indeed and right only in itself, having the right to be necessary” (Let, 1888, 282). If the hermit is unable to give himself his own good and evil, to “hang [his] own will over [him]self as a law” (Z, 175), he will suffer from his loneliness. Zarathustra describes the dangers of this loneliness:

Lonely one, you are going the way to yourself. And your way leads past yourself and your seven devils. You will be a heretic to yourself and a witch and soothsayer and fool and doubter and unholy one and a villain. You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes!

Lonely one, you are going the way of the creator: you would create

a god for yourself out of your seven devils.

Lonely one, you are going the way of the lover: yourself you love, and therefore you despise yourself, as only lovers despise. The lover would create because he despises. What does he know of love who did not have to despise precisely what he loved!

Go into your loneliness with our love and with your creation, my brother; and only much later will justice limp after you.

With tears go into your loneliness, my brother. I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes (Z, 176-177).

He advises the creator to escape into solitude so that he learn to love and despise himself.

In his solitude he creates a goal for himself, his way. It may be impossible to be true to oneself when immersed in the everyday shallowness of the masses. These profound spirits must escape, indeed they must *flee*, into their solitude. The fact that this speech precedes the speech "On Old and Young Little Women" and follows the speech on "On Love of the Neighbor" begs the question of the role of love and friendship for the creative spirit. Love and friendship are only means of relieving the spirit from the dangers of solitude.

The great danger of solitude is that one becomes lonely and due to this loneliness, one love indiscriminately. Zarathustra explains; "Love is the danger of the loneliest; love of everything if only it is alive. Laughable, verily, are my folly and my modesty in love" (Z, 267). He adds later; "'Now everything redounds to my best, now I love every destiny--who feels like being my destiny?'" (BGE, 103). The absence of companions may cause one to lose rather than find himself. The friend is merely a signpost on the path to one's own goal. Zarathustra implies that these "fellow creators and harvesters" who are capable of solitude are male. He explains:

My virile nourishment, the savor and strength of my words, are taking effect; and verily, I did not feed them bloating vegetables, but warriors' nourishment, conquerors' nourishment: I wakened new desires. ...Such nourishment, to be sure, may not be suitable for children or for nostalgic old and young little females. Their entrails are persuaded in a different way; I am not their physician and teacher" (Z, 423).

None of Zarathustra's strange companions are women. It seems that man may be more capable of independence, solitude, and true liberty than is woman. Yet, Appel's assessment that "solitude is meant to be a temporary, transitional state" is correct (Appel, 86). Nietzsche's teaching on friendship and love demonstrates that even the most creative

spirits are not completely solitary. The fact that Nietzsche offers a political teaching that he must give to others demonstrates his own reliance on others. He needs his children to bring the Übermensch to fruition. He may have diagnosed the problem and revealed the urgency of this choice, but it is up to others to carry out his plan. One last point: Nietzsche says that his teaching “may not” be suitable for old and young little females. He does not know if a woman could have ears for his teaching. He leaves open the possibility.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

### **Which Sex is Superior?**

Nietzsche's imposition of different roles and responsibilities on the sexes begs the question of which sex is superior. Second, his discussion raises the issue of whether these different roles reflect different natures. Regarding the superiority question, reading Nietzsche superficially indicates that man is obviously superior from Nietzsche's perspective. But the complexities discussed in chapter 7 demonstrate that male superiority is not self-evident. And because it is not self-evident, contemporary efforts to rescue women from the clutches of Nietzsche's so-called misogyny have missed the most important aspects of Nietzsche's teaching on woman. Nietzsche affirms aspects of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, he insists that both perspectives are absolutely necessary if the *Übermensch* is to be actualized.

Affirming the need for both perspectives could imply that man and woman are different, but on balance they are equal (or equally important). The relations between the sexes would thus be understood as a type of equilibrium in which each contributes equally, but differently. According to Nietzsche, the only way to achieve such a balance and make the sexes equal is to make them the same, which amounts to the complete elimination of sexuality. Nietzsche intends to create a war between the sexes that never achieves balance. Humans need to dismiss the desire to couch all human attributes in terms of equality and focus on the cultivation of strong individuals, according to Nietzsche. Even though both sexes are needed, Nietzsche does not necessarily imply that man and woman are equally praiseworthy, or that they are equally dependent on one another. Even the most despicable vermin are necessary, but this certainly does not indicate anything praiseworthy about them.

The superiority of the sexes must be considered as it relates to the actualization of Nietzsche's goal, but this question can be approached in a number of ways. One way is to consider whether man or woman is more likely to become the last man. The sex that more



readily falls prey to the degenerating process would be the inferior one. Man, the “sterile animal,” degenerates more quickly than woman. Not only are males responsible for their own degeneration, but also for causing the retrogression of women. To be sure, both man and woman are degenerating because woman’s destiny is intimately tied to the destiny of man. First, woman molds her character according to an image created by man, according to Nietzsche. Moreover, because she needs him in order to get pregnant, her spiritual fate is necessarily entwined with his. So the more quickly man degenerates, the more rapidly woman degenerates as well. The initial danger of this degeneration is stronger in the male than it is in the female. Further, the types of things (namely, people) that woman tends to esteem are more closely linked to the earth than are the objects of men’s affections. In general, woman does not become domesticated as readily as man does. However, men and women have both demonstrated that they can degenerate to the same degree. Thus, looking at the speed of modern degeneration does not answer the question of sexual superiority. Man may initially degenerate more readily, but woman can learn to make the same mistakes of man.

An alternate method of determining sexual superiority is to ask whether man or woman contributes more readily to the coming about of the *Übermensch*. The means that woman must employ sound slavish. She must be cunning and sly as she clings to her illusions, while the genuine master is bold and authoritative and has the courage to live with the truth. Women are to gain power from behind the scenes through her child, while man is the child who asserts himself explicitly. But Nietzsche does not quite say this; only those who are worthy of having children ought to procreate. Nietzsche does not say what is to be done with slavish women who are not worthy of having children. Sterile males, we are told, can be philosophic laborers, though most males will be neither *Übermenschen* nor philosophic laborers. But if women are to stay in the domestic role, it is not clear what is to be done with those incapable of having children or those who are unworthy of having them in Nietzsche’s view. Most likely Nietzsche would say that they should be the slaves





of the more creative types. So while there is a role for the lower males that seems more directly related to Nietzsche's goal, unworthy women do not seem to be good for any purpose. And among the unworthy humans, Nietzsche counsels men to rule women, although both are slaves.

In addition, there is some evidence that woman would be more in need of others than man. Her physical weakness relative to man makes her more vulnerable. If woman's deepest desire is for the child, by definition she is less solitary than man. Woman's stronger longing for a child would be more difficult to transcend, which is why he suggests that she should not try to overcome the desire, but should embrace it. But this means that woman's greatness is necessarily dependent upon others, namely, her child and the man with whom she creates the child. Woman, it seems, would not and should not seek solitude to the extent that man does. Woman is less self-reliant than man. Although man may need woman to provide him with the impetus to do so, man can be the creator who actively makes things happen. If solitary self-sufficiency is the goal, Nietzsche would say that man has a greater ability to achieve this as well.

Overall, Nietzsche seems to favor man's role (as his own), but this does not mean that women are simply inferior to men in all respects. In her cunning creativity and her ability to affirm life despite what she learns, she is superior to man. Nietzsche does not intend the question of male or female superiority to be answered easily. If the superiority of one sex was unambiguously clear, a genuine, eternally hostile war between the sexes could not endure. If woman were so clearly inferior to man, he would have to be an utter fool to fight to possess or rule someone so inferior. Man would have to be second-rate himself to need woman so strongly. But when both sexes experience a heightened need of one another and potential admiration of the other, judging one's superiority is difficult.

Since Nietzsche's goal is the creation of the *Übermensch*, the most fruitful way to answer the question of masculine or feminine superiority is to consider whether the

Übermensch could be a woman or a man.<sup>126</sup> To answer this we need to consider first whether man or woman could acquire the (masculine and feminine) traits that are needed, and secondly which sex acquires them more readily. First, does man more readily acquire the feminine traits that are needed or does woman more easily acquire the masculine attributes? The role Nietzsche prescribes to woman suggests that her purpose is to *produce*, not to *be* the Übermensch. But it is still necessary to consider whether woman could transcend this role. Man is capable of acquiring the most desirable feminine qualities (cf. GS, 72; EH, 295), just as woman can acquire the best aspects of the masculine character (cf., GS, 70). Nietzsche does not discuss whether man is more able to acquire the needed feminine traits or whether woman more easily attains the masculine attributes. But Nietzsche does admire several male philosophers, artists, and rulers who have the needed feminine traits. Males have demonstrated their abilities as creators and artists, whereas women do not seem to have achieved the same standing, according to Nietzsche. This provides additional evidence that men are capable of *being* the Übermensch, but for woman the question remains open. For Nietzsche, the Übermensch is a male. And this must mean that Nietzsche sees man as superior because men have realized the highest accomplishments and demonstrated the greatest potential so far. Nietzsche understands himself (and Zarathustra) to have the requisite femininity needed to create a new goal for himself. His experience is that of a male. Nietzsche is not a woman and does not have the experience of a woman, though he recognizes the feminine aspects of his character. Thus, he does not simply reject femininity, but embraces only the highest aspects of it.

The possibility of a female Übermensch is never explicitly ruled out by Nietzsche. Nevertheless, he does not expect the Übermensch to be a woman. To say that a female Übermensch is possible even though there has never yet been one is a huge assumption. The infrequent praise of actual women leads to the conclusion that he is seeking to educate males. Nietzsche even goes so far as to define a people in terms of their ability to produce

<sup>126</sup>I also discuss the possibility of a male or female Übermensch on pp. 121-139.

such great men (as opposed to women): “A people is a detour of nature to get six of seven great men [Männer]. --Yes, and then to get around them” (BGE, 126). So it seems that the character he hopes to produce is more likely to occur in a male, as Nietzsche’s experiences have indicated. Though such greatness is rare in a male, it is much more unlikely that a woman would attain the necessary traits. And since the type of genius needed is more rare in a woman, this would lead Nietzsche to conclude that man is superior to woman.

But there is the matter of Nietzsche’s earlier statement that the “perfect woman is a higher type of human being than the perfect man” (HAH I: 377), which seems to indicate that the “perfect woman” is superior to man. Nietzsche adds that the perfect woman “is also something much rarer” (ibid.). This statement again supports the conclusion that man is superior in the sense that he is more likely to possess the traits that Nietzsche hopes to cultivate. However, the meaning of Nietzsche’s assertion deserves closer scrutiny. Its significance rests on the meaning of “perfect.” If a perfect woman is a female *Übermensch*, then this assertion may indicate not only that a female *Übermensch* is possible, but that a female *Übermensch* is superior to a male *Übermensch*. Perhaps by “perfect” Nietzsche means that as a woman, she is more complete or fulfilled than man can be as a man. Her feminine will experiences the highest degree of power. The ideal type of woman maintains the motherly quality. Most women may not find satisfaction in the rearing of children because one never knows what type of child one will get. Alternatively, Nietzsche may mean that with respect to the task at hand--which is the creation of the *Übermensch*--woman is better prepared. The perfect woman is able to devote herself completely to this type of goal. Woman’s ability to love makes her better equipped to *serve* life than is man. The perfect woman is higher than the perfect man because she more completely embraces (and *devotes* herself to) life than man.

Woman’s perfection constitutes a different type than man’s. Though woman’s perfection occurs less frequently, when (and if) it does occur, the perfect woman is higher

than the perfect man. But the fact that the cultivation of the perfect woman is so unlikely explains why Nietzsche puts his faith in men primarily. As doubtful as is a male *Übermensch*, Nietzsche finds the possibility that a female one will ever come to be even more dubious. The danger of the *Übermensch*'s development is so vast that it is sensible to Nietzsche to place his hopes in the more likely candidate--the male. But this conclusion is based on the assumption that the perfect woman would be an *Übermensch*. The question still remains whether the "perfect woman" is *Übermensch* material. One would expect Napoleon's mother to come closest to the perfect woman Nietzsche describes. Perhaps the mother of an *Übermensch*, who molds her child in her own image, toward the type of transcendent goal Nietzsche envisions, would be a female *Übermensch*. A female *Übermensch* would be essentially different from a male one. Moreover, because the female *Übermensch* rules from behind the scenes, this also means that it is entirely likely for a female *Übermensch* to come about without anyone (with the exception of her own child) recognizing her strength. The child becomes the public commander, while the perfect woman orchestrates his commands.

Nietzsche's assessment that man is superior to woman is based on two serious assumptions. The first assumption is that the frequency of the event makes it superior. In other words, he assesses that man is superior because man is *more likely* to be an *Übermensch*. But this conclusion does not seem to be consistent with Nietzsche's praise of rarity. Additionally, one might criticize Nietzsche by saying that women have been oppressed for so many centuries that one could not expect her to break free from that oppression to achieve the things that males have. For example, Virginia Woolf argues that woman's oppression has understandably made woman angry.<sup>127</sup> This anger, Woolf contends, has impeded woman's genius. To contrast, in a great man like Shakespeare,

All desire to protest, to preach, to proclaim an injury, to pay off a score, to make the world witness of some hardship or grievance was fired out of him and consumed. Therefore his poetry flows from him free and unimpeded.

<sup>127</sup>My comments on Virginia Woolf have been shaped by lectures give by Willliam Shapiro.



If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare. If ever a mind was incandescent, unimpeded, ...it was Shakespeare's mind" (Woolf, 56-57).

Woolf would agree with Nietzsche that men have been the greatest artists and philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Woman's anger impedes her from reaching the heights that men have attained in the arts, according to Woolf. Women writers, motivated in part out of anger, desire to "set the record straight" by showing men what they can achieve. Woolf contends that women's literature will not aspire to the heights of men's until woman lets go of her anger and resentment. Woolf concludes that women can only hope to ascend to the heights of men when they are freed from oppression by men, because this freedom will enable women to overcome their resentment. It is also crucial to woman's development that she become financially self-reliant, as was Woolf herself.

Nietzsche would respond by saying that greatness is displayed in fighting opposition. Moreover, egalitarian societies do not tend to produce worthy enemies and are therefore less likely to produce the great art, literature, and philosophy. This is a very persuasive point. Furthermore, some women have overcome oppression to achieve great things. Women have become powerful rulers (Catherine the Great) and very good novelists (Jane Austen). But Nietzsche would say that women have not yet become the *greatest* artists, nor have they been philosophers.

Second, Nietzsche's conclusion of male superiority assumes that being or becoming a creator of values is more praiseworthy than giving birth to and creating a creator. Nietzsche's conclusion that the creator is superior results from his view of the particular needs of a degenerating society. But if the *Übermensch* is really the recognition of the mother's will, this fact would seem to make woman the superior individual. This type of woman would have transcended the need for recognition from the masses because she never experienced recognition. She knows who she is and receives her satisfaction from the child she creates. Of course, her fulfillment will rest on the accomplishments of the child, and this makes her dependent on his will. However, her transcendence of the

need to be recognized publicly seems to be a potential superiority of woman over man. In this respect, woman may be more capable of transcending the democratic spirit than is man, though this escapes Nietzsche's notice. If man is to be the active political figure, he will rely on the masses in a way that woman will not. Woman, on the other hand, relies on her own individual child (i.e., her own flesh and blood whom she has created physically, morally and spiritually) more so that man relies on any single human being.

### **Are Man and Woman Different By *Nature* or By *Nietzsche's Nature*?**

But the question of superiority of the sexes seems to rest on the assumption that man and woman have different natures. As a thinker writing of the death of god and the death of all stable forms of evaluation, feminists see Nietzsche as opening the door for woman's redefining herself in non-traditional ways. They argue that women can and should achieve the same things as men. But despite God's death, Nietzsche prescribes strict roles for woman. This raises a serious issue of whether Nietzsche invokes nature as a standard of evaluation in the discussion. Essentially, the difficulty is in determining whether the differences between man and woman that Nietzsche sees are determined by nature; or, are they are historically determined and consequently changeable, i.e., socially constructed by human beings? As Strauss describes the situation, nature "has become a problem for Nietzsche and yet he cannot do without nature. Nature, we may say, has become a problem owing to the fact that man is conquering nature and there are no assignable limits to that conquest. As a consequence, people have come to think of abolishing suffering and inequality" (Strauss, 183). Man does not know whether or how to continue molding his own nature. Humans now consider destroying two elements that Nietzsche contends are absolutely prerequisite for greatness--suffering and inequality. The treatment of women that Nietzsche prescribes represents a return to suffering and inequality in sexual relations. Nietzsche's discussions of man and woman highlight the problem that nature poses for the Nietzschean system. It is through those comments that the solution to this problem must be found. Any solution must be consistent with what Nietzsche has said

regarding the death of God, the Übermensch, the will to power, and the eternal recurrence.

Nietzsche's project begins with the death of God. The crisis of modernity is a result of this fact and Nietzsche's project is an attempt to redeem this event. All aspects of Nietzsche's philosophic system, including his comments on woman, must be understood in the context of the death of God. But the death of God precludes the possibility of believing in any fixed, unchanging, eternal truths. God's death means that there is no longer any basis for believing in fixed or absolute truths, even though humans need to believe in such truths. Based solely on his assertion of the death of God, Nietzsche could not understand nature as a fixed metaphysical truth. Considering his understanding of the death of God alone, Nietzsche would have to say that the differences between the sexes are socially constructed human conventions.

But the story does not end with God's death; Nietzsche's proposed solution is the creation of the Übermensch; this is the nature, the peak, that should be molded. Nietzsche teaches that the Übermensch must become the new human goal, otherwise the destiny of Man is to become a race of last men. The very possibility of an Übermensch is based on the eternal differences between the sexes. However, Nietzsche's proposal implies that this "eternally" hostile war between the sexes is based on a "fixed" and "unchanging" truth about man and woman respectively, namely, nature. And here is the problem. His system cannot logically accommodate such a fixed nature or permanent distinction between man and woman, and yet without this eternal tension the Übermensch will not be actualized.

A superficial reading of Nietzsche's texts suggests that Nietzsche is a proponent of biological determinism. Nietzsche emphasizes the significance of the body and he certainly distinguishes man and woman based on their bodily differences. Pregnancy, both physical and metaphorical, is a central issue for Nietzsche. Woman has this possibility because of biology. But the differences between man and woman go beyond mere biology. Nietzsche argues that man and woman are different and should be treated differently *because of his goal*, not because of their respective biologies. Individual women and men can transcend



the limitations of their bodies, respectively. Nietzsche recognizes that woman can quite capably become man because of the extraordinary power of social determinism. He states; “In three or four civilized countries of Europe women can through a few centuries of education be made into anything, even into men: not in the sexual sense, to be sure, but in every other sense” (HAH I: 425). Although Nietzsche was not familiar with the technology available today, technologies including cloning and other types of genetic engineering demonstrate that now more than ever, biology does *not* fix the respective destiny of man and woman in any permanent way. Due to medical technology, man and woman can even be altered sexually today. Biological determinism is inconsistent with Nietzsche’s view of human beings as the malleable, undetermined animals. Nietzsche recognizes that human beings can actually change human nature (for better or for worse) and therefore must decide what type of nature to cultivate.

Nietzsche does not base his truths about “woman as such” on biological difference alone because human beings simply are not bound by their biology. Biology can be altered, ignored, or interpreted as completely irrelevant. Nietzsche still insists that the distinctions between male and female bodies matter. He must have some other basis for his conclusion that man and woman are different and ought to be different for all eternity. Perhaps his doctrine of the will to power is the basis for maintaining the distinctions. One of the fundamental distinctions among individuals is the strength of the will. However, the body in and of itself does not determine how strong one’s will is. Strength of will is determined by the instincts and passions of the individual, as well as the social and historical conditioning that shape those instincts. While Nietzsche would concede that man and woman respectively have different instincts due to their different bodies, the significance of the differences between male and female bodies and male and female wills are not simply unalterable facts. Nietzsche recognizes the amazing power of Man to alter such traits; consequently, he must decide first, whether to maintain differences between man and woman and which differences to promote; and second, what the significance of

the cultivated differences shall be. If male and female natures were fixed, unalterable truths, Nietzsche would not need to discuss them, nor would he need to try to widen the tension between them. In other words, if the differences between man and woman were biologically determined and that biology could not be altered, Nietzsche would not need to insist on maintaining those differences. But the modern situation demonstrates quite frighteningly that it is possible to deny the importance of sexual difference. And if humans continue to ignore the differences between man and woman in their customs, laws, and education, ultimately those differences will be eliminated and forgotten. Society would become an ugly place if man and woman were indistinguishable from one another.

Comparing the differences between the sexes with the death of God--which Nietzsche considers to be a fundamental fact--demonstrates that the differences between man and woman discussed in "Our Virtues" are not fixed facts for Nietzsche. The death of God is a fact, an incident that occurred at a historical moment. Nietzsche does not defend or prove that God died because eventually any intellectually honest individual will recognize this fact (cf. Z, 124). Only a few intellectually honest individuals recognize this fact. Nevertheless, the death of God is a fact because it happened.

Similarly, biological differences between man and woman are facts which can be either ignored or cultivated. Man and woman have different bodies. Democrats, Christians, and other egalitarians insist that those biological differences are insignificant and ought to be ignored. Consequently, the roles of man and woman become the same. And as this homogenization continues, the non-biological differences between the sexes are eroded as well. Nietzsche, however, interprets their biological differences as significant because they are fuel for his goal.

Strauss's explanation is consistent with this interpretation. He argues that "for Nietzsche there cannot be a natural or rational morality because he denies that there is a nature of man: the denial of any cardinal difference between man and brute is a truth, if a deadly truth; hence there cannot be natural ends of man as man: all values are human

creations” (Strauss, 185). Human beings should not understand themselves in terms of their origins, but in terms of their possible conclusions. Man needs a goal; he is not his beginning, but has always understood himself in terms of what he could be or what he could achieve.

Strauss’ explanation also sheds light on why Nietzsche does not simply say that woman is more “natural” than man, but that her *nature* is more “natural.” The absence of quotation marks around the term *nature* could mean that it is a newly created standard or a standard that is not undermined by the death of God, or, perhaps both. The only type of standard that is not undermined by the death of God is a consciously created standard by an individual who understands that a created standard is a temporary standard. The term *nature* outside of quotations is Nietzsche’s *own* understanding of what woman’s nature can and should be. This standard of nature (that Nietzsche’s will fixes) should become the truth about woman in the future; his understanding of nature ought to be cultivated and become reality.

To make man natural means “to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*’ (BGE, 230). One masters all previous interpretations of the world by willing a new interpretation that can account for all others. Man has the power to alter his own instincts and the entire species through creative willing. Not only can he master the past by interpreting it in a life-affirming manner, but the authentic individual can free himself from the power that chance/accident has had over his life by creating a new goal for himself. In this manner one can “gain power over nature and in addition a certain power over oneself” (WP, 430). In particular, the most extraordinary human beings shape their own nature and are shaped by the goals, ideals, and moralities that they create. Nietzsche gives Man the possibility of improving himself by selecting the *Übermensch* as his goal.

The eternal war between the sexes, separate male and female natures, and the

Übermensch are in no way guaranteed. If man and woman are not taught that they are fundamentally different from one another, they will become more and more alike. The death of God and the fact that all of events eternally recur form the foundation of Nietzsche's preference for the Übermensch as the human goal. Nietzsche interprets those facts to mean that Nietzsche must will what the future of Man should be. Nietzsche selects the type of nature he would like to cultivate, for if he fails to do so, the most disgusting creature imaginable will arise. His subjective preference for the Übermensch as opposed to the last man dictates that choice.

Nietzsche's prescriptions for woman are not determined by woman's biology, but by his goal. His goal imposes a particular interpretation on the biological differences between man and woman. Nietzsche highlights the significance of their respective because it is possible to interpret the body as evidence of the other differences between them. Nietzsche promotes those differences that have elevated tension and struggle. Hopefully those distinctions (which were understood to be rooted in biology) will generate in the future an eternal war and hostility between man and woman. The sexual tension and passion created by man and woman struggling with one another prepares the soil out of which the Übermensch may grow. To repeat, if the eternally hostile war between the sexes were an inevitable fact, Nietzsche would not need to go to such great lengths to preserve it. Nietzsche interprets the different bodies of man and woman to be significant because of his task of creating the Übermensch, the goal that enables Nietzsche to transcend nihilism.

### **Is Nietzsche's Standard of Nature a Fixed, Eternal Truth?**

The fact that Nietzsche does not recommend a return to a fixed essence leads feminists to the conclusion that Nietzsche does not understand his "truths about 'woman as such' to be true in any fixed sense. And, they contend, since Nietzsche is not a proponent of any fixed essence or nature, there is also no fixed way or "correct" way to interpret his teachings either. Just as Nietzsche understands woman through the lens of his subjective preferences, so, too, do the feminists read Nietzsche through the lens of their goals. These

feminists, therefore, see Nietzsche's teachings as opening the door for women to transcend all previous definitions of femininity, and in particular, to overcome "mere biology."

Although Nietzsche is not a proponent of biological determinism, this interpretation is not accurate because Nietzsche obviously takes cues from the biological differences. Nietzsche creates meaning out of their biological differences due to his subjective preference for the *Übermensch* and his rejection of egalitarian goals.

However, these feminists are correct to note that there is no predetermined necessity that dictates that the differences between the sexes ought to be maintained. The differences between man and woman are not based on a fixed, unchanging metaphysical "truth" for two reasons. First, these "truths about 'woman as such'" are only Nietzsche's truths; they are products of his subjective will. Second, these traits are changeable over time. It is quite possible, indeed likely, that the last man will arise and that the differences between the sexes will be obliterated. Nietzsche cannot bear the thought of this despicable creature recurring eternally. Nietzsche would absolutely reject the feminist renunciation of "mere biology" because this interpretation creates a greater likelihood of the last man arising.

While the hostile relationship between man and woman is not "true" in the metaphysical sense, there are two senses in which the male/ female dichotomy will be both fixed and eternal. First, once Nietzsche's will fixes these sexual differences, i.e., once they are accepted as truths, they will eternally recur. Although Nietzsche's truths about men and women have not always been "true" in a metaphysical sense, if Nietzsche succeeds in promoting and widening the differences between the sexes, his truths will become fixed for a period of time. And the eternal recurrence of the same means that Nietzsche's truths are eternal in the sense that they will recur.

There is another sense in which the dichotomy of the sexes could be eternal due to the fact that the complete homogenization of the sexes has not yet occurred. If Nietzsche is able to keep the war between the sexes alive, and if others like him keep that tension alive in the future, perhaps the war between the sexes will never die. Nietzsche's will alone

cannot make this possibility come true. Only through an act of volition on the part of Nietzsche and others like him in the future can an eternally hostile war between the sexes be cultivated. This war between the sexes will likely exist in a variety of forms. Of course, the maintenance of sexual differentiation, passion, and struggle will not be possible if the democratization of the world continues unencumbered.

The only nature to which Nietzsche submits is his own idiosyncratic will. All that has happened so far has been a “trial...-a long trial; and what it tries to find is the commander” (Z, 324). Nietzsche understands himself as that commander who must change human nature by his teaching of the will to power, the eternal recurrence, and the *Übermensch*. And he hopes to create conditions so that other commanders will arise and continue to shape man’s nature. What Nietzsche wills matters because the world eternally recurs and he would like to create a life that he would be willing to relive. The foundation for Nietzsche’s truths is his love of himself and his love of his friends (present and future creators). His creation of a new goal is an act of self-glorification as well as an act of friendship. He hoped to leave his mark eternally, but he also hoped that others would challenge him and create new goals in the future.

### **Can Liberal Democrats Find a Practical Teaching in Nietzsche’s Thought?**

Nietzsche does not speak to feminists, egalitarians, or liberal democrats, but this does not mitigate the possibility of these groups learning something from him. It should be noted from the outset that Nietzsche would not approve of liberal democrats using his work in this manner. Not only will liberal democrats fail to understand him; but, Nietzsche’s goal cannot be reached within the framework of a liberal democratic society. Still, Nietzsche’s condemnation of liberal democracy is worth studying in the manner that Tocqueville proposes to study democracy. Though he is not a partisan of the regime, Tocqueville suggests that we should, at the very least, seek to understand democracy’s “good instincts as well as its evil inclinations, try to restrain the latter and promote the former” (Tocqueville, 245).

Nietzsche's diagnosis of the gradual homogenization of the species is a plausible danger; however, his solution to this problem is not feasible. Schutte attacks Nietzsche's prescribing exploitation and slavery because "the 'necessity' of violence is used only to justify aristocratic control over the masses" (Schutte, 1984, 171). She is correct to note that protection of the masses is not Nietzsche's goal, but Schutte is wrong to imply that Nietzsche institutes aristocracy for its own sake. When one alters the goal, as does Nietzsche, one must also alter the means. Because Nietzsche defines the purpose of society in terms of the exceptional individual, he must reject democratic government. Tocqueville voices a similar point in *Democracy in America* by raising the following questions:

Do you wish to raise mankind to an elevated and generous view of the things of this world? Do you want to inspire men with a certain scorn of material goods? Do you hope to engender deep convictions and prepare the way for acts of profound devotion?

Are you concerned with refining mores, elevating manners, and causing the arts to blossom? Do you desire poetry, renown, and glory?

Do you set out to organize a nation so that it will have a powerful influence over all others? Do you expect it to attempt great enterprises and, whatever be the result of its efforts, to leave a great mark on history?

If in your view that should be the main object of men in society, do not support democratic government; it surely will not lead you to that goal.

But if you think it profitable to turn man's intellectual and moral activity toward the necessities of physical life and use them to produce well-being, if you think that reason is more use to men than genius, if your object is not to create heroic virtues but rather tranquil habits, if you would rather contemplate vices than crimes and prefer fewer transgressions at the cost of fewer splendid deeds, if in place of a brilliant society you are content to live in one that is prosperous, and finally, if in your view the main object of government is not to achieve the greatest strength or glory for the nation as a whole but to provide for every individual therein the utmost well-being, protecting him as far as possible from all afflictions, then it is good to make conditions equal and to establish a democratic government (Tocqueville, 245).

Tocqueville's point is that one's partisanship depends upon one's goal. In Nietzsche's view, the love that matters is the love of the creator of values, therefore the worthy culture only needs to respond to the needs of the creator. Schutte's criticism of Nietzsche boils down to a difference of emphasis. Schutte's main concern is the well-being of each

individual, while Nietzsche's is the improvement of the species. Moreover, Schutte, like Nussbaum, measures well-being in terms of a particular standard of living for each individual. In contrast, Nietzsche would not be distressed if the majority of people have to be sacrificed for the sake of a single Übermensch.

If one finds the erosion of sexual differentiation disturbing, but Nietzsche's remedy of institutionalized slavery and the subordination of woman unpalatable, a new cure is needed for this democratic disease. First, Nietzsche's analysis provides reason to consider single sex education more seriously. Educating the sexes separately could help promote the modesty that transforms sexual relations to something beyond mere comfort and satisfaction of bodily needs. Physically separating the two sexes into two distinct classrooms could help foster an awareness of the unique significance of sexual differences. In this way, men will not be forced to be educated like women, and women will not be forced to become men. The separation of the sexes could also awaken a passion and desire to affirm that sexual differentiation. Although Nietzsche would not advocate girls and boys or men and women receiving the same education; perhaps, separating them into different classes could help maintain, or at least stall, the homogenization of the sexes. But this solution is nothing more than a band-aid on the problem that Nietzsche derides. If men and women receive the same education, they will be molded in a way that makes them have similar, mediocre desires. Furthermore, requiring separate types of education for men and women may be inconsistent with egalitarianism. If men and women are equal in the most important senses, what is the reason to maintain those differences, differences that are to be irrelevant politically? Egalitarians cannot answer this question, according to Nietzsche. In other words, it is not clear how a separate education for men and women could be established and promoted in an egalitarian society. It seems highly unlikely that a liberal democracy could *impose* single-sex education upon its citizens.

Second, scientists should reconsider the flagrant use of medical technologies. For example, current genetic research attempts to isolate the gene that causes aggression in



men. The obvious motivation behind the study is to see how one might eliminate this aggressive quality. The assumption behind the research, that (male) aggression dangerous and ought to be eradicated, may not be sound. These scientists need to consider what the consequences of the elimination of this gene would be, and how it may impact upon man, woman, the relationship between the sexes, the family, and society at large. Nietzsche persuasively argues that women will not desire men who are completely passive, gentle, and safe. Nevertheless, this is the type of man that primary schools now aim to produce. Feminists have successfully tyrannized the male dominance in the schools. It is now fashionable to denounce competition, aggressiveness, and ambition for the sake of feminine perspectives. But women should consider whether they could be satisfied without some of those qualities in men. Bloom, for instance, suggests that stripping men of their ability to dominate alters the nature of relationships, love, sex, family, and marriage (cf. Bloom, 88-137). The elimination of masculinity may result in sterile "relationships" rather than passionate, feisty love affairs.

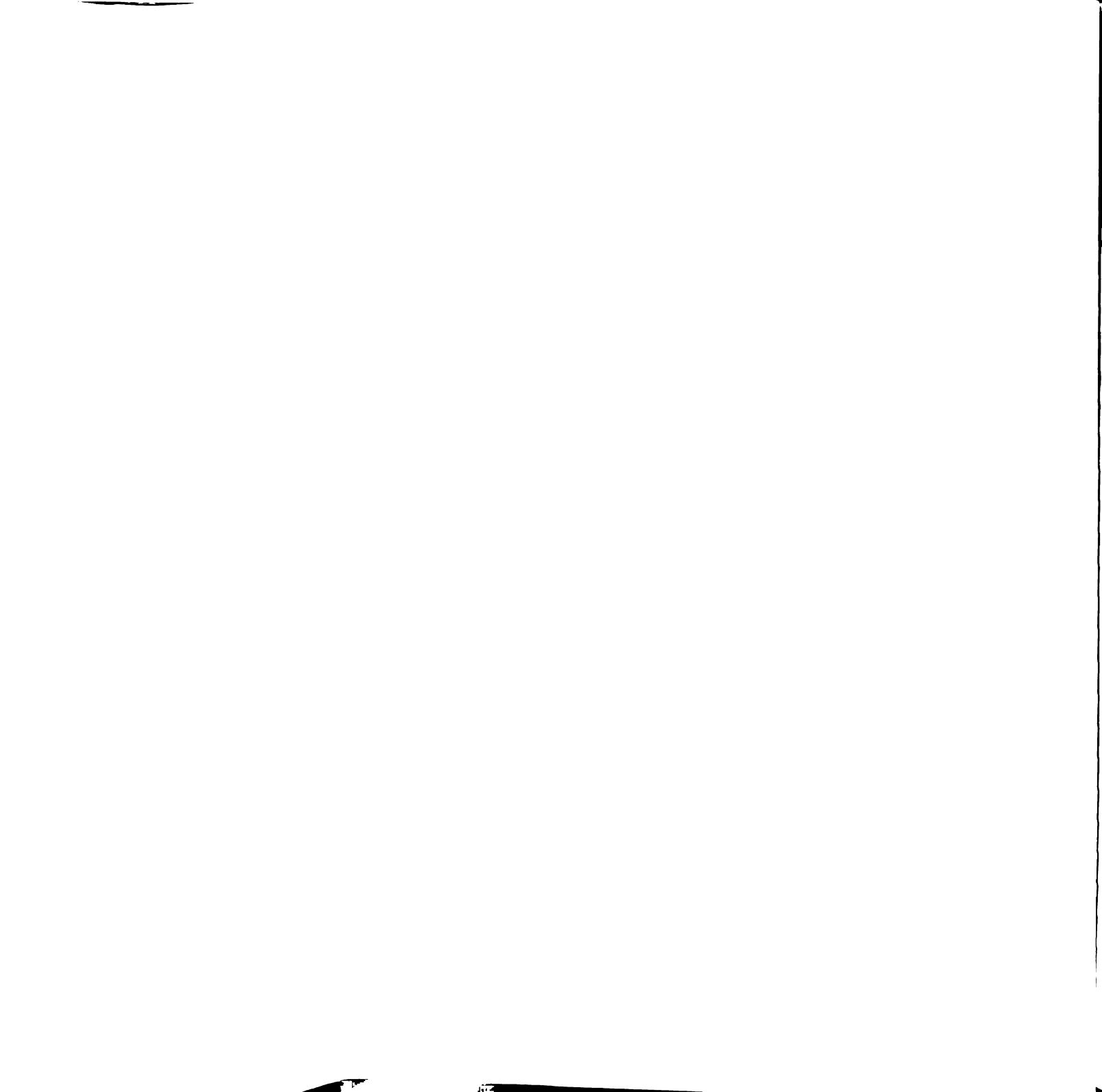
Further, the peculiarly modern faith in progress needs to be given further scrutiny. As new medications are developed, scientists lack a clear understanding of whether such medicines and procedures should be employed. Consider the extent to which current medical technology enables, and even encourages, us to medicate away the differences between man and woman. Women are now told that they can eliminate the menstruation cycle through a continual use of active birth control pills. Doctors are currently on a mission to make the day-after-pill and the abortion pill as easily obtainable as the birth control pill. If the menstruation cycle is essentially eliminated, and the consequences of careless sex (pregnancy) neutralized, woman will place less emphasis on her ability to give birth. Without menstruation, woman would no longer have the constant monthly reminder of the possibility of pregnancy. The availability of pills, which essentially reverse the effects of conception after the fact, alters the meaning of pregnancy and sex. Indeed, the initial introduction of contraception radically changed the way men and women relate to one

another. For many women and men, pregnancy may become an unnecessary nuisance that can be eliminated without much thought or care. Before carelessly eliminating the particularities of woman's body, one must consider the social and political consequences that may result. Eliminating menstruation because of its inconvenience makes woman closer to being a man figuratively, if not biologically. The question of why she should be a woman, mother, or wife no longer has any clear answer.

Third, if the family is worth preserving, perhaps separate roles for man and woman are also worth preserving. Without a doubt, women's liberation movement has effectively altered the family and marriage. But is the change in family for better or for worse? Indeed, modern egalitarian societies are moving closer to the communism of women and children that Socrates recommended in the *Republic*.<sup>128</sup> Socrates considers what happens when women get what they want and are treated exactly the same as men. Complete communism of sexual relations and children is required. Though this extreme result of complete communism of women and children proves to be undesirable and impossible, today's continual weakening of the family demonstrates a movement toward the ridiculous city envisioned by Plato. The withering away of the family is evidenced by high divorce rates, the rearing of children in day care centers, single parent homes, the high number of teenage pregnancies, and dead beat dads.

<sup>128</sup>In Book V of Plato's *Republic*, the interlocutors attempt to create complete equality between the sexes in the city in speech. In practice this means giving man and woman the exact same education and roles in the city. Plato presents a disturbing picture of reforms needed to equalize the sexes. These include raising children in pens, sex by lot, incest, the elimination of enduring love in marriage, and the abolition of family. The result of Plato's experiment is that all serious commitment is destroyed, private loyalties disappear, human dedication and dignity is lost, and life appears flat and hollow. The ugly picture of what complete equality would look like suggests that maintaining some inequalities is healthy both for the individual and for society.

The disturbing consequence of complete elimination of sexual inequality explains why Socrates preserves the family and the different roles of man and woman respectively in the *Laws*. More is to be gained by maintaining the differences. Plato has serious reasons why man and woman should not be completely equal; those reasons do not include a chauvinistic desire to justify the subordination of woman as Okin suggests (Okin, 276-277). Plato would argue that complete equality of the sexes is unnatural and therefore not desirable for the city or for the individual. While Nietzsche's argument may not rest on nature as Plato's does, he would certainly agree that the maintenance of separate roles for man and woman is absolutely crucial.



Not only has the family become weaker, but Putnam contends that women's liberation is one factor that has helped to "diminish civic engagement and social connectedness" generally (Putnam, 72). Putnam explains:

many millions of American women have moved out of the home into paid employment. This is the primary, though not the sole, reason why the weekly working hours of the average American have increased significantly during these years. It seems highly plausible that this social revolution should have reduced the time and energy available for building social capital. For certain organizations, such as the PTA, the League of Women Voters, the Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Red Cross, this is almost certainly an important part of the story. The sharpest decline in women's civic participation seems to have come in the 1970s; membership in such "women's" organizations as these has been virtually halved since the late 1960s. By contrast, most of the decline in participation in men's organizations occurred about ten years later; the total decline to date has been approximately 25 percent for the typical organization. On the other hand, the survey data imply that the aggregate declines for men and virtually as great as those for women. It is logically possible, of course, that the male declines might represent the knock-on effect of women's liberation, as dishwashing crowded out the lodge, ...(Putnam, 72-73).

The implications of women's liberation extend well beyond the domestic and erotic spheres. Certainly a decline in social connectedness was not sought by feminists, but since it has resulted, one must consider if there is any way to halt the process.

### **Can Feminists Learn From Nietzsche?**

Two assumptions have been inherent in women's liberation since its birth. One is that society will be stronger if women are afforded the same opportunities as men. The second is that women and men can be fulfilled by pursuing the same paths. Both assumptions are currently being questioned. Even pop culture television programs like "Ally McBeal" and "Sex in the City" are beginning to question what women actually gain from their so-called "liberation." The recognition that women's liberation may not be all good does not necessitate the enslavement of women. Only by confronting these difficult questions will it be possible to find a responsible notion of human rights. Nietzsche helps diagnose the problem clearly. Though I would not endorse his solution, one should still consider the motivation behind his concern. Nietzsche's goal is most certainly not an attempt to create sisterhood or help all women equally; nevertheless, it would be

appropriate for feminists to read his diagnosis of the problem. But, these feminists must learn to read Nietzsche without any illusions, for he is not a feminist, which means that he certainly does not hope to promote feminism.

Regarding the second assumption, instead of focusing so heavily on what would equalize the sexes, perhaps the focus should be on determining what would fulfill woman and what would fulfill man. The goal of the feminist movement is to make individual men and individual women self-sufficient. But in this movement, perhaps the social needs individuals are neglected. A society of self-sufficient similar individuals loses important elements of community, as Putnam discusses. We should not assume that woman wants the same things as man, but should instead consider the different predilections of man and woman. In this way, we can take cues from their differences instead of trying to ignore what we see before our very eyes. For example, the fact that women are not occupying the highest positions in the top corporations may mean that women do not have the same type of ambition as men. Perhaps ambitious women, in contrast to ambitious men, want it all-- family and career. Men, because they do not bear children, may more easily focus solely on career.

Nietzsche's concern of maintaining the dichotomy between the sexes speaks to a fundamental tension in the feminist movement that has been implicit since the beginning of the movement. One side would like to promote femininity as its own power. This group argues that femininity has not influenced society to the degree that these feminist would like it to do so. Feminists like Carol Gilligan hope affirm feminine and masculine ways of thinking. This strand has found its expression in educational reforms. However, it seems that feminists have moved beyond the desire to affirm the power of femininity, toward the goal of tyrannizing or eliminating masculinity for the sake of femininity. As Hoff Summers demonstrates in *The War Against Boys*, men are now forced to learn (and become) like women, instead of the other way around. This trend, if continued, will harm women as much as it harms men. Forcing both sexes to pattern themselves after only one

sex, not only denies the attributes of each sex, but necessarily causes the relations between the sexes to degenerate.

The other side strand of feminism argues that the differences between the sexes are irrelevant because humans are socially constructed. This means (as Nietzsche teaches), that the original natures of the sexes may never be found again. This second type of feminism, which I will call “historicist feminism,” would argue that it is unnecessary to look back to the original meaning of our biological differences because that biology can be altered. Thus, feminists like Harriet Taylor Mill and Gail Evans argue that women should be treated just like men. To liberate woman means to permit, indeed to encourage, her to pursue the same path as man. This, by the way, is the type of feminism that Nietzsche chastises most harshly. These historicist feminists insist on ignoring any sexual difference, and this ultimately weakens the family, erodes the importance and purpose of marriage, and corrodes social connectedness. Feminists cannot have it both ways. Either sexual differences are completely unimportant, or they are relevant and their cultivation is desirable. To make this decision, feminists must be honest about the current direction liberal democracy is headed. This tension in feminism may never be resolved, but the sobering effect of Nietzsche’s warnings may allow both types of feminists to gain some insight into the fallacies of the women’s liberation movement. Incidentally, Nietzsche would be concerned that some day feminists may reconcile themselves. Nietzsche might say that the tension within the movement offers hope that all is not lost.

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AC	<i>The Antichrist</i>
BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
H	<i>The Use and Abuse of History</i>
HAH	<i>Human-all-too-Human</i>
GM	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
TI	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
Z	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i>
LET	<i>Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche</i>

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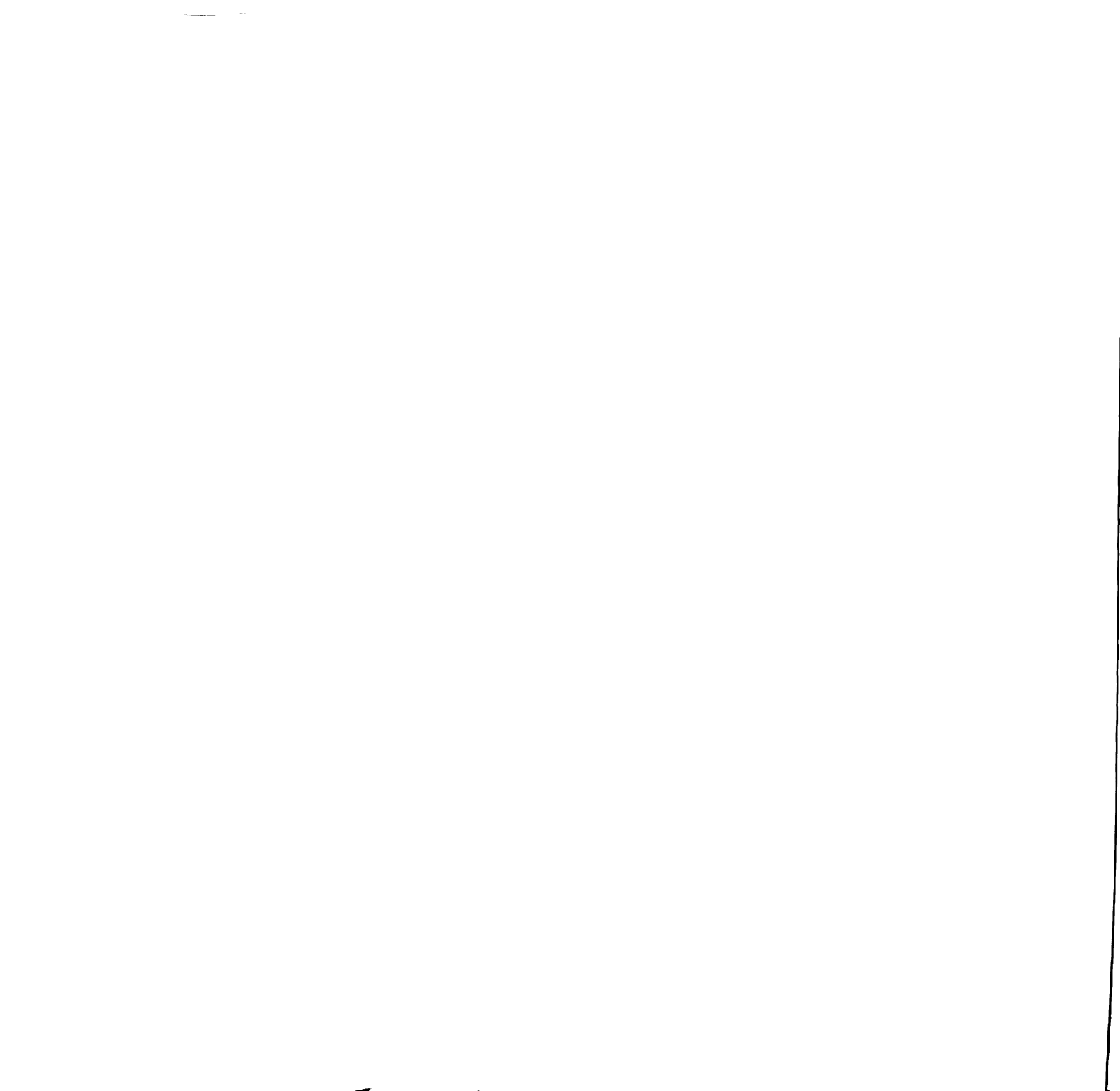
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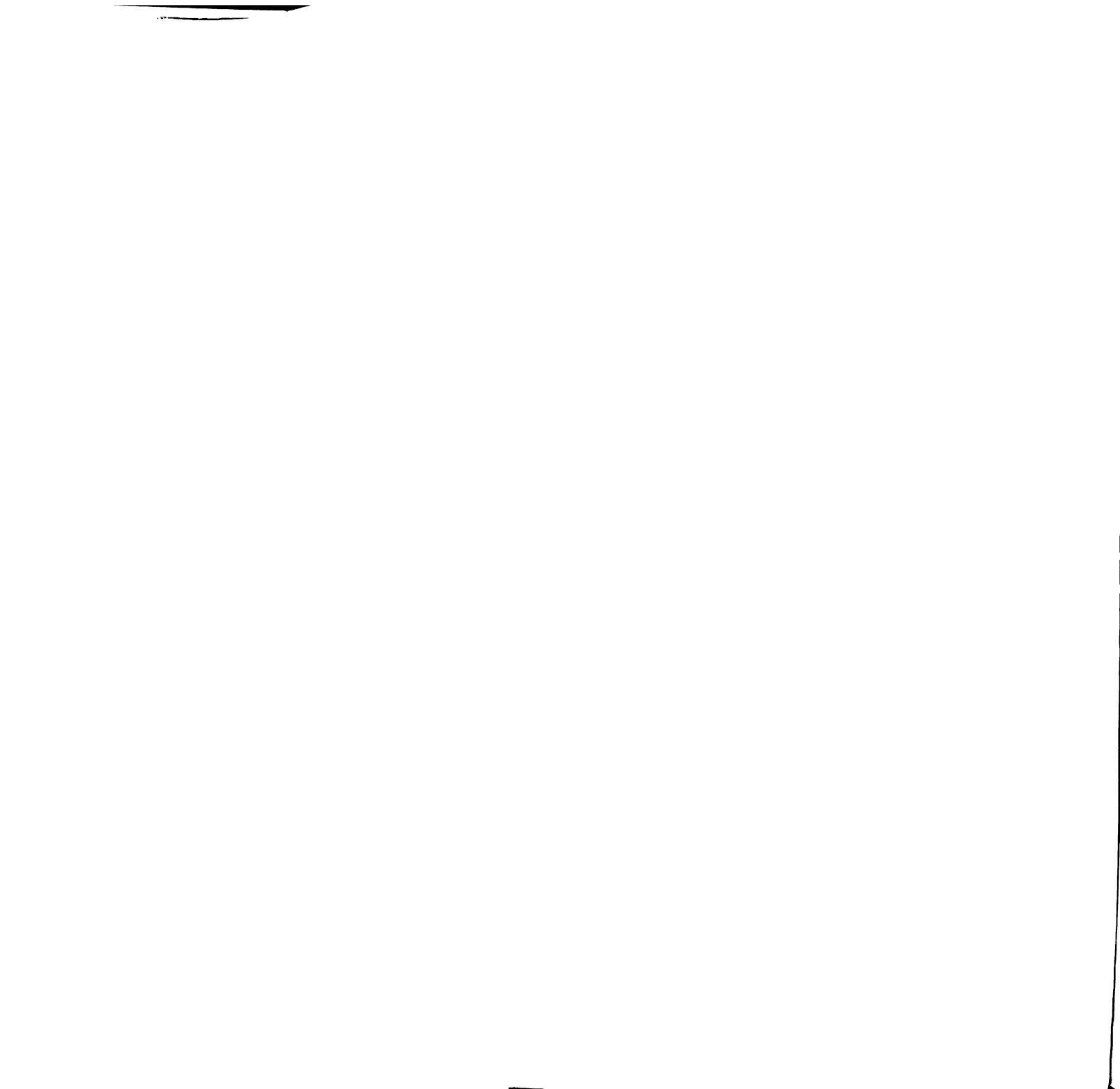
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