

# The Last Man of Modern Liberal Democracy

An Ethical Study of Nihilism in the Twenty-First Century

By

Corinne Cutler Latozke

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Philosophy

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Copyright © 2017 Corinne Latozke

## Abstract

Nietzsche's Zarathustra proclaimed the coming of the Last Man, an existence of humanity that no longer lives a life of honour or values. Instead, humanity exchanged the struggle of everyday life for a reality that resembled a rational animal seeking only shelter, food, and simple pleasures to pass the time.

The first section of this text traces the origins of nihilism into the time of the Enlightenment. The second section explains Nietzsche's encounter with nihilism and his predictions for the future of humanity. The third section examines the accuracy of Nietzsche's forecast, especially as witnessed in democratic North America. The culmination of several factors led to this very outcome, as has been observed by many modern philosophers in the past century. An increasing nihilism and materialism resulted in an ability to master nature and each other but with the consequences of a loss of ethics, morality and the human soul.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to recognise that this thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of many individuals.

First of all, I would like to thank all of my university professors who have inspired me with their infectious love of wisdom, encouraging my unending pursuit of philosophy. I would also like to recognise the immortal teachers, Plato, Augustine, Dante, Descartes, Nietzsche and Einstein just to name a few, who taught that life is more than just what we can see and measure.

Thank you to my advising committee who challenged me and offered guidance. The direction I received was integral to the development of this work. I really appreciate your time and commitment to this topic.

I am very grateful to my advisor Simone Mahrenholz for your passion and instruction. Working together through office meetings, countless emails and skype chats has been a pleasure and your patience with my ideas and your input have formed me and this paper into what it is today. Your passion for life, creation and knowledge have been pillars in my research.

Lastly none of this could have been possible without the great help of my family. During this writing process I was blessed with the birth of my little girl and am expecting the arrival of my son any day now. A big thank you to my parents, when you helped with babysitting and time management so that I could feel like a normal student every now and then. Lastly, to my husband Kevin who for some nights must have felt like a single parent, while other nights would listen to me endlessly discuss my thesis and the Last Man. You have been supportive, helpful and loving through stressful times with kind words and counsel. Thank you for being a wonderful husband, an amazing father and my best cheering section.

## Contents:

Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	1
Section 1: The Evolution of Nihilism	5
1. The Relationship Between God and Humans Before Descartes	5
2. Descartes' Intentions	8
3. Descartes' Consequences	11
4. Descartes' Influence	12
5. Fichte's Emergence	13
6. Hegel	15
7. The Development of Nihilism	18
8. The First Nihilism and the Individual	19
9. The Second Nihilism and its Division	22
Section 2: Nihilism According to Nietzsche	25
1. Nietzsche and his Understanding of Nihilism	26
2. European Nihilism	30
3. Consequences of Nihilism and the Death of God	35
4. Nietzsche's First Response to Nihilism	36
5. The Overman	37
6. The Eternal Recurrence of the Overman	41
7. The Last Man	44
8. Understanding the Last Man	45
9. The Cause of the Last Man	50
Section 3: Nihilism and the Modern Democracy	52
1. Prophecies of the Last Man	52
2. Observable Outcomes of Materialism	64
3. Trading <i>Telos</i> for Technology	70
4. Natural Science for Rational Animals	74
5. Where Have All the Experts Gone	77
6. Only a God Can Save Us Now	85
7. Classical Political Philosophy	89
8. The Education of Heroes	94
9. The Desire for Recognition	102
Conclusion	110

## Introduction

In only a few minutes on social media, we are reminded of the enormous pride that modern liberal democracy takes in the principle of freedom of speech - regardless of whatever opinion individuals are enabled to express. Over five hundred years ago, ideals such as freedom of speech and equality of the people were not glamorized.<sup>1</sup> Popular opinion fuelled by sociological study after study suggests that our modern communities are preferable to those in antiquity.<sup>2</sup> Liberal democracy has provided its citizens with many modern advantages, promises of less suffering and pain, more comfort and sustainability. It has been argued that the modern age is more ethically advanced<sup>3</sup> simply because of the progression through time and the technological advancements that have been established. However, Nietzsche warned of a greatly undesirable effect on people in general, resulting in a loss of those qualities which distinguished humans from the animals around us.

Nietzsche cautioned the people in the market place of impending doom of the Last Man, “the most despicable man”<sup>4</sup> who believes only in materialism and economics. Does a character like this really necessitate a warning or is it our current reality? In order to answer this we must explore what influenced Nietzsche towards such predictions.

I believe there is a notable change in the course of social, philosophical and political thought that began with Descartes and Machiavelli. It was within their actions and writings that

---

<sup>1</sup> “[17<sup>th</sup> century philosophers] looked forward to a time when, as a result of the progress of popular education, practically complete freedom of speech would be possible or to a time when no one would suffer any harm from hearing any truth.” Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p.33-34

<sup>2</sup> Veenhoven, Ruut. *Life is Getting Better: Societal Evolution and Fit with Human Nature*.

<sup>3</sup> Bandow, Doug. *Americans are Living Better Than They Have At Any Point in Human History*

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, first part*, p.129

we see the incubation of nihilism. Without directly using the term of nihilism, their beliefs caused a chain reaction that continued into modernity.

If Nietzsche's prediction is correct, and the Last Men are populating our society, is it actually detrimental? Our modern world has looked to the natural sciences and technology for many physical comforts and increasing freedom from disease. A world without suffering, with equality for each citizen has been the dream of many political philosophers.

I look to Leo Strauss when considering questioning the path that modernity has taken. My critique should not be mistaken as an attempt to undermine liberal democracy or modern technology that has advanced with it. Instead, I agree with Strauss that "the truest friend of democracy or of the people [who] will be the frequent, not to say constant, critic of the people."<sup>5</sup> Democracy is the rule of the people but can only be as good as those virtuous citizens who govern it. My critique is coming from a place of friendship where, when observing deficiencies, I will speak freely in order to assist a modern liberal democracy that I appreciate.

Nietzsche's prediction was heard by several influential thinkers of this modern world. Some elaborated on his theory, or argue that there are observable qualities that the average modern man shares with Nietzsche's Last Man. Natural physical science since Descartes has continued to grow at an exponential rate, from meticulous studies on the human body to expanding theories of the universe. This in-depth study has given us technology to contact and exchange information around the world, increased weaponry, and space travel. The laws of natural science attempted to explain the beliefs and actions of citizens. Materialism became

---

<sup>5</sup> Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, p.xiii

dominant and overshadowed values and myths. The benefits of natural science are ever increasing, but we must always be prepared to ask, at what cost?

The increase of technology brought a companion at its side, the increase of nihilism. As natural science became the focus of the modern world, humanity ignored those qualities that separated us from rational animals. In the first section, I will demonstrate the growth of nihilism, starting with Descartes, for once we understand the seed of a theory we can predict its cultivation. Descartes removed the contemplation of *telos* in nature, God or humanity. Descartes demonstrated that humans are free to act and are no longer dictated by God or His moral law. Humanity became increasingly atheistic, looking for truth, not from revelation but from visible material sciences. In the second section, I will discuss Nietzsche's encounter with nihilism, his use of it, and his warnings made to "all and none."<sup>6</sup> His works preached a message of living each day as if it were your last and that a dependence on democracy and natural science led to an animalistic being. Already in Nietzsche's time, much like I have seen in the present, people were willing to sacrifice true happiness for simple and easy comforts.

I have witnessed the decline in ethical understanding in our current society and a godlessness that has affected most of the general population in the developed world. In the third section, I want to know why it seems that more people are accepting a reanimalization, a life devoted to simple material pleasures. If natural science and nihilism resulted in humanity reducing itself to rational animals, then people have become a part of a democratic domestic herd. Even democracy is not immune to detrimental consequences, thus requiring ethical practices of citizens and government to come into question. Nietzsche himself did not know how to prevent this reanimalization except to do so through his literary warnings. Contrary to

---

<sup>6</sup> Nietzschean humor, Zarathustra is "a book for all and none." *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, subtitle, p.103

Nietzsche, I believe an education with a proper balance of material natural studies and historical moral lessons can help. After the Enlightenment, we took a wrong turn, overlooking the aspects of humanity that cannot be observed in a laboratory. The purpose of this work, much like Nietzsche's, is to question the fallacy that our technology and modern society have not necessarily given us greater ethical practices. I will see if there is a way to inspire people to be more than how natural science defines humans as rational animals.



## Section 1: The Evolution of Nihilism

Consider that our modern technology and mechanical advancements would not have been possible without Descartes' desire to use nature as a test subject. As Michael Allen Gillespie describes, Descartes was devoted to discovering a universal science comprised of eternal laws.<sup>7</sup> He had a passion for mathematics, natural sciences, and physics throughout his whole life,<sup>8</sup> but unforeseen impacts would follow from his philosophy. Descartes changed the idea of God as the puppet master of humans and nature to humanity being the creating force of the material world.

### I. The Relationship Between God and Humans Before Descartes

Aristotle explained that in order to have knowledge of something that exists, we must know its four causes: material, formal, efficient and final cause or *telos*.<sup>9</sup> A few hundred years later, Augustine described the goodness of God and His purpose for us.<sup>10</sup> Augustine was guided by biblical scripture<sup>11</sup> and religious authorities to study God's and humanity's *telos*.<sup>12</sup> Descartes challenged philosophical predecessors when he wrote his *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Medieval philosophical theology believed the soul and the body are connected and that God governs<sup>13</sup> both body and soul.

“It has been shown to man what place he would occupy in the things that God has established, seeing that human nature could be so united with God as to

---

<sup>7</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.30

<sup>8</sup> Slowik, Edward, "Descartes' Physics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/descartes-physics/>>.

<sup>9</sup> Falcon, Andrea, "Aristotle on Causality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/aristotle-causality/>>.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, p.115

<sup>11</sup> “We were too weak to discover truth by pure reasoning and therefore needed the authority of the sacred writings.” Augustine, *Confessions*, p.96

<sup>12</sup> “He had accepted the catholic justification for believing on the authority of the scriptures. He believed, on this authority, that the good God was the creator of all things.” Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p.197

<sup>13</sup> Discussing that Augustine believed “human beings are governed by natural law...that describes the relationship between man, nature and by analogy God.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.12,

become one person from two substances, and, therefore, He is now made up of three: God, the soul and the flesh.”<sup>14</sup>

The human soul, synonymous with the human mind is the process that determines a person’s actions. Before Descartes; first, it was believed that humans have free will<sup>15</sup> but that “God has foreknowledge of everything.”<sup>16</sup> Second, the cause of the sun rising in the morning was because God commanded it,<sup>17</sup> not due to laws of physics. God intervened on man’s existence. He “predestines man for salvation and damnation solely according to his will.”<sup>18</sup> If that is the case, could humanity have free will or are we constrained to an already known future? Could humans have any knowledge that was not given to us directly from God?

Augustine, in refuting skeptics<sup>19</sup> who did not believe in certain knowledge, examined<sup>20</sup> his own thought<sup>21</sup> and discovered certain absolute knowledge of God, mathematics<sup>22</sup> and ideas.<sup>23</sup> Descartes used the same “*method*”<sup>24</sup> as Augustine had used in *Confessions*. Stephen Menn, professor at McGill University, observed,

“In the *Meditations*, following Augustine (and ultimately Plotinus), Descartes gives an understanding of the human soul independent of any evidence of the senses.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *On The Trinity*, p.129

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, p.77

<sup>17</sup> “Everything is or occurs only as the result” of God’s will. Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.16

<sup>18</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.26

<sup>19</sup> Skepticism argued that all of our knowledge was mediated to us through our senses, and our senses are fallible and cannot be trusted. Therefore there is no certain knowledge in the world. Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, p.46

<sup>20</sup> Like Descartes, Augustine felt that mathematics produced knowledge that could not be refuted by skeptics who “taught that everything is a matter of doubt, and that an understanding of the truth lies beyond human capacity.” Augustine, *Confessions*, p.84

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p.48

<sup>22</sup> “I am certain that seven and three are ten,” Augustine, *Confessions*, p.95

<sup>23</sup> Augustine also concluded such things as the “incorruptible is better than corruptible” Augustine, *Confessions*, p.114

<sup>24</sup> Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p.217

<sup>25</sup> Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p.216

Both Descartes and Augustine examine their own thoughts to conclude that God exists and that humanity can discover certain knowledge about mathematics and logic. Descartes'

“Intention, like Augustine’s, is to help his reader to achieve an intuitive cognition of the reality of God.”<sup>26</sup>

Gillespie discussed how Anselm and Aquinas used the same ontological method in proving the existence of God.<sup>27</sup> Ideas and mathematics are not material but are derived from the reflection of our souls. Numbers are immaterial, therefore anytime and anywhere in the universe the number three never changes. Descartes discovered ideas of infinity and perfection in the same manner in which Augustine had.<sup>28</sup> Why would Descartes rewrite the same methods over again? What distinguishes him from his predecessors? Once we understand those answers, we can find Descartes’ motivations.

Descartes chose Augustine’s argument specifically<sup>29</sup> as Aquinas’ arguments begin with fallible senses observing a material world,<sup>30</sup> and Anselm’s justification was a thought experiment.<sup>31</sup> Descartes wanted evidence independent of sense perception of a material world. He used reason to demonstrate that humans have certain knowledge and it is “within our power to avoid error.”<sup>32</sup> Augustine’s method allowed Descartes to reveal that people could conceive

---

<sup>26</sup> Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p.268

<sup>27</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.58

<sup>28</sup> “I had established that the incorruptible is better than the corruptible, and so I confessed that whatever you are, you are incorruptible. Nor could there have been or be any soul capable of conceiving that which is better than you, who are supreme and highest good.” Augustine, *Confessions* p.114

<sup>29</sup> “Descartes (was) ‘selecting’ Augustine’s proof. Descartes is well aware that there are other, and superficially less difficult, arguments that God exists.” Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 263

<sup>30</sup> Aquinas used the arguments of motion, efficiency, contingency, degrees of perfection and design which all come from observation of the material world by the senses. Aquinas, *Summa of the Summa*, p.61-64

<sup>31</sup> It is inadequate because it is only evident of a perfect being can be conceived of in thought. There is no proof offered that things conceived of in thought actually exist. He only argues that existing is better than not existing so the greatest thing necessarily must exist because it is greater than not existing. See also Oppy, Graham, "Ontological Arguments", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/ontological-arguments/>>.

<sup>32</sup> Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p.217

certain truth without influence. “I was brought up into your light by the fact that I knew myself both to have a will and to be alive”<sup>33</sup> is equivalent to “*cogito ergo sum*.”<sup>34</sup>

## II. Descartes’ Intentions

What distinguished Descartes’ *Meditations* from antiquity is a conception of a proof of God that only included the first three of Aristotle’s four causes. Descartes differs from Augustine by examining God’s attributes while removing any consideration of moral goodness. He demonstrated that humanity is free to discover truth and no longer needed God or His purpose or *telos*. In removing Aristotle’s fourth cause or in this case God’s goodness, from Augustine’s argument, Descartes altered humanity’s understanding of nature and the world.

The dominant thoughts in Descartes’ time believed that if God created the world, His omnipotence could change it at any time. It was humanity’s “path of piety”<sup>35</sup> to trust that nature was governed by God’s will alone and instruction came by biblical references for humans to care for nature and the animals.<sup>36</sup> Sixteenth century theologian John Calvin said “the sun rises every day not because of the law of nature but because God wills it.”<sup>37</sup> However, Descartes demonstrated that humanity was free to study God and nature without the concern of *telos* or God’s will. Descartes’ goal was not to prove the existence of God but demonstrate that humanity did not need Him for moral or worldly knowledge.<sup>38</sup> Descartes discovered a “Universal science with which [he hoped] to conquer nature and subdue omnipotent God.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, p.114

<sup>34</sup> Descartes, *Meditations*, Book 2

<sup>35</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.31

<sup>36</sup> I use mankind here because in Genesis, God gives the instruction to Adam first before creating Eve. It is in the second creation story that both Adam and Eve care for the animals. Gen 2:20

<sup>37</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p. 26

<sup>38</sup> “Not meant to demonstrate the existence of God but to show that God is irrelevant for human affairs.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.61

<sup>39</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.34

Descartes transformed the understanding of God and material nature from ends in themselves into means for his own purposes. People, free from God, could discover autonomous truth about themselves and dominance over the world.

“This principle is the basis for human freedom and the mastery of science. Man knows that he is and knows that he is as a thing that thinks. To think, for Descartes, however, is ultimately to will.”<sup>40</sup>

Descartes was a thinking thing but also a willing thing by the fact that he willed himself to contemplate. His thinking and actions were freely chosen. Human beings observe every material thing as created, aging and decaying, but Descartes conceives of infinity independently *a priori*, without evidence in the sensible world and without relying on God.

In medieval tradition, infinity could only be conceived "*via negativa*."<sup>41</sup> The idea of something without boundaries was beyond humanity to comprehend as all things witnessed have limits or decay. Descartes was able to contemplate infinity in mathematical terms and not as a negation of the finite. Descartes demonstrated that certain knowledge (infinity, God and His attributes) is not from experience or authority but from our own minds. Humanity, not relying on God's influence, is able to will and create.

“No one can proceed very far in science if he must keep before his mind at all times the evidence for the various statements already established that provide the basis upon which he seeks to develop additional knowledge... [H]owever, it is not necessary to know that God exists in order to be certain of a statement for which one has conclusive evidence immediately before him.”<sup>42</sup>

To study natural science, Descartes liberated himself, not just from God, but from all prior assertions from religious dogma. Humanity cannot progress in material science if God can

---

<sup>40</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.xiv

<sup>41</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.12

<sup>42</sup> Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p.148

interfere with nature's course, without scheme or system. Earlier scientific statements, especially considering religious authority, were often dependent on God's control of physical nature. To dissect an animal's brain<sup>43</sup> or to use a forest for building materials suggests that those objects are simply means to humanity's own knowledge and utility. Instead of the ability to change the course of the world, God created a universe governed by unchanging mathematical law<sup>44</sup> that can be discovered and wielded. To learn from Nature, Descartes had to differentiate God's will from recognizable scientific laws in order to develop and test hypotheses. Nature cannot have *telos* if it is to be studied in material terms. In other words, Descartes understood nature as objects without ethical properties. Consequently, nature was no longer considered as having moral attributes.<sup>45</sup> Descartes employed universal mathematical laws to master natural science. Humans can discover universal properties about the atoms, energy and gravity, such as water boiling consistently at one hundred degrees Celsius. "The result is a deductive science that establishes the causal connection of all things."<sup>46</sup> Descartes established a physical science that explained the material causes in nature. "In order to master science, man must first become master of himself"<sup>47</sup> and Descartes mastered himself as a willing thing. Our current attitude towards nature has become one of domination and enslavement.

---

<sup>43</sup>Descartes believed there was a connection between the soul and the pineal gland. Lokhorst, Gert-Jan, "Descartes and the Pineal Gland", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/pineal-gland/>>

<sup>44</sup> Descartes "applies Augustine's concept of God as the source of "mathematical regularity to derive the principles of mechanical physics... [and] construct rules of scientific method." Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* p.393

<sup>45</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. 35

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.38

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.43

### III. Descartes' Consequences

Descartes introduced the position that nature would only be a means to our personal gains. By removing *telos*, neither nature nor God would be considered ends in themselves. Machiavelli wrote that in order to be a great successful leader, we must use nature to achieve strength and power.<sup>48</sup> Nature is not to be respected and cared for. The abundance of resources that nature gives us; wood, oil, metal, meat can make our armies stronger, create larger weapons and conquer faster. Machiavelli suggested to a greedy species that we were not directed by God to care for nature. Humanity should take more from nature than needed, study her at leisure and her rape for her supplies.<sup>49</sup>

“Descartes [proving humanity’s freedom] also gave human beings the scientific weapons with which to reclaim the world and reconstruct it according to human measure and for human purposes.”<sup>50</sup>

Descartes’ true intention was giving humanity the creating power of God.<sup>51</sup> Descartes does not argue the moral parameters of his life, what is good or what is evil about his existence, but that he has discovered certain knowledge.

“[Descartes’] conclusion does, to be sure, justify an assertion of *sum*. But the justification does not consist in a proof of *sum*. It consists in a proof that *sum* can never be reasonably doubted.”<sup>52</sup>

As a willing *sum*, I have certain undoubtable knowledge that I exist. Descartes was free from God to think, will and create. Humanity was now its own lord and master, free to discover universal truth about itself and the material world it inhabited.

---

<sup>48</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p.101

<sup>49</sup> “If one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down.” Machiavelli, *Ibid.*, p. 101

<sup>50</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. 74

<sup>51</sup> “The purpose of [Descartes’] discussion is to show that he can count on *sum* whenever he needs it, rather than to affirm it as a current truth.” Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen*, p.149

<sup>52</sup> Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen*, p. 145

#### IV. Descartes' Influence

Descartes willingness to study the laws of nature became a problem when Hume and other empiricists questioned the validity of universal natural laws. Hume argued that,

“As to the cases of these general causes, we should in vain attempt their discovery; nor shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explication of them.”<sup>53</sup>

Hume believed that the physical laws Descartes had attempted to observe, did not actually exist. “Every part of mixed mathematics proceeds upon the supposition”<sup>54</sup> of physical events that may not actually be correlated. We do not know for certain that the sun will rise tomorrow nor do we know the laws of gravity are permanent. If I strike a billiard ball and it hits a second ball, the first motion is not identical to the second motion produced.<sup>55</sup> Laws of natural science, in Hume's arguments, cannot predict one outcome from the hundreds that may occur. Hume argued that any observable patterns in nature were merely occurring regularities.<sup>56</sup> Hume was threatening Descartes' “entire enterprise”<sup>57</sup> but Kant would try to save Descartes' endeavors. To do so, Kant removed assumptions of God to maintain human reason and understanding.<sup>58</sup>

Kant saw humans as both physical in material needs but greater than nature in our capacity for happiness and morality.<sup>59</sup> Kant predicted a subjectivity initiated by Descartes. He believed that his *Critique of Practical Reason* allowed a balance between science, morality and freedom. Kant argued that moral beliefs have greater influence on people's actions than

---

<sup>53</sup> Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, p.19

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, p.18

<sup>56</sup> Hume was able to “argue that what seemed to be causal connections were only regularities of experience.” Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.69

<sup>57</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.74

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practice Reason*, 113, p.306



material desires.<sup>60</sup> Kant's synthetic *a priori* knowledge was not from experience or senses<sup>61</sup> whereas natural science was specifically based on observing the physical world. Kant argued a dual aspect to humanity and nature. The categorical imperative; that one's actions can be "universal law,"<sup>62</sup> attempted to create a balance of free will and universal moral truth.<sup>63</sup> On one hand, humans have freedom to choose any action but on the other hand if a person is to do as he ought, it is following a universal law. Kant allowed for a dualism of materially determined animal self and the universal moral intelligence of which humanity is composed of.<sup>64</sup>

Kant believed that by his teleological reconciliation humans could be both material beings controlled by universal laws and autonomous wills. Kant allowed for both "an objective world on one hand and the infinite I and subjective freedom on the other."<sup>65</sup> The human soul is free yet determined to strive for moral laws. He embraced the impenetrable contradiction between determinism and human freedom.

## V. Fichte's Emergence

Humanity was free to find universal truths without God's influence. This created a self-conscious autonomous "I" separate from nature and from God. In Fichte's view, Descartes made the self-conscious soul "into a world-creating will."<sup>66</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, born in 1762, was a philosopher whose talent was recognized early in his career by Kant, Hegel and Jacobi.<sup>67</sup> Fichte discovered "the dualism of Kant's transcendental idealism."<sup>68</sup> One of Fichte's

---

<sup>60</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 161, p.325

<sup>61</sup> Kant, *Groundwork Of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:420, p.30

<sup>62</sup> Kant, *ibid.*, 4:421

<sup>63</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*

<sup>64</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 162, p.326

<sup>65</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.85

<sup>66</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.66

<sup>67</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.67

<sup>68</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.76

endeavors was to establish human freedom as the transcendental I.<sup>69</sup> If each person has the capacity to discover his own world,<sup>70</sup> it is possible for people to create values and ignore a universal shared morality. Fichte could alter certain knowledge into subjectivism.<sup>71</sup> People could create whatever truth would suffice and as each person has conflicting experiences and desires, each person would have differing truths. Fichte argued for an uncertain, relative truth and was often accused of preaching atheism.<sup>72</sup> Contrary to popular belief, the word Nihilism was not used primarily by Turgenev but rather Jacobi in a letter over half a century earlier. It had been a letter to Fichte<sup>73</sup> in reference to extreme Kantians who felt we could not attain certain knowledge. Though undefined, nihilism explained the nothingness when truth in unattainable. “Fichte’s idealism recognizes no truth beyond consciousness or reason... an absolute subjectivism”<sup>74</sup> recognizing only relative truth. Jacobi disagreed and recognized that the subjectivity of Fichte’s Absolute I would lead to a belief in nothingness or *nihil*.<sup>75</sup> Truth was no longer from a source outside of humanity’s mind. It was considered subjective as each person discovered knowledge for himself in *cogito ergo sum*. First Kant, then Fichte observed an “essential freedom of the human will,”<sup>76</sup> and while Kant allowed reason to accept objective infinite laws, Fichte opposed it by advocating human reason autonomous from divine laws.<sup>77</sup> Without objective truth, we are led to a loss of universal moral laws.

---

<sup>69</sup> Breazeale, Dan, "Johann Gottlieb Fichte", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/johann-fichte/>>

<sup>70</sup> “transferring the notion of the I into a world-creating will” Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.66

<sup>71</sup> among these writers was Fichte and Jacobi, who discussed that man either had a choice of contradictions; to choose if God is outside of man and an essence existing for itself, or that the absolute I is God. Both men referred to the Absolute I as world-creating. Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.66

<sup>72</sup> Fichte was often surrounded by accusations that he was promoting atheism. He resigned from his position at Jena due to such rumours in 1799. Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.65

<sup>73</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.65

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger *Nietzsche*, volume 2, p.19

<sup>76</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.100

<sup>77</sup> Fichte “even characterized this thought as absolute subjectivism.” Ibid. p.194

Fichte's understanding was an extreme form that I believe neither Descartes nor Kant would agree with. Fichte argued the world was not God's creation but was understood only as humans perceived it. Truth no longer depends on God or universal morals or the Forms and we fall prey to subjectivism.<sup>78</sup> After Descartes, nihilism derived from *nihil*,<sup>79</sup> a belief in nothingness was ignited by Fichte.

“Nihilism, as we will see, grows out of the notion of the infinite will that Fichte discovers in the thought of Descartes and Kant”<sup>80</sup>

Fichte understood the *ego* of *cogito ergo sum* as the creative I independent of God. *Ergo* determined how his world was to be understood. Fichte believed there was no reconciliation between free will and universal moral laws. He built “upon this Kantian foundation in a way Kant never intended,”<sup>81</sup> asserting moral satisfaction was achieved when the absolute I acted freely. We can only know truth as relative and we create our morals by which to function. The autonomous creative I replaced God. Hegel tried to undermine Fichte by demonstrating that the connection of man and God is possible.

## VI. Hegel

I will briefly define Hegel's arguments but this is not meant to be a study in Hegelian philosophy. As my goal is to articulate the history of nihilism, I wish to recognize Hegel as an integral part, though he did not intend to promote nihilism. I will not debate what the left or right Hegelians believed. Hegel's writings impacted history and several authors who continued his arguments often twisted them for their own benefits.

---

<sup>78</sup> “Fichte's idealism recognizes no truth beyond consciousness or reason and thus falls into an absolute subjectivism.” Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.66

<sup>79</sup> Heidegger *Nietzsche, Volume 4*, p.6

<sup>80</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. 66

<sup>81</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.81

Hegel disagreeing with Fichte, saw what subjective truth could be considered with an Absolute I. He believed the absolute was not within the I but Spirit. Hegel would understand Kant's contradiction between human freedom and universal morality and work to overcome it.

“Hegel, for example, argued that Kant had solved the antinomy of nature and freedom only by transposing the contradiction of consciousness. As he saw it, Kant simply rendered consciousness itself contradictory.”<sup>82</sup>

Kant attempted to resolve the contradiction, but he merely changed where the contradiction was. Hegel believed it was the Spirit that could resolve this contradiction. For Hegel, the absolute Spirit is being and revelation in one. It is discovered by

“*Free contingent process* by intuitively-contemplating its pure *self* as *time* outside of itself, and likewise its *given-being* as *space*.”<sup>83</sup>

Spirit is pure intuition, a person's immaterial mind in pure form. That pure thought, for Hegel is outside of time. It becomes related to a human material body in space. Hegel believed the Spirit is constantly striving to attain knowledge. It's only when Absolute Spirit achieves all knowledge of all being that it has fulfilled its goal.<sup>84</sup> Hegel believed humans will one day attain all accurate knowledge and consequently future generations will not need to change. This will be the end of history, no revolutionary actions will alter the culture and the Spirit achieves Absolute knowledge. Hegel believed that,

“The ultimate liberation of the spirit results from the eruption of Christianity into the heathen world.”<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.73

<sup>83</sup> Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p.152 where Kojève is quoting directly from p.563 lines 14-21, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

<sup>84</sup> “On the principle of freedom of the Spirit Hegel also constructs the history of the world, with a view toward a fulfilled end.” Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.32

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.34

Hegel understood the Spirit to be both human, God and the relation. He allowed humanity to be free but by Spirit still metaphorically connected to God. The Spirit is individual awareness that attained “recognition that it is a moment of general consciousness or spirit”<sup>86</sup> as part of a social whole. People, as historical communal beings, are able to contemplate their past and how they have changed and the causes.

Before entirely understanding the idea of the end of history, we must clarify what historical humans meant for Hegel. “The basic phenomenon of historical life is *change*,”<sup>87</sup> allowing a person to differ from the past and mark his place in the lapse of time. Revolts against a tyrannical state, creation or destruction all effect humanity and cause change within ourselves and within the state. When an event, a war or a person is deemed historic, it has changed humanity itself. Metaphysically, they are not the same person they were the day before but have grown and changed in their personal understanding. At Hegel’s end of history, that historic change in society would no longer occur nor would it be necessary either. Once the Spirit attained complete wisdom, knowledge of humanity itself, in community and of the Divine, people would be satisfied and no longer need to work towards any other goals. Hegel hoped to reform Kant’s theories to reduce the subjectivism initiated by Descartes and Fichte.

“How are we to explain this eclipse of nihilism? While it was due in part to the waning revolutionary passions, it was equally if not principally the result of the overwhelming intellectual influence of Goethe and Hegel”<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.118

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.110

The first inklings of nihilism began with Descartes, marginalizing the study of *telos* but was emphasized by both Goethe and Hegel. While Goethe's Faust argued for the lack of truth and the despair of the world,<sup>89</sup> Hegel's intentions were to fight nihilism created with an Absolute I.

## VII. The Development of Nihilism

At a point, the followers of Hegel divided nihilism into active nihilism or passive nihilism. Nietzsche referenced both and we must understand both to know what is meant by "God is dead."<sup>90</sup> Heidegger argued that, for Nietzsche, nihilism is the "long duration in which truth of being as a whole is essentially transformed"<sup>91</sup> but which nihilism does this pertain to?

Disagreeing with Fichte, Hegel established a connection of humanity to an omnipotent God by the Spirit, resulting in a division between his followers. "Yes. There used to be Hegelists and now there are nihilists."<sup>92</sup> Turgenev described Russian politics, resulting from Hegel's influence. The prior generation Turgenev was discussing were idealists, believing honour and morality. The generation that came after were "refusing to submit to anything [but forced] everything to submit to"<sup>93</sup>them. The nihilists intended to lead, forcing the world to conform to their subjective interpretations. The world, the non-material, everything was to be interpreted by relative truth.

"Hegel recognized the danger of the Romantic nihilism and attempted to overcome it by showing that the principle of freedom or negation did not lead to meaninglessness and despair but to absolute knowledge and a thoroughly rational ethics and politics. Hegel began with the same contradiction that Fichte and the Romantics faced but ended in a rational

---

<sup>89</sup> "And though a god lives in my heart, though all my power waken at his word, though he can move my every inmost part - yet nothing in the outer world is stirred. Thus by existence tortured and oppressed I crave for death." Goethe, *Faust Part One*

<sup>90</sup> Nietzsche *The Gay Science, Book III, Aphorism 125*

<sup>91</sup> Heidegger *Nietzsche*, volume 4, p. 4

<sup>92</sup> Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, p.17

<sup>93</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.151

spiritual and political order directly at odds with their subjectivistic irrationalism.”<sup>94</sup>

Hegel attempted to reconcile Kantianism but his followers returned to the “inevitable”<sup>95</sup> nihilism; a result of the subjectivity of Fichte and the inadequacy of Kant’s provided answers. Followers of Hegel segregated themselves and consequently nihilism into new and old Hegelians or left and right. The first, an individualistic nihilism centered on personal will and the second, the nihilism of the citizen as a working member of politics.

### VIII. The First Nihilism and the Individual

Kant’s solution was not only insufficient for Hegel but also for Schopenhauer.<sup>96</sup> Students of Hegel were split into “left Hegelians” and “right Hegelians.”<sup>97</sup> Right Hegelians being more conservative preserved Hegel’s unity of human and God through the Spirit, including a unity of God within the social political structures of man.<sup>98</sup> Schopenhauer followed the Hegelian Right and a belief in subjective truth. The individual person and their experiences became the focal point and the basis for truth. Schopenhauer believed that a person’s will is the foundation by which man’s consciousness exists.<sup>99</sup> It is the will that mandates humanity and can only be perceived by observing human actions. Consciousness can only have a complete understanding of things that it is separate from but because the will governs all of human action, separating ourselves from the will to understand it is impossible.

---

<sup>94</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.116

<sup>95</sup> “Hegel was able to achieve this reconciliation, however, only by accepting the implicit nihilism that lay at the heart of transcendental idealism. Kantianism in his view made nihilism inevitable.” Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> “Schopenhauer tears [Kant’s] reconciliation to pieces.” Ibid., p.185

<sup>97</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.126

<sup>98</sup> They unify “God and State with the Absolute.” ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Wicks, Robert, “Arthur Schopenhauer”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/schopenhauer/>>.

“The identity of the body and the will, which Schopenhauer calls a miracle, is a fundamental principle that can never be demonstrated or deduced.”<sup>100</sup>

Schopenhauer argued that the will and the body are in relation as the will causes the body to move or act. He did not believe in anything metaphysical other than the will. In short, Schopenhauer proposed “the body as the incarnation of the will”<sup>101</sup> and that it is the immaterial part of humanity. Schopenhauer believed that understanding the will on its own is impossible and therefore never able to be completely comprehended. He argued<sup>102</sup> a person cannot remove himself from the means by which we observe, desire, or act.

Both the I and the will are essentially free and both are continuously in motion, but never achieve an end.<sup>103</sup> The will has “no goal,”<sup>104</sup> but is striving towards something. If the will is to have no goal, the will itself will not be made up of reason but only force or movement. If “willing as a whole has no end in view,”<sup>105</sup> Schopenhauer concluded that “life as a whole has no meaning,”<sup>106</sup> and without meaning or a *telos*, what is man’s purpose?

A life without purpose is like a person lost in a maze uninterested in finding a way out. Humans become unable to measure greatness on an ethical scale if the immaterial good does not exist. It is meaningless to use terms like justice, morality, charity, goodness as these are all qualities of the greatness or the *telos* of man’s soul.<sup>107</sup> The inability to use these values to measure leaves people with only material qualities to ponder if a life is good or not.

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.187

<sup>101</sup> Wicks, Robert, "Arthur Schopenhauer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/schopenhauer/>>.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.194

<sup>104</sup> Wicks, Robert, "Arthur Schopenhauer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/schopenhauer/>>.

<sup>105</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.189

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.189

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *the Republic*



Consequently, it is assumed that those that live longer, or acquire the most wealth must have the better lives. Without attributes of a good soul, giving to the poor would seem ridiculous as people should save material wealth for survival. It is greed and pride that humanity aspires to when there are no greater goals beyond the physical body. The body, by which we experience the will, is the only absolute we strive to please by means of improved health and physical comfort. Self-sacrifice becomes absurd because it would end the will, the only existence for people. Humanity's only goal is survival and things which will make survival easier and consequently more comfortable.

“The disciples of universal man, this nihilistic ‘I’, must seem to be egoistical and ‘in-human’. In actual fact, the individual egoist is everyone, because everyone is concerned for himself above all else.”<sup>108</sup>

The description of a human living only for material gain seems egotistical but Schopenhauer's passive nihilist is exactly that. Nihilism accepts nothingness, knowing only physical truth from experience. We cannot say sacrifice or charity are good as there is no universal immaterial good. We are left with materialism, belief in only what can be seen or measured. Just as each individual would vary in response to an event, subjective truths could vary from person to person as both Lowith and Gillespie also observed. Passive nihilism results in a loss of objective truth and leave us with whatever values each individual chooses. Authority once determined what was right and but after nihilism, people become lost without direction towards what to believe in.

“The attempt to base human life in the absolute autonomy of the I is a revolt against traditional morality and marks the beginning of a radical transformation of European intellectual life. It destroys the basis for all objective standards and undermines reason itself, establishing the supremacy of the transrational, of emotions and feelings, . . . In rejecting the rational order of nature and a mathematical natural science, the absolute subjectivism in

---

<sup>108</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.317

nominalistic fashion turns to an utterly arbitrary and potentially irrational will, a will, however, no longer of an inscrutable God but of an absolute I.”<sup>109</sup>

Subjectivism transforms even natural material science into a variety of personal truths which can result in irrationality. Passive nihilism destroyed belief in the immaterial and ethical. Humans then rely on instincts and desire for comfort, becoming domesticated and seeking only material fulfillment. Even friendship and love are out of his reach, as nihilism only understands interpersonal relationships by means of material necessity, such as food, sex and warmth.

## IX. The Second Nihilism and Its Division

Left Hegelians had less concern for the individual and greater influence on societal structures. Applying Hegel’s philosophy to the social order, they rejected established political structures. By concentrating primarily on social, Hegel’s works became a “reflection of the human spirit”<sup>110</sup> and desired political revolution to initiate historical change. The students of Hegel were, “responsible for nihilism becoming a world-historical political force.”<sup>111</sup> Hegel’s goal of fighting metaphysical nihilism was adapted from theology to social and those who were once Hegelian, were now Nihilistic.<sup>112</sup> They wanted to negate the habitual and traditional political structures.

“Russian nihilism in this sense is only a further and more radical permutation of the idea of absolute will whose development was traced from nominalism through Descartes to Fichte and the German Romantics.”<sup>113</sup>

Russian nihilism also originated in Fichte’s understanding of Descartes’ freedom from God. It meant freedom from authority of the church. This nihilism became influential in Russia,

---

<sup>109</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.110

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.125

<sup>112</sup> Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, p. 19

<sup>113</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.136

focusing more on political authority rather than Schopenhauer's nothingness. The first literary use of the word Nihilism comes from Russian Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.

“A nihilistic man [is one] who does not bow down before any authority, who does not take any principle on faith, whatever reverence that principle may be enshrined in.”<sup>114</sup>

Russian nihilism is questioning every belief that only existed based on faith in authority and tradition. No matter what respect we have for an idea, Russian nihilism does not believe a claim if it is given without proof. Authority for Russian nihilism is worthless as Descartes freed humans from religious command. Turgenev's quote demonstrated that Russian nihilism differs from Fichte's skepticism and skepticism in anything metaphysical. Russian nihilism is an active will nothingness, or to will a negation.<sup>115</sup> Fichte and Schopenhauer were passively accepting nihilism while Turgenev used nihilism in an active sense, not succumbing to political, sociological or religious authority.

Hegel was aware of these two forms of nihilism,<sup>116</sup> calling them false nihilism and true nihilism. False nihilism involved the belief that reason did “not rule the world,”<sup>117</sup> passive acceptance that nothing metaphysical existed. The true nihilism recognized “both true omnipotence along with the Absolute Spirit capable of reason.”<sup>118</sup> True nihilism allowed for reason to discover a knowable truth. Russian nihilism warns that we should not receive truth from authority alone. It is an active rebellion and for Hegel, it is out of the abyss left from total destruction that we are free to discover certain knowledge. Hegel believed nihilism is absolute

---

<sup>114</sup> Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, p.17

<sup>115</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche volume two*, p.19

<sup>116</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.116

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116

<sup>118</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p. 116

negation, as “the annihilation of annihilation.”<sup>119</sup> Skepticism and materialism claim that knowledge is only from the senses. True nihilism questions that there is nothing metaphysical, instead considers knowledge beyond the will. Hegel, in referencing the Spirit, transforms annihilation and nothingness into the foundation for building rationality. True nihilism is only a negation of self and preconceptions and traditions that we are born into.<sup>120</sup>

“A self negation, a negation of a negation...comes to realize the impossibility of absolute negation”<sup>121</sup>

The true nihilism is questioning authority and popular beliefs to find the origins of where they came from. If people find there are errors or self-contradictions, they can annihilate these biases and start anew, Hegel’s annihilation. It is out of the nothing of nihilism that new creation, fresh and unfettered by its previous regime, can begin to grow. In the next section, I will argue Nietzsche’s awareness of both forms of nihilism, his hatred of one and admiration of the second.

---

<sup>119</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.116

<sup>120</sup> This is the same argument that Augustine addressed in *Against the Academicians*, however instead of nihilism, he was arguing against skepticism

<sup>121</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.120

## Section 2: Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Last Man

Zarathustra, the proclaimer of the Overman and the Last Man, is “the victor over God and nothingness” and delivers “the prophecy of nihilism.”<sup>122</sup> Nietzsche’s concept of the Last Man is contingent on his understanding of nihilism. I will demonstrate how Zarathustra prophesized the relation of nihilism to the Overman and the Last Man.

Heidegger claimed that nihilism is one of the main rubrics for Nietzsche’s metaphysics as a whole.<sup>123</sup> Each rubric is just one aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy but all parts must be understood as a quality of the whole. The will to power is humanity’s spirit of being, while the eternal recurrence is how Nietzsche believed he could inspire people to be “in their ‘essence.’”<sup>124</sup> Revaluation is destroying old values, a “metamorphosis... and breeding of a new need for values,”<sup>125</sup> Hegel’s true nihilism. Nihilism is the destruction of old values allowing for creation or metamorphosis of values into something alternative. Lastly, the Overman is “the supreme configuration of purest will to power”<sup>126</sup> and for Nietzsche the final goal for humanity.

The will to power is the *what* of human existence and eternal recurrence is *how* Nietzsche wants to inspire people. Nihilism is questioning old prejudices, philosophizing with a hammer to test old idols in order to cause a revaluation of all values. Lastly, for Nietzsche, the overman is the final outcome<sup>127</sup> or *telos* of humanity. In *Will to Power* “‘nihilism’ is an ideal of the highest degree of powerfulness of the spirit, the over-richest life – partly destructive, partly ironic.”<sup>128</sup> Nihilism is a letting-go of all comfort of preconceived lessons you have been taught from society

---

<sup>122</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.194

<sup>123</sup> For Heidegger, Nietzsche’s metaphysics could be divided into five main rubrics; nihilism, revaluation of all values hitherto, will to power, eternal recurrence and the overman. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p.6

<sup>124</sup> He also speaks of the “basic character of being and for the essence of power” Heidegger, *Nietzsche* p.7- 9

<sup>125</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p.6

<sup>126</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p.9

<sup>127</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.124

<sup>128</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 14

to gladly question and destroy the chains you have been led to believe in and create new values from the rubble.

## I. Nietzsche and his understanding of Nihilism

Nietzsche described the corruption of morality as the consequence of “decadence” and that “nihilism is no cause but merely the logical result.”<sup>129</sup> He was aware that in removing God as the creator of morals and truth, humanity became its own god. Truth is only understood relatively, which resulted in a dogma towards materialism. This truth is measure in natural sciences that are physically observed.

“‘Everything is subjective’ you say; but even this is interpretation. The ‘subject’ is not something given; it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.”<sup>130</sup>

Humanity became the creating force of subjective relative truth in favor of objective truth.

However, how can one follow a religion that preaches a universal omnipotent God and truth yet succumb to a societal relativity? To Nietzsche, modern Christians believed in a dead God as the Christian religion had become one that accepted all interpretations and opinions to support subjectivity and equality. This created a herd who guided their lives on material instincts and for physical comforts. They craved “unconscious states, without feeling, (sleep, fainting)”<sup>131</sup> or a numb life without any pain.

“Nihilism is the result of the belief that existence has been rendered meaningless by the death of God.”<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.26-27

<sup>130</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.267

<sup>131</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.27

<sup>132</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.178

For God or anything to die, it must have been created at some time. God as Absolute would be eternal, unborn and unable to die. Nietzsche, with schooling in religious and philosophical studies, knew the arguments for the proof of God, most notably that which included God as infinite. A god that can die is one that humans have anthropomorphized and given birth to.

“‘Whither is God?’ he cried; ‘I will tell you. *We have killed him-* you and I. All of us are his murderers... Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.’”<sup>133</sup>

Without a universal truth, there is no good, no bad and no evil; therefore all is permitted and accepted. Humans no longer needed any rules or rituals to bring them closer to God.<sup>134</sup> Instead of labour, modern Christianity brought God to everyone equally so that forgiveness could be passively, and lazily given, not earned. The creating I and subjective truth gave humanity the power to choose which morality to follow, which practices were correct and was an acceptance of all opinions. Christian dogma became closer to nihilism. We cannot know God, we cannot know any certainty in this world, but we can make God and truth into whatever we create.<sup>135</sup> We created “the anti-natural castration of god”<sup>136</sup> removing any aggressiveness in exchange for passivity.

“what would be the point of a god who knew nothing of wrath, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning and violence?...he counsils ‘peace of soul,’ hate-no-more, forbearance, even ‘love’ of friend and enemy...Formerly, he 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.”<sup>137</sup>

A fabricated god of equality accepted all and punished none. Who wouldn't prefer choosing the easiest to please, the lover or all, the always peaceful God? Wealth and power can take hard work to attain, so create a god who celebrates poverty and humility. “The god who had died was

---

<sup>133</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p.181

<sup>134</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, Section 33, p.607

<sup>135</sup> “If God was inaccessible to human reason, and divine will could have no effect upon the phenomenal world, then God was superfluous and, for all intents and purposes, dead.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p. 247

<sup>136</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 16

<sup>137</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 16

only the tame, rational God of Christianity.”<sup>138</sup> The modern Christian god was invented by humanity, to be a materialistic image that he could relate to.<sup>139</sup> The theological God was neither born, nor mortal, so he could not be the one that died. Humanity became lazy and weak, believing subjectivity over truth. With the decay of Christianity, a passive belief in a religion of slaves and of pity, humanity killed a god they created with their own ignorance.

“God degenerated into the *contradiction* of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature, against the will to live! - the formula for every slander against ‘this world,’ for every lie about the ‘beyond!’”<sup>140</sup>

Christians no longer followed Jesus’ teachings of standing up for your beliefs and loving the sinners. Christianity had become a religion that denied life’s joys and sufferings. Without feeling pain, we do not know pleasure, or a sunny day without knowing what the rain is like. “One longs for a condition where one no longer suffers.”<sup>141</sup> Christians were choosing comfort over suffering, when they may not realize the consequence was numbness and sacrifice of true happiness. Nietzsche argued that this leads to weakness, not as a consequence but that humanity actually wants weakness.<sup>142</sup> The general people liked mediocrity, even sacrificing greatness, because it also guarantees no pain or disappointment.

“In Paul’s hands, Christianity was refashioned into a religion of pity and revenge, an expression of the resentment of the lower classes, a slave revolt against the master morality of antiquity, a revolt against sexuality, power, and self-assertion ...a religion that sees all life as suffering and preaches universal guiltiness.”<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.197

<sup>139</sup> “To make love possible, God must be a person: to permit the lowest instincts to participate, God must be young.” Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 23, p.591

<sup>140</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 18

<sup>141</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.27

<sup>142</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.29

<sup>143</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.211



As Gillespie argued, it wasn't Jesus but Paul that preached the values of pity and guilt. Christian guilt isolated its citizens from enjoying life. "Man is the cruelest animal against himself."<sup>144</sup> Christians were taught from a young age to avoid sex, wealth, power or plenty because all are sins. Even violent, lustful or impure thoughts are a sin against God. Nietzsche believed that guilt over enjoying life's passions and gifts is detrimental.

"Whenever he calls himself 'sinner' and 'cross-bearer' and 'penitent,' do not fail to hear the voluptuous delight that is in all such lamentation and accusation."<sup>145</sup>

Christians would take pleasure in bragging about the pain they had suffered, the sacrifices they had made and who was the holier. One should bear a cross to become stronger, not for the ability to moan to others about their pain.<sup>146</sup> These Christians would never sacrifice anything necessary or cause themselves pain. Giving ten percent of your salary or baking for a church bake sale does not compare to Jesus' rebellion, the sacrifice of Nelson Mandela, or death of Socrates. Nietzsche referred to Christianity as a slow suicide, "a quite ordinary bourgeois mediocre life."<sup>147</sup> It had become a religion of weakness and pity.<sup>148</sup> Each person became a passive, accepting sheep and blindly followed whatever his or her religion preached.

"Nietzsche foresaw the future appearance of that 'European nihilism' which declares that after the downfall of the Christian belief in God, and thus also of morality, 'nothing is true,' but 'everything is permitted.'"<sup>149</sup>

Nietzsche witnessed the degradation of faith in Christianity and the preference of nihilism and relativity over objectivity. Morality became personal and no longer dictated the people's actions.

---

<sup>144</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra, Third Part*, p.330

<sup>145</sup> Nietzsche, *ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fast." Matt 5:16

<sup>147</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.143

<sup>148</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 7

<sup>149</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.189

## II. European nihilism

Nietzsche's first chapter in *Will to Power* is called European Nihilism to specifically address only the active nihilism. He clearly distinguished the Christian or European nihilism from the passive form, which is more oriental.

“*Buddha against the ‘Crucified.’* Among the nihilistic religions, one may always clearly distinguish the Christian from the Buddhist. The Buddhist religion is the expression of a fine evening, a perfect sweetness and mildness—it is gratitude toward all that lies behind, and also for what is lacking: bitterness, disillusionment, rancor; finally, a lofty spiritual love; the subtleties of philosophical contradiction are behind it,... it still derives its spiritual glory and sunset glow... the Christian movement is a degeneracy movement composed of reject and refuse elements of every kinds; it is from...forms of morbidity crowding together and seeking one another out...it also stands in opposition to every spiritual movement, to all philosophy; it takes the side of idiots and utters a curse on the spirit.”<sup>150</sup>

Buddhism for Nietzsche accepts that “all interpretations of the world are false”<sup>151</sup> and instead accepts nothingness, echoing Schopenhauer.<sup>152</sup> Nietzsche claimed Buddhism was a “yearning for nothingness”<sup>153</sup> and lacking in moral judgments and values. A person cannot fight or create new values when they believe in nothing. It is a giving up on life altogether.

“The weary nihilism that no longer attacks, its most famous form, Buddhism; a passive nihilism, a sign of weakness. The strength of the spirit may be worn out, exhausted”<sup>154</sup>

Schopenhauer’s nihilism and Buddhist nihilism are passive accepting of nothingness.<sup>155</sup> It is weakness to settle for one’s lot in life instead of rebelling to achieve greatness. Passive nihilism

---

<sup>150</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.95-96

<sup>151</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.7

<sup>152</sup> Nietzsche is clear in saying that the Buddhism he discusses is not Indian Buddhism because that particular form of Buddhism has moral judgments, which allow for punishment, error and therefore has religious values.

<sup>153</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.7

<sup>154</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.18

<sup>155</sup> “Critique of Schopenhauer becomes ... even sharper in his later works, where Schopenhauer is characterized as the supreme decadent and nihilist.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.182

is not a joyous moment but one of acceptance of prejudices and despair. There is no purpose in life if it is random occurrences “all existence has no meaning.”<sup>156</sup> Passive nihilism in *Will to Power* is described as “decline and recession of the power of the spirit.”<sup>157</sup> As time went on, Nietzsche would reject<sup>158</sup> Schopenhauer’s absolute negation in favor of discovering his own “absolute affirmation.”<sup>159</sup> The advent of nihilism emerged from human beings trying to compartmentalize themselves, passively ignoring individuality and allowing society to define who they are as a member of the herd.

Conversely, Active nihilism is “a sign of increased power of the spirit”<sup>160</sup> and Nietzsche, similar to Hegel, argued that it is an active change of man’s ideals, “goals... ‘Convictions,’ [or] articles of faith.”<sup>161</sup> Active nihilism is when a person has examined their own beliefs and questioned existing dogmas. They would not bow down to authority as Turgenev would say,<sup>162</sup> but rebel against it. Nietzsche described that active nihilism,

“Reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction [but] its opposite; the weary nihilism that no longer attacks... [is] a sign of weakness.”<sup>163</sup>

The destruction that Nietzsche discussed is when a person finds himself to be greater in strength than his prejudices. Nietzsche was referring to strength in power of mind, having greater freedom of thought. It represents will to power, or durability to be free from slavery or the herd. Active

---

<sup>156</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.96

<sup>157</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.17

<sup>158</sup> “Schopenhauer’s basic misunderstanding of the will is typical: lowering the value of the will to the point of making a real mistake. Also, hatred against willing; attempt to see something higher, indeed that which is higher and valuable, in willing no more, in ‘being a subject *without* aim and purpose.’ Great symptom of the *exhaustion* or the *weakness* of the will.” Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.52

<sup>159</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.183

<sup>160</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.17

<sup>161</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.17

<sup>162</sup> Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, p.17

<sup>163</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.18

Nihilism destroys previous ideologies so that we have a clean slate to start from.<sup>164</sup> “What is falling, we should still push.”<sup>165</sup> Nietzsche understood that society and the Christian religion were decaying, and humanity was choosing materialism over will to power. Active Nihilism helps to destroy what is decaying and broken, because it cannot be fixed. When a leg is necrotic, we cannot try and cure the rot but we must cut the limb off completely<sup>166</sup> to save a life. It is like a condemned building, when it is rotten to the core. We must tear it down to rebuild. William E. Connolly recognized Nietzsche’s observations of nihilism and although his definitions were correct, he was unable to recognize the specific division of passive and active. Connolly discusses passive nihilism as “despair and inaction.”<sup>167</sup> He continues that it is “the nihilism of rage against the world,”<sup>168</sup> and a hatred of the society because it attacks the individual’s values. Connolly ignored that Nietzsche himself spoke of two separate nihilisms; passive and active and one was to be despised and the other to be celebrated and encouraged. If we only examine Nietzsche with one argument against nihilism,<sup>169</sup> we lose the ability to affirm life and affirm the destruction that comes with active nihilism. Connolly ignores that both Zarathustra and Nietzsche himself in *Will to Power*, explain humans<sup>170</sup> and nihilism as having two possible conclusions.<sup>171</sup> Nihilism cannot be understood as both passive acceptance of nothingness of spirit and the active rebellion and violent rage against society’s morals and traditions. Connolly doesn’t ignore active nihilism, he just does not recognize it as such. He is aware of Nietzsche’s desire for “great destruction”<sup>172</sup> that encourages awareness of what is truly important. Connolly

---

<sup>164</sup> Active nihilism “wants to extinguish everything that is aimless and meaningless in a blind rage; it is a lust for destruction that purifies humanity... it levels the ground for a new creation.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.179

<sup>165</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra Third Part*, p.321

<sup>166</sup> Matthew 5:29-30 “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out... if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.”

<sup>167</sup> Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 14

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> “the efforts to fend off nihilism, the ward off its signs in the new world,” Ibid. p.13

<sup>170</sup> “Man is a rope between...” Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.126

<sup>171</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 22. 23., p. 17-18

<sup>172</sup> Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p.166

does not address active nihilism by name but comprehends Nietzsche's enthusiasm for revaluation which gives people "something to struggle for"<sup>173</sup> in establishing their own priorities.

"The two great nihilistic movements: (a) Buddhism, (b) Christianity. The latter has only now attained to approximately the state of culture in which it can fulfill its original vocation."<sup>174</sup>

Buddhism preaches acceptance of nothingness and a continuous cycle of death and rebirth. Christianity, in its infancy, was a religion of rebellion against the ruling class. When Jesus was in the marketplace, he was upset at merchants, threw tables,<sup>175</sup> and fought violently for what he believed in. Jesus preached against traditions such as circumcision, divorce and repetitive prayer.<sup>176</sup> Old practices had to be eliminated in order to create new values. Jesus risked his life, accepted suffering and died for what he believed in. It is now Christianity that has reached a point of the traditions Jesus fought against, when it must be actively nihilistic and destructive.

"Pity is the *practice* of nihilism... a prime instrument of the advancement of decadence: pity persuades men to *nothingness!*"<sup>177</sup>

Centuries after the death of Jesus, the church preached compliance, pity and slavery. Riches and pride became sins.<sup>178</sup> Nietzsche experienced a modern Christianity that conversely taught that we should accept our suffering. He believed the Christian church "protects everything ill-constituted and sick"<sup>179</sup> as opposed to active nihilism which promoted creation. Nietzsche wanted mankind to be more like Jesus, passionate and creative, not just existing in the herd.

---

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.128

<sup>175</sup> Matthew 21:12

<sup>176</sup> Matthew 5:17-48

<sup>177</sup> Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, section 7

<sup>178</sup> Matthew 19:24

<sup>179</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.143

“Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?... it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted”<sup>180</sup>

Christianity was the moral basis for pity, shame and self-denial, which became a catalyst for passive nihilism. Nietzsche believed Christianity needed destruction and reevaluation. Christian morality is throughout politics and society<sup>181</sup> therefore to make a revolution, we must begin with nothing of the past religious dogmas and start anew.<sup>182</sup> Nietzsche, instead of promoting an acceptance of nothingness, wanted humanity to be passionate instead of reserved. Active nihilism was a destruction of social and religious beliefs, with the underlying hope for building something new in the future. Christianity no longer made humanity strong but instead tells them they are weak and equal.

“In Christianity, three elements must be distinguished: (a) the oppressed of all kinds, (b) the mediocre of all kinds, (c) the discontented and sick of all kinds. With the first element, Christianity fights against the political nobility and its ideal; with the second element, against the exceptional and privileged of all kinds; with the third element, against the natural instinct of the healthy and happy.”<sup>183</sup>

Christianity for Nietzsche forced equality on all people, even those smarter had to lessen themselves to be mediocre. The greater became the oppressed, having to conform. Nietzsche argued that when preaching people are equal, those who are naturally weaker cannot become more powerful. Those who are naturally enhanced; mentally, physically, and in spirit, must suppress themselves and their talents to be perceived as equal with those less gifted. As such Christianity forced weakness<sup>184</sup> upon those who were stronger. Christianity, in preaching

---

<sup>180</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.7

<sup>181</sup> “Christian value judgments are found everywhere in socialistic and positivistic systems.” Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> “Active nihilism in this sense is authentic nihilism. Passive nihilism deflects the convulsive self-obliteration that active nihilism seeks by putting in its place a doctrine of universal pity. It wants to go out not with a bang but a whimper. This is the path of the Crucified. Active nihilism, in Nietzsche’s view, is more desirable because it brings itself and the Christian world to a more expeditious end.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.180

<sup>183</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.126

<sup>184</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.xi

equality, guilt and suffering, made people discontent by denying the joys of life, the achievements they could attain in this world, in exchange for an uncertain afterlife of reward.

### III. Consequences of Nihilism and the Death of God

The herd, once devout, began to believe materialism as a new faith resulting in the death of God. When they stop following a religion denying worldly power, the herd “unlearns modesty,”<sup>185</sup> and the demand for material fulfillment increases. The herd rejected the morality that made them human and replaced it with democratic ideals of equality and material satisfaction. Each person is equal in Christianity and no matter how great they may be, anyone must lower themselves to match the religion’s standards, be it in strength, intelligence or political power. In democracy, each citizen has an equal free vote in their ruler.

“Modern democracy was, of course, the target of Nietzsche’s criticism. Its rationalism and its egalitarianism are the contrary of creativity. Its daily life is for him the civilized reanimalization of man. Nobody really believes in anything anymore, and everyone spends his life in frenzied work and frenzied play so as not to face the fact, not to look into the abyss.”<sup>186</sup>

Without God acting as authority over humanity’s ethics, society began to change its sociological balance. Connolly makes a point of arguing that the death of God results in the loss of moral authority as well as a loss in a “unified center”<sup>187</sup> of morality among people. Without moral guidance, having only physical knowledge of the world, people could not make any value or ethical judgments. Machiavelli taught that we ought not to concern ourselves with what we should do but make morality about what men will do.<sup>188</sup> Nietzsche referred to modern virtue, modern spirituality and our natural science “as forms of sickness.”<sup>189</sup> Our beliefs and our science

---

<sup>185</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.19

<sup>186</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.143

<sup>187</sup> Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p.10

<sup>188</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.263

<sup>189</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.32

were like diseases, an ailment that spreads from person to person. With nihilism, people deified natural science as the only objective knowledge and using science to determine moral and political choices. “Nihilism in its most palpable sense means that the bourgeois has won.”<sup>190</sup> As nihilism increased and subjectivity became more prominent, the middle class of equality, the bourgeois increased in number. It is the morality of the herd that if you are not with them, they will destroy you. And more often than not, people will weaken themselves to fit in and become a sheep in the herd.

#### IV. Nietzsche’s first response to Nihilism

Nietzsche, like Hegel, distinguished between the two forms of nihilism, the Buddhist passive nihilism and the active nihilism. Christianity, as originally portrayed by Jesus Christ, was active nihilism. Jesus destroyed the ruling religious dogmas of his time to create new morals. Nietzsche hoped to inspire people to understand active nihilism with his foretelling of the Overman.

Zarathustra descended the mountain, claiming “I love man” and had aspired to bring humanity a gift.<sup>191</sup> He comes to the market where people have gathered, and presents his gift, to teach the Overman. “Man is something that shall be overcome.”<sup>192</sup> He compares the ape to present day people and that the modern human will be the same embarrassment to the Overman that the ape was “to man.”<sup>193</sup> Zarathustra continued that “even now, too, man is more ape than any ape.”<sup>194</sup> Nietzsche argued that most of humanity had lost belief in anything greater than

---

<sup>190</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind* p.157

<sup>191</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.123

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.124

<sup>194</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.124



themselves and had become more like rational animals. The people, believing materialism, requested the simple life of the Last Man.<sup>195</sup>

## V. The Overman

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra does not offer a clear explanation of what the Overman is because he himself does not know. He says that he is not the Overman and cannot describe what the Overman is, only how he will come to be.

“The lightning out of the dark cloud that is man, that is, the destructive illumination that emerges from shapelessness”<sup>196</sup>

Shapelessness is another reference to nihilism and the Overman understanding the abyss. The destructive illumination is knowledge as the sun was truth to Plato in *the Republic*.<sup>197</sup> Stanley Rosen, professor of philosophy at Boston University, explained that the Overman is a positive culmination, by force or otherwise, that creates knowledge or truth from nothing. The Overman destroys by means of active nihilism and begins anew with a clean slate on which to build.

Zarathustra explains the coming of the Overman as work and sacrifice on the part of the people.<sup>198</sup> He adds that “as heralds, they perish.”<sup>199</sup> To see truth in social structures, Nietzsche argued that it will take sacrifice. The life devoted to comfort is not possible if we are to prepare for the Overman, or break the chains and escape Plato’s cave. We must labour over time to learn the truth behind the dogmas that we are taught and see the nothingness under the rope. Laurence Lampert, a leading Nietzsche scholar, explains that

---

<sup>195</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.130

<sup>196</sup> Rosen, *the Mask of Enlightenment*, p.65

<sup>197</sup> Plato, *the Republic*, Book VI

<sup>198</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.127

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

“His new conception is described as ‘man’s taking possession of the earth’ the people are to sacrifice themselves so ‘that the earth may one day belong to the superman.... in taking possession of the earth,’ the superman does not merely yield to a meaning that the earth already has.”<sup>200</sup>

Revolutions are led by people that do not conform to existing prejudices nor yield to historical morals. The Overman will not succumb to dogmas, but will create his own values.

On the contrary, passive nihilism values only material things. People with bigger houses, more food and comforts are regarded as being successful and therefore happier. This is an incorrect materialistic dogma that the Overman must destroy. This is why Nietzsche placed Zarathustra in a market place, as it represents the social and material economic structure.

“From Nietzsche’s point of view, the Overman is not meant to be a mere amplification of prior man, but the most unequivocally singular form of human existence that, as absolute will to power, is brought to power in every man to some degree and that thereby grants him his membership in being as a whole... the Overman simply leaves the man of traditional values behind, *overtakes* him, and transfers the justification for all laws and the positing of all values to the empowering of power.”<sup>201</sup>

To understand humanity, society and the will to power, we must understand immeasurable parts of humanity as historic essence. We must know the past to overcome it.

In the end, the people of the market do not understand the Overman. It is hard to teach people to questions opinions they have grown up with their whole lives. The Overman, “whose task it is to give a goal to the existence of the herd-men of democracy,”<sup>202</sup> did not do so with a speech. After the death of God, and a nihilistic existence, the populous of the marketplace do not have any higher purpose other than materialistic and economic worlds. They only have simple material comfort and consumerism to cling to, but no greater purpose. They are similar to the

---

<sup>200</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teachings*, p.21

<sup>201</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume 4*, p. 9

<sup>202</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.261

domesticated animal who naps all day. “Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman - - - a rope over an abyss.”<sup>203</sup> As a rope, people are suspended between two opposing destinations, and they must make a decision. They can understand the truth of the abyss of nihilism and actively rebel or passively accept their place as a domestic rational animal. The active nihilism is destruction for presenting a new start so that a new regime could be built up. The second nihilism is a passive acceptance of the abyss of life, Schopenhauer’s will of nothingness.

“We return to chaos in order to initiate a beginning, in this instance ostensibly of the superman.”<sup>204</sup>

Chaos in the Greek sense is the nothingness that was before creation. Active nihilism was a return to nothingness in order to create something new. Rosen argued that Nietzsche was identifying nihilism as a necessary ideal. It was nihilism that initiated man’s response to move to either end of the rope when confronting true nothingness behind dogmas of religion and politics. The abyss beneath the rope with both the passive and active nihilism. If a person accepts that false nihilism is only nothingness behind society’s dogmas then there is no final purpose and he becomes like the beast. An active nihilist addresses the nothingness, but does not passively participate.<sup>205</sup> It is in a rebellion against the abyss, a revolution from the herd of the people in the market.<sup>206</sup> If man doesn’t go under the rope,<sup>207</sup> he cannot see nihilism, blindly follows his prejudices and will remain only in a state of lies, ignorant to truth. Zarathustra said that he loves only those who know how to live “by going under, for they are those who cross over.”<sup>208</sup> Going

---

<sup>203</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.126

<sup>204</sup> Rosen, *Mask of Enlightenment*, p.52

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> “For Nietzsche, the superhuman is not the cause of the nihilism but its solution.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.179

<sup>207</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.127

<sup>208</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.127

under learns the truth behind the nothingness of society, distracting dogmas and popular culture.

The abyss under the bridge must be related to becoming the Overman.

“Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea; in him your great contempt can go under.”<sup>209</sup>

The metaphor of a dirty stream is the prejudices of popular culture. Only someone who has a large enough area of knowledge will not be influenced or polluted by encountering the stream of dogmatic belief. If the only world you have known is being chained to the bottom of a cave,<sup>210</sup> Plato agreed that it would be a very difficult task to break those familiar chains and only a very few could. As Christian dogma argued, the body has evil desires and a weak person may be controlled by them and turn away from God.<sup>211</sup> Going under would evaluate past religious dogmas and biases that have influenced them. With “the will to go under”<sup>212</sup> humanity addresses nihilism and a lacking natural science to create new values. So far this is not the case.

“Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing.”<sup>213</sup>

The sinners that died with God were those who understood the strength to stand up for what they believed in. We are left with sinning against the earth, people who, instead of trying to be godly, try to become like rational animals. The greatest sin for an animal is a sin against the earth, the mother that provides food and shelter. The worst thing an animal can do is destroy his home, his species or himself. In the animal world, we do not see examples of suicide, subduing material desires or destruction of the earth. For a rational animal, sin is turning away from materialism.

---

<sup>209</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.125

<sup>210</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI

<sup>211</sup> Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*

<sup>212</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.127

<sup>213</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.125

Humanity's will must be directed towards a creating force that Rosen explains as the lightning. Lampert observed that going under "is also the word for the sinking of a ship and for death and destruction generally."<sup>214</sup> The Overman going under is also an analogy of death, death of prejudices and of the previous regime.

"With the word overman Nietzsche is by no means designating a merely superdimensional human being of the kind that has prevailed hitherto. Nor is he referring to a species of man that will cast off all that is humane, making naked willfulness its law and titanic rage its rule. Rather the overman-taking the word quite literally-is that human being who goes beyond prior humanity"<sup>215</sup>

The Overman will not be like naked rational animals, but goes beyond prior humanity with new beliefs and revaluated values. Going beyond prior humanity is what Nietzsche wanted to inspire people to do.

## VI. The Eternal Recurrence of the Overman

The Overman is not total destruction of humanity. We do not stop being human to become a complete new species. The Overman will be historic in that it will be a new revolt against the old political and religious structures. Heidegger knew that Nietzsche wanted people to revalue their values, not change humans altogether.<sup>216</sup> We must learn from the past, from mistakes of wars and Christianity, from triumphs of Jesus and Socrates. History prior to Descartes and nihilism are to be part of the Overman. Nietzsche's eternal return is an inspiration to humanity.

"Zarathustra teaches the overman because he is the teacher of eternal return of the same. Yet the reverse is also true: Zarathustra teaches eternal return of the

---

<sup>214</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teachings*, p.15

<sup>215</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume 2*, p.215

<sup>216</sup> "Zarathustra does not want to lose anything of mankind's past; he wants to pour everything into the mold." Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume 2*, p.215

same because he is the teacher of the overman. These doctrines are conjoined in a circle.”<sup>217</sup>

Separately, both ideas can be understood but together eternal return indicates how the Overman would accept life and how the average man would be terrified.<sup>218</sup> Picture a monster coming at night, the loneliest time, telling you that life does not end in Heaven but in reliving everything you have done in an unending cycle. All your actions and decisions are the same. Each day and year repeats over and over in an eternal cycle. Nietzsche called this “*The greatest weight*.”<sup>219</sup>

“Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus?”<sup>220</sup>

Nietzsche wanted the reader to question their daily choices. People are willing to be unhappy with their jobs and counting down to the weekend, vacation or retirement. But when people are faced with death, they live in the moment.<sup>221</sup> Nietzsche challenged the reader not to live for the future, but to do today what they have always dreamed. If a person wants to travel, they should pack up and leave tomorrow. If one wants to spend more time with family, work less because money will not bring back time lost. A person should praise the monster and want to relive each day as a blessing. *The Gay Science* argued some will be devastated, while others will be ecstatic. These are the two differing nihilisms. Those devastated are those of the passive herd, while the happy are the Overman, living every day to its fullest. The herd toil miserably, counting down the time until they are done. The modern Christians for Nietzsche were slaves, praying for reward for their suffering that only came after death. Contrary to Christianity, Nietzsche saw

---

<sup>217</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume 2*, p.228

<sup>218</sup> “The superman teaching requires that it be reconciled with the teaching of the eternal return.” Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teachings*, p.21

<sup>219</sup> Nietzsche, *the Gay Science*, p.273

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Thoughts come to mind about the pop culture even influenced by this thought. By example the song by Tim McGraw; *Live like you were dying*. The song talks about all the ‘living’ that he did, once he found out he was dying. Going skydiving, having fun and travelling and “was finally the husband, that most the time” he wasn’t.

Jesus as passionate and rebellious, a form of active nihilism.<sup>222</sup> Christians encouraged shame and humility, but Jesus wanted to free people from guilt. Nietzsche believed Jesus was the spirit of the Overman, where life is embracing joys of experience. Jesus could be passionate or angry, leading revolutions for freedom instead of accepting materialistic life.<sup>223</sup> With the death of god, the people in the market place honoured money but Jesus said that consumerism was empty goals.<sup>224</sup> These Christians waited for death and reward in the afterlife.

“The internal connection between Christianity and humanity is expressed in Nietzsche’s case by the appearance of the superman when God is dead. This death demands of the man who wills himself, to whom no God says what he must do, then he transcend man at the same time as he is freed from God. Thus man forfeits his traditional place as a being ordered between God and the brutes.”<sup>225</sup>

Nietzsche said “the overman shall be meaning of the earth.”<sup>226</sup> The Overman is the rebellion against religious dogmas and accept the teaching of the eternal recurrence. Eternal recurrence is a freedom from fear of death because people to live everyday embracing life, passions and the will to power. If man lives as such, he would love each day because each is pleasurable and fulfilling. If every day is lived completely, no one would have the fear of dying with things being left undone. To the Overman, death is not the greatest fear but a life not lived is. He is

“the heir of all history and enjoys happiness of a god full of power and love, but he is capable of such heights only because he is a moment of the procreative will to power that wills its own eternal recurrence (*FW*, *KGW* V2:244-45) the existence of the overman thus depends on the death of the Christian God and the return of Dionysus. Man can only become god only as a moment of the will

---

<sup>222</sup> “Nietzsche does not identify Christianity with Christ. In his view, the historical Jesus did not reject this world or pursue vengeance against the ruling classes; he preached a doctrine of universal innocence and acceptance that sought to liberate human beings from guilt and the spirit of revenge. Nietzsche admires this Christian spirit and portrays it as an intrinsic element of his vaunted overman.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.211

<sup>223</sup> “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?” Matt 5:25

<sup>224</sup> Matt 5:19

<sup>225</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.322

<sup>226</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.125

to power understood as primordial music which wills its own deification and reconciliation as Dionysus or the eternal recurrence of the same.”<sup>227</sup>

The Overman does not live for the future but enjoys each day. He is specific to say the death of the Christian god as the death of religious dogma but allows for God of power and love. This God is not the Christian god but encourages passions and the will to power over humility. The Overman is the heir to all history because he has the knowledge of all past events, good and bad. If people deny their history and do not learn from it, they become ahistoric like rational animals.

## VII. Nietzsche's second response to Nihilism; the Last Man

Zarathustra speaks to the crowd “gathered in the market place.”<sup>228</sup> The crowd doesn't understand the Overman and stands without response.<sup>229</sup> He attempts a new approach to inspire the crowd. Instead of the Overman, he will scare them with warnings of the Last Man. Man is a rope between the Overman and the last man or what he calls the “beast.”<sup>230</sup> The Last Man, as opposed to the Overman is a regression to an animal state. The two concepts are best understood together like using a loss of heat to explain cold, or sadness as the lack of happiness.

“Zarathustra's teaching on the last man is the essential counterpart to his teaching on the superman,”<sup>231</sup> and are best understood together. The Overman is progress and the Last Man is a decaying man, a regression to a domesticated rational animal.

The Last Man and the Overman are both described by Lampert as differing views of atheism.<sup>232</sup> The Last Man's atheism tries to live by Christian morals while knowing that god is

---

<sup>227</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.240

<sup>228</sup> Nietzsche *Zarathustra*, p.124

<sup>229</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.128

<sup>230</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.126

<sup>231</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teachings*, p.24

<sup>232</sup> “Both belong to the period of Western history subsequent to the death of the Christian God. They represent quite different atheisms.” Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teachings*, p.24



dead. It becomes an existence dictated by morals that have been passed down by uneducated opinions and prejudices, altered by time like a bad game of “telephone.” Without God, or moral authority, people began to compose interpretations of ethics for themselves. The only objective truths left is the universal laws of natural science and a materialistic dogma. The Last Man’s atheism brought about a “spiritual nihilism.”<sup>233</sup> Without knowing any existence beyond material things, material satisfaction becomes the only goals. Values such as honour, patience and charity become needless and humanity lives only for self-indulgence and material desire satisfaction. People attempted to live by Christian moral laws that they don’t understand nor know the origin of. People can’t explain why they believe what they do and cannot defend against any attack. Humanity was given moral laws from God, but with a dead god, they have no understanding of why they act within these laws. With the death of God, Christians do not act rebelliously, creating something out of the destruction but lose faith in any metaphysical or ethical beliefs.<sup>234</sup> The Christian religion left its followers unprepared to exist without God. They fall into dogmatic materialism, becoming like the Last Man. They lose belief in anything metaphysical without an education to understand the immaterial and believe only in what they see, hear and measure.

## VIII. Understanding the Last Man

Why would Nietzsche choose Zarathustra to be his great messenger? In the religion he founded; Zoroastrianism, there is a singular God but no after life. It is the actions of this life which are either good or evil that matter most with no promise of redemption or justice in an afterlife. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche presents Zarathustra in a different manner than his other writings. As opposed to his usual essay form as seen in *The Birth of Tragedy, Untimely*

---

<sup>233</sup> Lampert, *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> “The Christian comes to believe that nothing is true when faced with the death of God.” Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p. 179

*Meditations* and *Human, All too Human*, this is an epic tale of proverbs and teachings. It is similar to biblical writing and “reflects the Christian literary tradition.”<sup>235</sup>

“Among my writings my *Zarathustra* stands to my mind by itself. With that I have given mankind the greatest present that has ever been made to it so far”<sup>236</sup>

T.K. Seung, professor at the University of Texas, demonstrates the similarities *Zarathustra* shares with Dante’s *Divine Comedy* or Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Outside of Christian tradition, it is similar to Plato’s works. *Zarathustra* is delivering his message to save the people. However, common people reject him and cannot understand his ways or his message and he is driven to find a small select group of disciples.

“This book, with a voice bridging centuries, is not only the highest book there is, the book that is truly characterized by the air of the heights-the whole fact of man lies beneath it at a tremendous distance- it is also the deepest, born out of the innermost wealth of truth”<sup>237</sup>

*Zarathustra* is symbolic of those people who encounter nihilism and act in revolution against the herd. The Overman is beyond human beings in an intellectual way. However, Nietzsche is clear to point out that he does not want to start a new religion. *Zarathustra*, in his time, tried to teach monotheism to the dogmatic herd and was not very successful. Nietzsche is not asking for the leap of faith that Biblical readers are required to make. He is advising the reader through logic and truth. To indoctrinate the herd-men of the market, and the readers, by offering a new religion would lack the necessary step of encountering nihilism. It would be an erroneous attempt to cover up one lie with another, trying to build on a faulty foundation of dogma.

---

<sup>235</sup> Seung, *Nietzsche’s Epic of the Soul*, p.354

<sup>236</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p.675

<sup>237</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p.675

The Last Man, according to Nietzsche, will no longer create anything new or great.<sup>238</sup> He does not understand true love, because love is an immaterial ideal that cannot be physically measured. Natural science has tried to explain interpersonal relationships with chemical hormone levels or physical responses. The Last Man does not know longing because technology has put every physical comfort at his fingertips. Lastly, he does not despise himself. Everyone in modernity is equal and mediocre therefore no one suffers to become better or create great things. There are no more saints starving themselves or going into the wilderness<sup>239</sup> risking their lives for their values. The Last Man does not toil nor work hard but prefers a comfy life and material desire satisfaction. The Last Man is dehumanized in that he desires the satisfaction of animal desire but cannot appreciate any exertion for knowledge or creativity.

The Last Man looks at the world through a materialistic lens that can only judge life by natural science. Material science cannot ask what the good of something is, or its moral worth. When looking at the world, at stars and the universe,<sup>240</sup> the Last Man no longer asks why they exist, but only what they are made of. He does not ask if love is good or for whom it is good. Just like creation, longing and even a star, the Last Man only gives names to things in the world but no longer desires to know what their purpose is. In natural science, we can only name the animals but don't know their good in themselves, their *telos*. In politics, we only define marriage and love in material terms and in forms of contracts, not by love or honour. The Last Man devotes himself to technology because it makes his animal life easier, more comfortable. Material science has taken nature from something beautiful and good but people now use and destroy it for their own comforts. This can be seen by the rapid destruction of the rain forests in

---

<sup>238</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.129

<sup>239</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.123, refer to the saint in the woods.

<sup>240</sup> "What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?" Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.129

South America and the increase in air pollution and climate change. These events are from humanity using nature, like burning of coal for energy causes increasing pollution. The most popular argument in preserving the rain forests is that they may have medicines or cures we have not yet discovered. Even these responses are not to protect nature for its own good but to use nature for another means for our survival. Descartes wanted to find universal laws in nature, but the Last Man heard Machiavelli and raped nature for whatever he wanted.

The Last Man does not appreciate a love that risks and sacrifices but he joins himself to a friend or lover for selfish comfort<sup>241</sup> and reducing loneliness. People procreate to have someone to care for them in their old age but there was a time that people would have children for love and wanting to give their lives to a cause. That time is over. Humanity has reduced the world to material physical worth. Nature's beauty has been reduced and replaced with pavements and roads so that travel is easy. Humanity destroyed lakes and rivers to obtain oil and fly around the world in under a day. This is why the world is small for the Last Man.<sup>242</sup> At one time, humans would pilgrimage for beauty and for God. The struggle that came with sacrifice gave strength and experience when risking one's life for personal beliefs and recognition. Now people use machines to effortlessly scale the highest peaks, not for a goal, not for the challenge but for the picture opt. There is no risk or labour to be honoured when technology has made obstacles easy.

The Last Man makes things small. He reduced the size of the world and Book Three discusses the virtues that make men small, the virtues created by religious dogma without God. Nietzsche argued that among these virtues is "mediocrity, though it be called moderation."<sup>243</sup> The Last Man praises equality where no one wants to rule or obey but each person wants to

---

<sup>241</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.130

<sup>242</sup> "The world has become small, and on it hops the Last Man." Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.130

<sup>243</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.282

mediocre.<sup>244</sup> To excel as master or to be a slave requires too much work for the Last Man and therefore they strive to be one of the domestic herd, grazing and not exerting themselves.

“[The virtues that make men small] have turned the wolf into a dog and man himself into man’s best domestic animal.”<sup>245</sup>

Nietzsche is saying that humanity, like a strong self-sufficient wolf becoming a dog, will lose his self-reliance and follows a herd. Wolves must fight and risk their lives for dominance and survival in a pack, but the tame animal is given food, shelter and becomes lazy. The Last Man has no ability to be alone for he needs his neighbors “for one needs warmth.”<sup>246</sup> Humans will not value love or friendship as immaterial goods but instead use each other to satisfy material desires like warmth or wealth and comfort. The desire for friendship, love and recognition has become so degraded that we can only think of these relationships in material terms. If a person were solitary, to survive he must labor for food and be strong in physical and mental strength to subdue enemies and defend his territory. Instead, the Last Man prefers to be in a herd, have his warmth and shelter provided for him by others. A group of people are warmer when the huddle together in a crowd, using each other’s body heat.

The Last Man praises equality and mediocrity as domestic rational animals find more security in the herd. To excel takes too much work, and being better means you are not equal and you do not fit in. The happiness that has been “invented”<sup>247</sup> as Lampert claims, is one that is frail and needs constant reassurance from those around him.<sup>248</sup> Solitude is terrifying and the Last Man can’t feel comfortable without being in a herd. Those who are most comfortable and have the

---

<sup>244</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.130

<sup>245</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.282

<sup>246</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.129

<sup>247</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.129

<sup>248</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teachings*, p.25

most material desires fulfilled are those held up by the herd as inspirational. Those who have the greatest wealth or are the most promiscuous - think Hugh Hefner - are idolized. Happiness is now measured by the herd of the Last Man by wealth, physical pleasure and material gain. "Mankind's virtues have thus been transformed into the vice of cowardice."<sup>249</sup> Honour, love, pride have all transformed into vices, signs of weakness to be exploited. Honesty is not respected in the business community when successful results can come from swindling and dishonor. The Last Man can only value material things, which results from passive nihilism. Man has become domesticated like a common house-dog, meek and obedient.

#### IX. The Cause of the Last Man

With nihilism, the Christian god was rejected and dogmatic materialism became more prominent. Natural science became the way to answer life's difficult questions, without being able to answer the most important question of 'why.' Humans began to lose value in the immaterial virtues and could only value those things he could see and feel. The problem was the loss of God and the removal of religious authority led man to discover a new method for determining the answers that were at one point answered by religion. These were answers to questions such as how to treat one another, what is the soul, what is truth.

"Faith in the dignity and uniqueness of man, in his irreplaceability in the great chain (rank/office/high status) of being, is a thing of the past –he has become an animal, literally and without reservation of qualification, he who was, according to his old faith, almost God (godman)... all science, natural as well as unnatural... has at present the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself, as if this had been nothing but a piece of bizarre conceit."<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teachings*, p.183

<sup>250</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of morals*, p.591

Nietzsche understood that in the past, before the death of god, man had religion. This religion gave humanity a rank between animal and God. When compared to animals, people were more intelligent and closer to God. There was a hierarchy of plants, animals, humanity, and then God in ascending order. With material science, people became convinced that, like the animals, they were only material and all actions were caused and guided by material means and instincts.

“The petty will of the present, the will of the Last Man, of democratic society that sees the principal goal of human life as preservation and prosperity. The denial of suffering, however, is a denial of life in its greatest and highest moments.”<sup>251</sup>

The democratic society praises both mediocrity and freedom. The Last Man claims that the goals in life are material desire satisfaction and long life to enjoy them. It is not important if a man is good or evil in his lifetime because material science cannot make those claims, but it can praise him for living to be one hundred. Suffering, such as pain or labour, risking one’s life, should be necessary parts of life. Without suffering of hard work, human beings don’t create great achievements, nor stand out among the herd as a distinct man to be recognized.

The Last Man has emerged from a culmination of events, the death of god, the dogmatic belief in natural sciences and democracy that Nietzsche so despised. Physical pleasure and material gratification became the measures of success. Monks that would go on hunger strikes, religious people sacrificing wealth or risking their lives for their beliefs no longer existed. In material science, people cannot strive to be more moral but only strive to be more comfortable. The Last Man relinquished searching for moral claims or immaterial values because they are not recognized by modern science. Nietzsche understood the Last Man as the final stage before humanity became a herd of rational animals, and he was not the only author to observe this.

---

<sup>251</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, p.212

### Section 3: Nihilism and Modern Liberal Democracy

#### I. Prophecies of the Last Man

##### i. Mary Shelley

Humanity is currently at a cross-road<sup>252</sup> between two possible outcomes, one being the Overman and the second is the Last Man. For the Last Man, picture the ultimate couch potato, content to waste everyday under the guise of materialism and consumerism, as all of life's opportunities are passing by. Nietzsche foresaw this type of person that we all know, in a time that did not even have the technology to mentally remove them from reality.

Nietzsche was not the first person to use the term the Last Man. Mary Shelley titled one of her novels *The Last Man*. She, like Nietzsche, observed the effects of a theoretic death of God. Natural science began to overtake Christianity, the basis of morality in Europe.

In *Frankenstein* the title character, young, ambitious and uneducated, attends university to study natural sciences. Frankenstein's older and wiser professor explains we must have knowledge of "every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics,"<sup>253</sup> advocating for the study of both the material sciences and immaterial mathematics. Mathematics offers theories about things not visible in nature such as perfection and infinity, whereas material science is limited to study the material. Mathematics is unchanging and more certain than natural sciences which are based on fallible sense perception.<sup>254</sup> Frankenstein was more akin to his younger

---

<sup>252</sup> "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end." Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.127

<sup>253</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.50

<sup>254</sup> Similar to Descartes notion that the senses can deceive in the first meditation but in the second meditation he discovers certain knowledge through mathematics.



professor that mocked history and taught him to concentrate on physical results. This led Frankenstein to ignore knowledge of the immaterial world, the world of God and morality.

“Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies, deprived of life which... had become worm food”<sup>255</sup>

Frankenstein, like the Last Man, did not understand anything immaterial. With the theory of the death of God, a churchyard, usually thought to be sacred and a place of respect, lost all religious and moral standing for Frankenstein. He understood it in terms of what material supplies it could offer. He had no recognition of morality or values.

Frankenstein’s lack of moral education results in the death of many of his associates and in his own destruction. He had been encouraged to pursue education in both science and philosophy but chose only to study chemistry.<sup>256</sup> In that respect he is like Nietzsche’s Last Man, ignoring the immaterial and focusing only on the physical. He accepts the dogma of materialism, an attribute of passive nihilism. Frankenstein attempts to “examine the causes of life”<sup>257</sup> by looking only at the physical anatomy and the decay of the human body. He does not ask why humanity was created or its purpose. He gives life to a dead body he has sewn together, but discards it without care.<sup>258</sup> The monster that Frankenstein created has a different education from Frankenstein himself resulting in him studying both the material world and philosophy. His education comes from history and stories instead of natural science alone. The monster is cultivated by books like the Bible and *Paradise Lost*, and by writers such as Plutarch and Goethe.<sup>259</sup> In the end, the monster has a greater understanding of his own desires and wants,

---

<sup>255</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.52

<sup>256</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.51

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131

having “the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness.”<sup>260</sup> Frankenstein believed in a materialism which was devoid of values or morality. Like the Last Man, he wanted to master nature by physical sciences, but without asking the questions of *telos*. It is not the monster but Frankenstein that is the Last Man. Instead of living without values, Nietzsche and Shelley wanted people to live life to the fullest.

The argument about the decline of the Frankenstein was and continues to be lost on the audience. Pop culture highlighted the monster with films like *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, and *I, Frankenstein*, evidence that even modern audiences have missed the warnings about Frankenstein. Years later Shelley wrote *The Last Man*, more assertive in her title to the consequence of a lack of moral education. Unfortunately, without the appeal of a grotesque monster and a longer storyline, the book’s popularity plummeted as the reading difficulty rose. Set in the not too distant future, Lionel began his life orphaned, leading a band of adolescents in the forests “untaught in refined philosophy.”<sup>261</sup> His life was “like that of an animal,” where he enjoyed “acts of tyranny and freedom”<sup>262</sup> without moral law. The orphan began a friendship with a young man who “even at [his] early age, he was deep read and imbued with the spirit of high philosophy.”<sup>263</sup> This led the hero to admit he had only “now [begun] to be human.”<sup>264</sup> Lionel lived the life of an animal until philosophy and friendship helped to make him more human than a beast. Lionel, like Rousseau’s Emile began, “[caring] only about himself... is independent and self-sufficient” and he has “no duties.”<sup>265</sup> Shelley has created her character to

---

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p.222

<sup>261</sup> Shelley, *The Last Man*, p. 14

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p.18

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p.26

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p.29

<sup>265</sup> Bloom, *Giants and Dwarfs*, p.182

mirror a philosophical education that Rousseau gave to Emile.<sup>266</sup> She witnessed people concentrating their education in material sciences alone, leading humanity to rest solely on dogmatic materialism and lose its moral compass.

As Shelley's novel continues, people who lack wisdom or morality die from a plague, like Ryland, who abandoned his fellow man and was found "dead and half devoured by insects."<sup>267</sup> What keeps some from succumbing to the plague? Lionel's wife dies from eventual exhaustion but not the plague,<sup>268</sup> as self-sacrifice shows devotion to love and values. Another example of those unaffected is Lucy<sup>269</sup> who, out of duty, doesn't marry for love but instead for money to care for her family. She stays behind to care for her sick mother, sacrificing her own freedom and happiness. Those who give their lives for others, against the material instinct of self-preservation and selfishness, remain healthy. Those who get the plague are materialistic, like rational animals who care only for self-preservation and desire satisfaction. Shelley is arguing that in a world of humans that act like animals and care only for material desire satisfaction, even people like Adrian or Lucy will be effected by the majority who have lost their humanity.

Lionel is the last man, the only man among a world of animals. All noble and honourable people have succumbed to the pitfalls of those who were sick; their greed, insanity, jealousy ended in the consequences of death. Lionel had both an education of the physical world and philosophy, mimicking Plato's education in *the Republic*.<sup>270</sup> Lionel closes by saying,

"Farewell to the arts, - to eloquence, which is to the human mind as the winds to the sea, stirring ad then allaying it; - farewell to poetry and deep philosophy, for man's imagination is cold, and his enquiring mind can no longer expatiate

---

<sup>266</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*

<sup>267</sup> Shelley, *Last Man*, p.318

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p.355

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p.365

<sup>270</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII

on the wonders of life, for ‘there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest’”<sup>271</sup>

Shelley claimed that humanity will become like rational animals, dedicated only to material desire satisfaction. People will not be inspired to create values or philosophy, like the Last Man, work will be a means of passing the time, and only materialism and subjective truths exist.

Shelley believed that without any change, man was on a path to living like the beasts.

Rousseau also influenced Nietzsche and taught that historical novels are ideal for a young man’s education claiming, “Emile will contract a greater taste for the books of ancients than our own.”<sup>272</sup> An education cannot be natural science alone. A child must learn passions, honour and consequences for acting immoral. Goethe’s Faust had obtained as much knowledge of the human world as possible, but he only knew the appearance of things,<sup>273</sup> not the truth of them. Faust is materialistic, studying only what he can see but unclear of the essence of humanity.

“The great danger to man is that he falls into lethargy, that he becomes satisfied with life and ceases striving.”<sup>274</sup>

Faust was nihilistic and did not believe in objective immaterial truth and could not understand anything beyond the material world. The only knowledge Faust could comprehend was what he could see. He became lazy and accepted materialism, giving up on striving for more. The passive acceptance of nihilism is what Nietzsche expressed in the Last Man.

These novels all predicted the coming of a herd society of Last Men. Before Nietzsche had written *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Shelley, Goethe and Rousseau envisioned modern society

---

<sup>271</sup> Shelley, *Last Man*, p.321

<sup>272</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p.250

<sup>273</sup> “You can’t, if you can’t feel it, if it never, Rises from the soul, and sways, The heart of every single hearer, With deepest power, in simple ways. You’ll sit forever, gluing things together, Cooking up a stew from other’s scraps, Blowing on a miserable fire, Made from your heap of dying ash. Let apes and children praise your art, If their admiration’s to your taste, But you’ll never speak from heart to heart, Unless it rises up from your heart’s space.” Goethe, *Faust, Book One*

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114

that had lost its faith in God and had disproportionately given its attention to natural science. Without asking the purpose of nature, the world becomes a means to an end. Without asking what our own *telos* is, people could not know immaterial goals but only what natural science could measure, the material wealth. More money meant more power which meant more pleasure, regardless of who or what you had to step on to get there, or if you sold your own soul.

## ii. Kojève and the end of history

Kojève, an expert on Hegel, experienced the world after Nietzsche's declaration of the death of god. Kojève observed that people no longer feared nor believed in God. He knew that the increasing desire for equality was leading towards a loss of objective truth because every person's opinion was becoming subjectively equal. In interpreting Hegel's end of history, Kojève considered modern society as being one where a post historic humanity does not acknowledge "truth" nor does it celebrate any great achievements that will progress the species.

Kojève stated "History [as Hegel understood it] is certainly the history of human errors."<sup>275</sup> Upon achieve all knowledge and reaching perfection, humanity would not learn new ideals nor change in any way because in every aspect, in theory, man would be satisfied. "Mais comment juger du succès? Il faut pour cela que l'Histoire soit terminée."<sup>276</sup> Hegel knew that we did not yet live in the perfect State because humanity was still changing.<sup>277</sup> There were still those who were oppressed by religion or government. Humans are historical beings, changing with rebellions and intellectual advancements. Without revolutions, our environment becomes cyclical like animals, a

---

<sup>275</sup> Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. p.156

<sup>276</sup> Kojève, *Introduction a la lecture de Hegel*. p.95 (But how to judge success? For that, history must end.)

<sup>277</sup> Kojève *ibid.*, p.97

system repeating itself over and over. History for Hegel has “a view toward a fulfilled end,”<sup>278</sup> but after the end of history, there is no more change required and all humanity is equal and fulfilled.

“Nature is only Space and not Time; one would have to conclude that there is no conceptual understanding of Nature. One would understand, in the full sense only where there is Time-i.e., one would truly understand only History.”<sup>279</sup>

Without people, there would be no historical change that influenced the natural world in the way that humanity has. Humans have used nature as a means towards their own ends. Without humanity, the planet would exist in continuous cycles.<sup>280</sup> As Hannah Arendt agrees, humanity exists historically, changing throughout generations in a linear manner. Humanity keeps records of history, learns from his past and makes plans for the future.<sup>281</sup> We can observe growth from influential events like revolutions and inventions. Without humanity, there is no history.<sup>282</sup>

Each person in the state after the end of history would only be materially satisfied. The desire to stand out from the herd, be recognized as an individual, would remain cease to be. Work exists just to pass the time. True toil is no longer needed after the end of history because there is no mental exertion to overcome, and no major physical labour to exert. We can thank technology and natural science because it has made all labour easier. The work that the Parthenon took is beyond comparison with how little actual physical exertion humanity today uses to raise a skyscraper.

---

<sup>278</sup> Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p.32

<sup>279</sup> Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, p.146

<sup>280</sup> “Nature and the cyclical movement into which she forces all living things know neither birth nor death as we understand them. The birth and death of human beings are not simple nature occurrences, but are related to a world into which single individuals, unique, unexchangeable and unrepeatable entities, appear and from which they depart.” Arendt, *the Human Condition*, p.96

<sup>281</sup> Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, p.147

<sup>282</sup> Kojève admitted that after the end of history, humanity continues to exist but in a different sense. *Ibid.*, p.159

For Kojève, the end of history would bring about people too lazy to choose difficult education or hard work over light tasks and easy entertainment. A dedicated following of a religion requires strenuous hours of study and devotion, sometimes limiting diet or desires, sometimes physical labour, all of which would be too constricting for posthistorical humanity. People create necessary things, shelter and food and calls them art,<sup>283</sup> instead of understanding art as something truthful to achieve after material desires have been fulfilled. Entertainment has devoted itself to a whole culture of cooking or home buying television shows, the art of basic shelter and nourishment, what every animal in nature must achieve.

“The transition from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom will be the inglorious death of the very possibility of human excellence.”<sup>284</sup>

Modern democracy deems that any work that does not result in wealth accumulation is pointless. Discovering truth or creating art should not be motivated solely by material gain. My career allows me to sustain my living but when I tell people I study philosophy, they ask “what will you *do* with a philosophy degree, what kind of *jobs* are there?” For our society, hours of labour and studying should result in employment for money and if it doesn’t, it is useless. Labor of any sort, in career or studying, writing, or art in our political forum is used to fulfill for wealth or power.

Kojève believed the end of history was coming to fruition “in the World, prefiguring the ‘eternal present’ future of all humanity.”<sup>285</sup> The eternal present is the idea that people would forever be without social or moral change. Kojève claimed, “Man’s return to animality... a certainty that [is] already present,”<sup>286</sup> was observable in the United States. All citizens are free

---

<sup>283</sup> Kojève, *ibid.*, p.159

<sup>284</sup> Roth, *Knowing and History*, p.132

<sup>285</sup> Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, p.161n

<sup>286</sup> Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, p.161n

and equal<sup>287</sup> to pursuit any desires for material fulfillment.<sup>288</sup> If all are constitutionally equal, no one is smarter than anyone else and all people are free to have their own relative truth.

“History provided protection from nihilism and relativism for thinkers who had abandoned nature as a transhistorical standard and God or religion as a suprahistorical guarantee.”<sup>289</sup>

Without history, society becomes cyclical, never changing but respecting each citizen’s subjective beliefs. Without religion, there is no hierarchy in humanity, no experts or leaders, only the singular herd. For Kojève, equality for people “might not coincide with making them wise,”<sup>290</sup> and people will lower themselves to belong and be equal. Machiavelli believed the end of excellence will be when people no longer need to control material desires but indulge every one. Natural sciences cannot teach respect for nature but only take as much as desired. *Telos* is removed and nature is a means to our own comfort. Natural science cannot explain the beauty of a sunset or the awe of powerful rapids. We become like rational animals, looking only for shelter and food to sustain life, but we lose sight of what can actually bring happiness.

“If philosophers participate in the struggle against nature at the expense of contemplation of the natural, they forget the basis of philosophy. When the goal of all human effort is the triumph over nature, victory removes the very ground of the human.”<sup>291</sup>

When the great thinkers study only material natural science, they do not examine morals or values. Humanity placed all of its efforts into conquering nature for means of comfort but did not ask if it was good or not. When people chose material desires over values, honour and individuality, they sacrificed those vary things that defined their humanity. An animal existence

---

<sup>287</sup> “The Kojèvien response to such criticism is that Hegel may have ... been right about the end of history becoming evident in a universal and homogeneous state.” Roth, *Knowing and History*, p.119

<sup>288</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, book viii 555b.

<sup>289</sup> Roth, *Knowing and History*, p.195

<sup>290</sup> Roth, *ibid.*, p.128

<sup>291</sup> Roth, *Knowing and History*, p.132



does not fulfill the desire to be recognized as a distinctive person. Humanity needs to be understood by his companions as an end.<sup>292</sup> It is this desire that causes a person to strive to be appreciated and a desire that is not explainable by material natural science.

“The struggle for recognition, which is the origin of human, remains a criterion for separating those willing to participate in historical life from those content with the repetition of the natural,[animal existence. it is by the desire for recognition that] one steps from the animal to the human, from the natural to the historical,”<sup>293</sup>

Roth claimed that the desire for recognition separated chronological man from rational animal.

The desire for recognition will not exist after the end of history because it inspires each person to be distinct from the herd. The desire for recognition inspires man to risk his own “biological life.” For example, Socrates questioned social prejudices at the risk of not being accepted by the crowd. History was written by those, who changed the status quo, who stood out from the herd.<sup>294</sup> Animals, which are only materialistic, cannot have the immaterial desire to stand out from their herd, unless materially motivated.<sup>295</sup> This problem would also be addressed by Raymond Queneau, one of Kojève’s friends.<sup>296</sup>

### iii. Queneau

Raymond Queneau, a French novelist and philosopher, began writing in the 1930’s and 40’s. In *Odile*, the main character Travy was lost, uncaring and unconcerned about the world around him. Travy “blinked when he looked at the world”<sup>297</sup> just like the Last Man staring and

---

<sup>292</sup> “The final condition for all men will be identical with the loss of their humanity, and this cannot reasonably satisfy them.” Roth, *ibid.*, p.128

<sup>293</sup> Roth, *ibid.*, p.107

<sup>294</sup> Achilles, Ghandi, Dante are some examples of people who sacrificed comforts of simple life and stood out as individuals.

<sup>295</sup> It can be argued that alpha males in wolf packs are motivated by a desire for recognition to lead a pack. This however was discovered to be a fallacy and the idea of an alpha wolf was found instead to be the usual family connection guided by paternal instincts and not a desire for leadership or individuality. Mech, L. David. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 1999, 77(8): 1196-1203, <https://doi.org/10.1139/z99-099>

<sup>296</sup> Roth, *Knowing and History*, p. 135

<sup>297</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.20

blinking.<sup>298</sup> It portrays a picture of a still, lifeless human, looking at the world, not learning, not observing, not creating, just staring and blinking. A world of couch potatoes staring at a box their whole lives, working for simple entertainment and wasting their time on this earth.<sup>299</sup>

“‘Don’t you worry about becoming dehumanized?’ ‘No, I’m not too worried about that.’”<sup>300</sup>

Travy is not concerned with living like a rational animal as he accepted passive nihilism, believing there is no purpose in life. He has little understanding of morals or history but knows people only in terms of material science, money, or politics. “Nothing around me seemed alive and it did not bother me.”<sup>301</sup> Travy finds modern society teaches only political and financial gain<sup>302</sup> causing people to become solitary and live only for themselves.<sup>303</sup> Like the Last Man, Travy and his companions only stay together “for one needs warmth,”<sup>304</sup> and work only to pass the time.

Our world cannot be explained by rationality or material science alone.<sup>305</sup> Humanity is not just the sum of its molecules and atoms. We are emotions, passions, cultures, and traditions. The Last Man does not understand this. He believes that all things in the world are invented, that anything worth knowing can be seen and measured.

“It’s about describing a world, discovering it, not about constructing or inventing it, because it exists outside of human mind and independently of it.”<sup>306</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> “Asks the last man, and he blinks... say the most refined, and they blink... say the last men, and they blink.” Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.129-130

<sup>299</sup> “Assuming that I had no future, I had built my void upon their nothingness.” Queneau, *Odile*, p.34

<sup>300</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.28

<sup>301</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.9

<sup>302</sup> Queneau, *ibid.*, p.58

<sup>303</sup> Queneau, *ibid.*, p.51

<sup>304</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, First Part (5) p.129

<sup>305</sup> “There’s a reality which is beyond us, and which we can’t explain using rational language invented by the rational mind, because the rational mechanism for reconstructing that world fails.” Queneau, *Odile*, p.19

<sup>306</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.16

Queneau argued as Augustine did about certain knowledge outside materialism. These writers began with mathematics. First, simple addition: the example that we know certainly that two plus three will always equal five. Continuing further, Travy found theoretic algebraic answers and radicals. Queneau believed that in order to fight the nothingness of nihilism, people must begin with certain knowledge, seeing that there is a world that is not dependent on our perception. Travy knows that there is a part within himself that requires objective truth,<sup>307</sup> aspiring to attain knowledge of math and reason. After being able to understand objective, unchanging knowledge, Travy begins to feel that there must be other certain truths, beyond mathematics, independent of the senses. He is frustrated with the uneducated, racist, political friends of his who do not understand morality. Travy doesn't know what to do with his knowledge or why we acquire it. With the arrival of Odile, the title female character, he finds that there is an odd attraction, something new.

Even on meeting Odile, Travy finds himself confused by his feelings for her as he has no capacity to comprehend the way she makes him feel. The Last Man asks "What is love?"<sup>308</sup> Travy cannot understand his passions because they cannot be scientifically explained. Love, encourages self-sacrifice and saved Travy from a decaying animal existence. As Rousseau explains, "it is not good for man to be alone."<sup>309</sup> To fill what is missing, Travy must experience immaterial desires like love and justice in relation to another soul. By love, he overcomes animal life and finds happiness. "I no longer forged blindly ahead like a projectile."<sup>310</sup> Queneau is giving us hope that we do not have to be the Last Man of material dogmas.

---

<sup>307</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.34

<sup>308</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book One p. 129

<sup>309</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, Book five, p.357

<sup>310</sup> Queneau, *Odile*, p.35

“Queneau’s heroes live in the self-conscious satisfaction that there is no longer anything for which to fight or work. Indeed, in the post-historical world there is nothing left to do except perhaps to know that there is nothing left to do?”<sup>311</sup>

Roth observed Queneau’s literary world was composed of characters after the end of history, characters who did not need to fight revolutions or rebel against society. All political and material aspects of life are complete but they still are not happy. Our modern world in this state will produce the wealthy comfortable peaceful passive Last Men who have no happiness, no purpose or morals and will commit suicide.

## II. The Observable Outcomes of Materialism

Kojève and Queneau were not the only writers who understood the accuracy of Nietzsche’s predictions. Allan Bloom, an American philosopher stated the decline in moral and educational standards in North America. Bloom observed firsthand what he believed was the decline of higher education in the universities. He saw Descartes as the catalyst for the emergence of nihilism and materialism. Removing *telos*, we only study how we can use something or someone, but we lose the good of the thing itself.

“More repulsive successor of the bourgeois, the last man, is the product of egalitarian, rationalist, socialist atheism.”<sup>312</sup>

Passive nihilism has led to acceptance of atheism, and rational materialism. The Last Man is someone striving for “comfortable self-preservation”<sup>313</sup> above any other goal. The aim of knowledge after Descartes was conquering nature to supply the bourgeois life. “The system’s principles are those of self-preservation.”<sup>314</sup> More food and shelter provide good health and a long, comfortable life. Sacrificing in the name of someone else, your family or fellow neighbour,

---

<sup>311</sup> Roth, *knowing and History*, p. 135”

<sup>312</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p. 197

<sup>313</sup> Bloom, *Giants and Dwarfs*, p. 179

<sup>314</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.65

diminishes your visible supply of goods. The Last Man fears death, especially one that is violent or brutal, and pain. The longer he lives, the more simple pleasures and comforts he can enjoy. The best way to ensure your own health is with money to provide the best medicine, to buy the most food, and to keep you warm. Charity, in the simplest material explanation, is a risk to your life. The Last Man is primarily selfish.

“The old commandment that we love our brothers made impossible demands on us, demands against nature, while doing nothing to provide for real needs. What is required is not brotherly love or faith, hope or charity, but self-interested rational labor.”<sup>315</sup>

There was once a time humanity was called upon to take care of those around them and the less fortunate. With materialism, virtues and charity are not valued as they cannot produce money in the bank or food on your table. Prior to dogmatic materialism, a good man was one who laboured for knowledge, charity and his fellow man. Selfish used to be an insult but now it means successful in materialistic terms.

“Modern psychology [claims], fathered by Machiavelli - that selfishness is somehow good. Man is self, and the self must be selfish....a good man used to be the one who cares for others, as opposed to the man who care exclusively for himself. Now the good man is the one who knows how to care for himself, as opposed to the man who does not.”<sup>316</sup>

Psychologists like Freud<sup>317</sup> wanted to claim psychology as a natural science in an attempt to understand humanity by creating materialistic natural laws. This was a mistake. Psychologists had to apply the only objective laws they had access to; natural laws claiming that man's thoughts are materially caused. With the growth of psychology and social sciences, human behavior is now believed to be an outcome of our “social and environmental conditioning.”<sup>318</sup>

---

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p.165

<sup>316</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.178

<sup>317</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p. 199

<sup>318</sup> Fukuyama, *the End of History*, p.297

Our human actions are determined not only by the natural laws of our nurturing but also the way in which our physical brain has been constructed. Thoughts are now viewed as synapses and brain activity is measured on computer screens. If humanity and even its thoughts are directed by material causes, humans lose their free will. Attempting to justify human actions with physical laws observed in nature reduces humanity to a pattern of rational animal behavior,<sup>319</sup> and ignores those qualities which set humanity apart.

“A psychology, or a political science, that did not take into account man’s desire for recognition, and his infrequent but very pronounced willingness to act at times contrary to even the strongest natural instinct, would misunderstand something very important about human behaviors.”<sup>320</sup>

People must aspire to be greater than the instincts that drive animals to act. Animals do not love, do not create and do not aspire. If a person’s actions are only materially caused, they are not guided by immaterial morals or virtues like charity. Nietzsche believed that we must choose between science and psychology.<sup>321</sup> Natural science must be left for nature alone while humanity must be understood by philosophy.

“Psychology cannot be like Freud’s, which, beginning from Nietzsche’s understanding of the unconscious, finds causes of creativity that blur the difference between a Raphael and a finger painting. Everything is in that difference, which necessarily escapes our science.”<sup>322</sup>

Materially applied laws cannot explain why something is good or what life is just. Without objective truth, who are we to claim that a finger painting has more truth than a beautiful

---

<sup>319</sup> “Everything – including the individual human being, not to mention the animal – becomes a repeatable, replaceable process... conflict between administrative, reifying science, between the public mind and the experience of the individual” has demonstrated the increasing turmoil that arose in humanity, the natural laws that dictate the actions of groups or herds and the desire to be recognised as an individual. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, p.65

<sup>320</sup> Fukuyama, *The End Of History*, p.152

<sup>321</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.200

<sup>322</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.199

painting by Monet or Van Gosh.<sup>323</sup> Under materialism, people cannot say if an action is moral or good, they cannot make value judgements.

Bloom observed that by removing *telos* from natural laws, “Descartes, playing his part in the dismantling of the soul, had reduced nature to extension.”<sup>324</sup> Nature was to become only a means for humanity. As natural science became the only measure for objective truth, a soul, lacking in both weight and extension, was forgotten and ignored. Francis Fukuyama, a North American philosopher believed that natural science’s effect on history,

“Was cumulative, such that successive generations could be spared the efforts and mistakes of earlier ones. Thus the modern notion of progress had its origins in the success of modern natural science, and allowed Francis Bacon to assert the superiority of modernity to antiquity on the basis of inventions like the compass, printing press and gunpowder.”<sup>325</sup>

Technological progress is visible and cumulative. Scientific knowledge builds increasingly over time and the results accumulate. We do not forget basic advancements in science.<sup>326</sup> Morality and values are different. Can we say that between Aristotle, Aquinas or Kant one of them knew more or less about justice or virtue? The mathematics used in building the pyramids and the Parthenon are the same then as they are today. Homer, Shakespeare and Jane Austin all wrote with a level of expertise and human truth, yet the years they wrote did not limit their validity or beauty.<sup>327</sup> The catch phrase for validity for the past hundred years is that something has ‘scientific proof’ as if it were the only way modern society can accept it as true.

---

<sup>323</sup> “A diminished, egotistical, materialistic being without grandeur of beauty of soul, and it has maintained that negative sense.” Bloom, *ibid.*, p.157

<sup>324</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.177

<sup>325</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.57

<sup>326</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.343

<sup>327</sup> “Unequivocally cumulative and directional in modern natural science. The same cannot be said for activities like painting, poetry, music or architecture: it is not clear that Rauschenberg is a better painter than Michelangelo.” Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.72

“Only scientific knowledge is genuine knowledge. From this it follows immediately that all awareness of political things which is not scientific is cognitively worthless.”<sup>328</sup>

Modern natural science cannot ask what is the goal of life.<sup>329</sup> A dream is not measured by weight or size, so it is deemed unimportant. Natural science cannot tell me how to raise my child or if an apple tastes good. Consequently, as explained, arguments of morality are only subjectively true. As argued in the second section, Nietzsche, Connolly and other writers recognized that with the death of God came the consequence of the death in morality grounded in Divine Law. I am aware that this claim will also raise suspicions because Nietzsche also influenced the Existentialists. They believe that even without certain truth, there was a moral obligation we had as free humans. However, their obligation to ethics was not in relation to an objective universal truth but instead to a rebellion against the prejudices and misconceptions of society. Like Nietzsche, Sartre taught that humanity was plagued with “mauvaise foi,”<sup>330</sup> that compelled people to follow social norms without questions. He wanted to inspire people to ensure their freedom and act as humans and not slaves. Camus in both *L’Etranger* and *The Fall* expressed similar encouragement towards a rebellion regarding the democracy. Almost word for word as Nietzsche wrote, Camus also felt disdain for the modern Christians but did “feel friendship for the first Christian of all.”<sup>331</sup> He, like Nietzsche, understood Jesus as a rebellious figure, questioning authority and standing out from the herd of slaves. Simone de Beauvoir noted the dual essence of humanity, of both matter and thought. She argued that we must treat ourselves and others accordingly. People should be treated as ends in themselves and not as means. These writers, similar to Nietzsche, rebelled against the establishment of a society whose

---

<sup>328</sup> Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.135

<sup>329</sup> “What is love?...we have invented happiness,” Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.129

<sup>330</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.87

<sup>331</sup> Camus, *The Fall*, p.136



democracy is based on the principles of natural science. Sartre did not want our lives being dictated by material economics, and Camus did find a universal truth in that murder and suicide is wrong.<sup>332</sup> Simone de Beauvoir argued there is still some universal moral truth that we can find, that is not based in materialism but in the idea of human soul as the source for a guiding moral intuition.<sup>333</sup> Michael Frazer noted that Nietzsche's "greatest objection to slave morality is precisely that it is the morality of slaves – of the weak and sick."<sup>334</sup> Nietzsche did not argue against the universal morality that religion preached but instead that Christianity was being used as a tool of the weak. Jesus, in contrast, was a rebelling figure who taught to fight the establishment as well as the destruction of old traditions. Nietzsche was speaking out against the slave morality that Christianity had converted into. Frazer argues that Nietzsche believed in a hierarchy of morals.<sup>335</sup> For Nietzsche to believe that some human morality is better than others requires an ethical hierarchy or authority.<sup>336</sup> To judge that one is better than another suggests that there could be a universal good towards which we are striving.

On the other hand, natural sciences can tell us the number of chromosomes that our bodies begin with or how our circulatory system works, but not moral law. If the ship is going down with less life boats than passengers, how could material science decide who should survive? The existence of God, the soul, or the Good could not be demonstrated by natural

---

<sup>332</sup> Camus, *the Rebel*, p.6

<sup>333</sup> "Passion, pride, and the spirit of adventure lead to this tyranny... it does so not in the name of an abstract law, but because if it is true the every project emanate from subjectivity, it is also true that this subjective movement established by itself a surpassing of subjectivity." There is a universality in wanting to find morality and how to be good. We may not be able to find certain truth about specific morals but this is a good place to start, that we all agree we want to find it. Simone de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, p.77

<sup>334</sup> Frazer, Michael. 2006. The compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on sympathy and strength. *Review of Politics*, 68, no. 1: 49-78. Accessed on March 10 2017 [https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3350069/frazer\\_compassion.pdf?sequence=2](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3350069/frazer_compassion.pdf?sequence=2)

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> "The one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal. But tell me, my brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal – is humanity itself not still lacking too?" this suggests there he might have believed in a teleological goal for values. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p.172

science. In the eyes of science, a healthy body has one heart, one brain, veins and arteries. These bodies are equal, whether it is the body of a serial killer or an altruistic nun.

### III. Trading *Telos* for Technology

The consequence of the materialist credo is an idea that democracy promotes equality and freedom of all people regardless of their education, skill, expertise level, or lack thereof.<sup>337</sup> Equality results in mediocrity, as those who are more capable must reduce their skills in order not to create a mayhem in the crowd. Not everyone can be expected to understand complex physics but we can all agree on simple addition. Democracy must cater to the lowest common denominator, frequently in effect encouraging the smarter members to reduce and “dumb down” their ability to the level of the common herd. Experts, once considered individuals from the crowd, begin to disappear into the industrialization of society<sup>338</sup> and the natural laws, which tell them their bodies and their physical needs are the same as every other body in the herd.

“Its daily life is for him the civilized reanimalization of man. Nobody really believes in anything anymore, and everybody spends his life in frenzied work and frenzied play so as not to face the fact, not to look into the abyss.”<sup>339</sup>

Natural science reduces us to the same atoms, molecules and hormonal instincts that compose the everyday animals: a civilized reanimalization. The Last Man is a rational animal who does no longer believe in anything other than what he can see. The catchphrase ‘seeing is believing’ is still heard in educational institutions, in popular culture and all over the media. Materialism has reduced us to a life of rational animal nature. What is it that animal life resembles? Dogs do not worry about being recognized for their individuality, nor do they worry about injustices in case,

---

<sup>337</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, VIII

<sup>338</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.106

<sup>339</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p. 143

another dog has more food or a bigger house on the other side of the street. Throughout the summer and fall, a squirrel labours, non-stop foraging, to save for the winter. Simple tasks of gathering fill the days so that the winter can be spent in warmth and plenty. The spring brings about warmth and a time for mating and running around. Frenzied work and frenzied play keep the last men busy so that they are not left with the time to contemplate the world or question life. Occupied with simple tasks and simple pleasures like for instance, reality television, people do not contemplate what the good life is, what is happiness or what is truth.<sup>340</sup>

Is this really the case? Multiple sources can be cited describing the modern age as the best time to exist. We have received so much from studying natural sciences. Inventions and discoveries like the telephone that allow large scale communication,<sup>341</sup> computers that help direct our lives and most of all the discovery of penicillin<sup>342</sup> that has saved countless lives by curing infections. Modern writers such as Bandow cannot help but praise the advances in technology, declaring proudly that it is the best time to be alive. First of all, science has given freedom to “some inventors [who] just love to create,”<sup>343</sup> but after the end of history there is nothing left to create. All knowledge is achieved and technology may advance but it will not make humanity better as a species. Technology, aside from treating disease and saving lives, has made us more dependent upon it. First of all, children and teenagers are currently growing up in a world guided by smart phones and the dependence is bordering upon addiction, which makes our species weaker, not stronger. Secondly, although there has been decreases in famine and death from disease around their world,<sup>344</sup> the number of people killed in war has steadily increased.

---

<sup>340</sup> “The reversal concerned only thinking, which from then on was the handmaiden of doing... contemplation itself became altogether meaningless.” Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.292

<sup>341</sup> Nietzsche would disagree that this is necessary but only how the Last Man made the world small.

<sup>342</sup> Bandow, *Americans are Living Better*.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Kenny, 2015, *The Best Year In History for the Average Human Being.* *The Atlantic*. Dec 18th 2015.

Technology has created larger scale weapons and more effective forms of torture.<sup>345</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, describing the effects of the Enlightenment and mastery of nature on modern humanity. They observed that in spite of the great advances in technology and natural science, there was one of the greatest increases in unethical and immoral behaviors. Although modern democracy prided itself on freedom, still, culture and industry resulted in a large-scale loss of freedom for the citizens, either by corruption and use of economics, or by the mastery of humans over nature and over other humans. In this period some of the most cruel and unjustified acts were being conducted, an example being the Nazi war camps.<sup>346</sup> When questioned about their war crimes, many soldiers could only respond that they were following orders, like fetching a bone or attacking intruders when told. The prisoners and the soldiers both lost freedom and the soldiers did not stand against injustice. No matter the level of technology we have achieved, people may argue that we live in a better world, but morality and strength of character - as Rousseau noted in 1750 - does not necessarily increase in a co-dependent manner. Although articles as such Bartow's and Kenny's are numerous and frequent, their promotion of the modern age fails to address the ethical questions that have been ignored since the Enlightenment.

With the increase of technology, the goods produced increased as well. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that "the individual is entirely nullified in the face of economic powers."<sup>347</sup> They observed that like the soldiers, citizens also lost their individuality in an industrial world. In their writing they argued that natural science and the subsequent technology that followed removed moral reasoning and left people to be addressed with neutral behaviors.<sup>348</sup> Technology

---

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 174

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p.xvii

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p.67

and the economic industrialization that is built upon it treat human beings only as objects with money. It is the modern industry that “most effectively assists the subject in mastering nature. The system’s principles are those of self-preservation.”<sup>349</sup> For them it is not natural science itself that was wrong but a corrupted system that understood the use and abuse of nature for money and the application of economic material laws to the human consumer.

Before I continue I must be frank. Working in the medical field and being surrounded by technology unimagined a hundred years ago, this allows me to appreciate the benefits that natural science has provided to the modern world. Natural sciences could not have been possible without Descartes and Machiavelli who shifted the idea of nature as something sacred to material wealth. Do not confuse my attack on natural sciences as an aspiration to return us to a time before Descartes. I do not think the general public could be convinced to sacrifice their modern comforts and technology,<sup>350</sup> nor do I think it at all desirable. Natural science has given us medical advantages, provided the technology to communicate worldwide to share knowledge and ideas, and has helped us manage our resources and daily chores. My attack is on the misapplication of science; social and natural. Natural science should not be applied to the measure of a person’s good life or the purpose of being.<sup>351</sup> When applied to humanity, natural science sees us as rational animals and implying we should be treated as such.

“Everything – including the individual human being, not to mention the animal – becomes a repeatable, replaceable process, a mere example of the conceptual models of the system.”<sup>352</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 65

<sup>350</sup> “Can it be un-invented? Can the scientific method cease to dominate our lives... return to pre-modern, prescientific?” Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.81

<sup>351</sup> “Scientific invariability takes a cause-and-effect view of life, and that, in the view of the naturalist, purpose and meaning are invalid terms.” Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism*, p.78

<sup>352</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, p.65

Natural science is a true endeavor, but using objective natural laws in modern business for forecasting economic laws on human predictive consumption or applying them to human behavioral practices, we remove freedom of human soul and replaces it with assumptions of materially caused instinctive behavior which excuses the treatment of people as rational animals.

#### IV. Natural Science for Rational Animals

The search for truth in natural sciences itself is still an honourable and noble pursuit. Mapping a genome or the vastness of new galaxies may well hold further truth in the cellular structure of life or how the universe was created, but natural science will never answer what is the purpose of life or why the universe was formed. Those who make the opposite claims, for instance declaring our genes hold our future,<sup>353</sup> are mistaken that our actions can be dictated by the material components of our human bodies. However, we are invited to predict our future with genetic tests (determining cancer or heart disease risks) and we are told that who we are lies in our genes (ancestry.com). Instead, the freedom of humanity allows a person to choose to be and act as an individual, not materially determined. Education, morality, and values are all choices that animals don't have the capability of even considering.

“Freedom does not mean the freedom to live in nature or according to nature; rather, freedom begins only where nature ends. Human freedom emerges only when man is able to transcend his natural, animal existence, and to create a new self for *Himself*.”<sup>354</sup>

In nature, animals must defend their territory and gather food for themselves. Directed by physical instincts, they have no freedom. A bear does not share food with a hungry deer, nor

---

<sup>353</sup> The ethical fear of mapping the human genome was the inapplication and possible discrimination from insurers or employers to those who were more at risk for cancers or heart disease. It is not the case that if you are predisposed to have heart disease that you will live a life that will lead to said issues and if you are not predisposed to having cancer in our DNA, nothing is said that you will not choose a life of sunbathing and smoking.

<sup>354</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.152

would a fox share its home with another in need. A mother animal must protect her young, her natural instinct to preserve her own species, even from their own father.<sup>355</sup> A mother protecting her children is self-sacrificing, but it is arguable that it is a hormone driven instinct to protect her young. She is programmed to do so and being programmed to act a certain way is not freedom but slavery to the material causes. The natural world, dictated by natural laws of instincts and material needs is one of desperate survival and of kill or be killed: the rules of the jungle.

“Nature’s indifference to justice is a terrible bereavement for man. He must care for himself without the hope that good men have always had; that there is a price to be paid for crime that the wicked will suffer. But it is a great liberation - from God ... kings, nobles and priests, and from guilt or bad conscious. The greatest hopes are dashed, but some of the worst terrors and inner enslavements are dispelled.”<sup>356</sup>

Scientific method encouraged an ignorance of worth in all things immaterial like justice. Self-preservation<sup>357</sup> and comfort became the goals of the use of nature and the new measure of a good life. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that “the control of internal and external nature has been made the absolute purpose of life,”<sup>358</sup> instead of living the best life. We celebrate when people hit ‘milestone’ birthdays but fail to ask whether or not they led a good life. If humanity is only rational animals, then we are all equal like sheep in a herd. Humanity is not sheep and we are not the sum of those parts that natural science and psychology limit us to.

“Man is the only being which can be concerned with self-respect; man can respect himself because he can despise himself; he is ‘the beast with red cheeks,’ the only being possessing a sense of shame.”<sup>359</sup>

---

<sup>355</sup> Gerbils, polar bears and lions have all been known to attack and kill their own offspring in nature. Morell, Virginia. “Why Do Animals Sometimes Kill Their Babies?” *National Geographic*, March 28, 2014. Last accessed August 16 2017. URL =<  
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140328-sloth-bear-zoo-infanticide-chimps-bonobos-animals/>>

<sup>356</sup> Fukuyama, *The End Of History*, p. 163

<sup>357</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.306

<sup>358</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 24

<sup>359</sup> Strauss, *An introduction to Political Philosophy* p.131

Natural sciences cannot account for shame or self-loathing that animals do not feel. It takes self-reflection to see personal and political problems and create change. We have seen animals do not experience change but live within natural cycles. The capacity that humans have for even conceiving of justice demonstrates an existence that is more than the limits of our molecules.

“Modern science had appeared to have shown that nature is soulless, that the beautiful cosmos, imitated by the fine arts, is a product of groundless imagination. Correspondingly, the modern science of man denied that man is the being naturally directed to virtue and knowledge and asserted instead that, akin to all the other beings, his sole concern is his preservation.”<sup>360</sup>

Natural science assumed that humans are directed towards preservation above all else. It ignores sacrifices made for honour or glory, shame or guilt. Beauty or creativity of life is reduced to instincts and materialism. Jonathan Swift witnessed natural sciences distorting how people acted and related to one another. Some natural scientists believed they found the truth of human life by looking under a microscope. Swift argued that it was a distorted view of the world that removed beauty and *telos*. He argued that in the lens of natural science “no object ever disgusted me so much as the sight of her monstrous breast.”<sup>361</sup> We forget the soothing comfort a breast can bring to a baby or a lover or its erotic powers because it is distorted and enlarged by a microscope.

While most of the people considered scientific improvements to be working towards the betterment of society, Rousseau questioned if it was actually “progress.”<sup>362</sup> He asked, “Has the restoration of the sciences and arts tended to purify morals?”<sup>363</sup> He discovered the increase in physical science did not guarantee the answers to some of life’s most important questions.

“No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-based confidence. Suspicions, offenses, fears, coldness, reserve, hate, betrayal will

---

<sup>360</sup> Bloom, *Giants and Dwarfs*, p.278

<sup>361</sup> Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.60

<sup>362</sup> Fukuyama, *End of History*, p.83

<sup>363</sup> Rousseau, *First Discourse*.



hide, constantly under the uniform and false veil of politeness, under that much vaunted urbanity which we owe to the enlightenment of our century.”<sup>364</sup>

Although written well over two hundred years ago, the accusations sound familiar. With the rise of technology, we look less to philosophy. It can be argued that there has been an increase in interest in ethics, not just medical but technological with the increase of physical sciences. This would appear to suggest that modern people are looking to be more moral, but as I have argued, this is not the case. Within universities, the humanities have encouraged growing participation in the studies of ethics, but that has been eclipsed by an overall lack of interest in the humanities themselves. Less students are interested in questions of the best life and more interested in future employment. Philosophy departments have increasing interest in ethics, however funding has been continuously decreased towards those departments in favor of programs promoting technology and computers.<sup>365</sup> With the increase in natural science, there is less sacrifice and more greed for technology producing more goods at lower costs. While humans once honoured sacrifice, our institutions now encourage the young to put themselves first above all others.

## V. Where Have All the Experts Gone

Socrates hated democracy because it potentially gave power to those who were uneducated and thus not equal. There will always be those who choose to place themselves in the situations of slaves. Plato argued that there are different kinds of people, some more apt to leading, others to adventuring and still others who naturally chose to follow.<sup>366</sup> Zarathustra in the

---

<sup>364</sup> Rousseau, *First Discourse*, p. 38

<sup>365</sup> “it is no wonder that computer science is the university’s most popular major, and that there are no longer any humanities programs among the top five...The concern that the humanities are being eclipsed by science goes far beyond Stanford....Harvard had a 20 percent decline in humanities majors over the last decade” Lewin. Tamar, (Oct 30, 2013) As Interest Fades in the Humanities, Colleges Worry, *New York Times*. Retrieved from, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/31/education/as-interest-fades-in-the-humanities-colleges-worry.html>

<sup>366</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, 414b

marketplace encountered such people, who cried, “Give us this last man,”<sup>367</sup> the easy life of materialism. Think of people who prefer to be told what to wear and where to go. Look to the fashion industry and the money that is made on people buying what designers say is ‘in.’ People choose to follow a band and are called groupies. They desire to be told where to go, what to believe and how to look. These are what Nietzsche would refer to as zeros, citizens in society that are the slaves, those who follow orders and are ignorant to the best life has to offer.

“Our entire sociology simply does not know any other instinct than that of the herd, i.e., that of the *sum of zeros* – where every zero has ‘equal rights,’ where it is virtuous to be zero.”<sup>368</sup>

This is the democracy that we currently see in North America. If we are all equal as natural science declares then there is no leader, only followers of the herd. This increasing admiration of equality by modern people, parallels the growth of democracy around the world.<sup>369</sup> If every person is equal, we can only be as great as the least great person. Adorno and Horkheimer believed modern democracy views that “all have become employees and in the civilization of employees,” any dignity and excellence a person may have possessed “ceases to be.”<sup>370</sup> A race of equality between a cheetah and a snail forces the cheetah to slow to a snail’s pace, since the snail cannot naturally increase. Extraordinary people do not belong in a community of equals. The herd of democracy maintains “the instinct of the mediocre against the exceptional.”<sup>371</sup> Western democracy tried to fulfill all material needs equally but it ignores the fact that each citizen may require more than just material satisfaction.

---

<sup>367</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. p. 130

<sup>368</sup> Nietzsche. *Will to Power*, p.33

<sup>369</sup> “Democracies have been relatively rare in human history, so rare that before 1776 there was not a single one in existence anywhere in the world.” Even the American democracy was more of a republic as the vote was not equal or available to all people, but only male landowners as they were the only ones considered to be educated. Fukuyama, *The End of History*. p.48

<sup>370</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.123

<sup>371</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p.156

“The life of the last man is one of physical security and material plenty, precisely what Western politicians are fond of promising their electorates. Is this really what the human story has been ‘all about’ these past few millennia?”<sup>372</sup>

It has become interest of the common people to degrade and delegitimize experts and professionals.<sup>373</sup> Popular culture and mass media have allowed not only a plethora of opinions but platforms to support each one. First of all, because of these platforms, every citizen feels they have an opinion equal to their neighbour’s, and they have freedom to express it. Secondly, the availability of all of these differing opinions, educated or otherwise, has confirmed *any* conceivable bias. This is easily observed by quick google searches on every topic from medical findings, to political platforms to whether or not the earth is round, and yes, frighteningly enough there are still people who believe it is flat. The internet has given people a soapbox to shout opinions from. As the internet expands, and as media such as Facebook and Twitter become more popular and more politically relevant, the uneducated opinions seem to scream louder than those with evidence based findings. The modern North American democracy had been based on Christian teachings. In religion, the priests were considered the experts, leaders guiding the populous in searching their souls for morality. Removing Christianity but keeping the Christian laws left a confused community who was aware of what equality was but unable to explain why they believed in it. Laurence Lampert noticed that the death of God introduced a herd of people that knew of morality but did not know why they should be moral.

“The speech on the last man is the first of many speeches on the fate of modern man as the heir to a kind of Christian morality while free of the Christian God.”<sup>374</sup>

---

<sup>372</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.312

<sup>373</sup> Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, <http://thefederalist.com/2014/01/17/the-death-of-expertise/>

<sup>374</sup> Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teachings*, p.24

Instead of investigating why we have certain beliefs, the modern person was lazy and preferred to declare themselves above all historic people, without justification, freeing themselves from previous morality.<sup>375</sup> Opinion is easy and simple, but education to become an expert is hard and time consuming, and the herd cheers for the Last Man.<sup>376</sup>

As each person is equal and has an opinion, trust in expert opinions begins to decrease. Facts, true or false or alternative, are available to everyone with a simple exploration on a search engine.<sup>377</sup> Tom Nichols, an American professor, noticed increasingly that people have become skeptical about experts and have begun to believe anything they can find on the internet. If information is that easy to find, why would anyone spend time and money on a doctor's diagnosis, a carpenter's measurements or a professor's political opinion. As a dental hygienist, I have seen a steady increase of patients who no longer describe symptoms but instead share their self-made diagnoses. Modern times have created domesticated rational animals who prefer simple quick answers because they are lazy and an education is so difficult and expensive that very few are receiving it and "when education itself is withering for economic reasons, unprecedented conditions are created for the paranoia of the masses."<sup>378</sup> A perfect example is the anti-vaccination movement which has become greatly divisive and has had large medical ramifications. Parents, instead of talking to medical doctors, have turned to conspiracy websites relating autism to vaccinations. There is no medical research to support this claim, but the problem continues. The American President himself tweets his opinions worldwide without looking to experts first. We have seen countless incorrect claims from the president, from "wire-

---

<sup>375</sup> "They used to be mad" Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, p.130

<sup>376</sup> "That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only." Education is difficult and time consuming and the Last Man will find it boring and tedious. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p.25

<sup>377</sup> Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, <http://thefederalist.com/2014/01/17/the-death-of-expertise/>

<sup>378</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.162

tapping” to winning the election by the most Electoral College votes since Reagan.<sup>379</sup> If the leader of the United States himself does not need experts, why would any citizen? Nietzsche did advocate for active nihilism that suggested questioning all sources of knowledge, including knowledge from authority and experts. It is in that active questioning that a person would be able to see the contradictions in the claims of the uneducated and be able to distinguish and trust the experts. Adorno and Horkheimer warned of the detrimental effect of listening not just to those who were uneducated but worst of all, those who were “half-educated.”<sup>380</sup> The uneducated will admit their ignorance but the half-educated will have too much pride in their own half-truths and find other half educated people and build conspiracies together. This unfortunately is a quality of democracy as well as our technology that can place information in the wrong hands. We must stop telling citizens that truth is subjective and everyone is equal in order that they stop believing the propaganda that tells them they are justified in their own – often incorrect - beliefs.

Socrates warned that democracy will dispense “a certain equality to equals and unequals alike.”<sup>381</sup> Was Socrates correct that democracy would fall into tyranny?<sup>382</sup> Democracy will bring about a “law of equality and of freedom in the relations of women with men and men with women.”<sup>383</sup> Our modern democracy is fighting for this kind of equality, showing the accuracy of Socrates’ predictions, since women in antiquity were never considered socially equal.

Socrates predicted that within democracy teachers will become intimidated by their students, fawning over them instead of helping. If everyone is equal, teacher and student alike, we lose respect for our elders - while children are flattered instead of corrected. This is visible in

---

<sup>379</sup> He in fact won with 306 votes and President Reagan who won with 304 but fact checkers expressed that Obama won with 365 votes and Bush Sr. won with 426 votes. URL =<<http://time.com/4674714/trevor-noah-trump-press-conference/>>

<sup>380</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.162

<sup>381</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 558c

<sup>382</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII

<sup>383</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 563b

today's education and sports systems. Increasingly, schools are refusing to use letter grades, or keeping children back to repeat grades they have not sufficiently completed. In North American several sports have removed score keeping<sup>384</sup> from organized sports for children under 12. This may improve the overall physiological wellbeing of the child but limits how the teacher or coach amends bad behavior or inadequate performance. Regardless of the reasoning, Socrates was able to predict these events when, during his era, teachers were respected by students. Because of this demand for equality among all people, there is no ability to say with certainty what is right and wrong, when all are entitled to respect for their opinions.

As opposed to an expert, a tyrant emerges out of the democratic crowd, already having some political or economic power, usually inherited from his or her father.<sup>385</sup> When this tyrant speaks, he does so with a rhetoric that is uncommon to the political platform of equality. This person will speak to others, insisting without need for evidence, that they are more skilled, more experienced and "the best." Simple rhetoric must be used to appeal to the lowest common denominator, the least educated, and why they do not like experts as they use a more complicated dialogue. It is easier to believe what you are told than doing the research to see if it is valid. The tyrant's opponents will say that the tyrant is entitled to his or her own equal opinion and is free to speak their minds. In modern democracy, no one can be called right or wrong, a tyrant declares that only he is right, and no one disrespects his freedom to make such a statement. The herd hears his claims, and choose him to be their leader. The tyrant is only an ignorant citizen, but once presented with power, his plans must now be to subdue the public. Trump overturned a motion made by the Obama administration that allowed transgendered people to use whatever

---

<sup>384</sup> Kathryn Carlson, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/no-winners-children-still-keeping-score-despite-move-to-end-sports-competition>

<sup>385</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 569a

bathroom they felt comfortable with. By removing that right, Trump limited the freedom of some American citizen's. Secondly, contrary to the constitution, Trump's travel ban limited Muslims from entering the U.S., whether or not people held green cards. In both of these cases, some citizens fought the actions of the government because they felt that no one can impose limits on another person.<sup>386</sup> When the citizen's begin to notice that the shift in power is moving away from themselves to the new political power, they fight back. Socrates continued that when the state,

“gets bad winebearers as its leaders and gets more drunk than it should on this unmixed draught, then, unless the rulers are very gentle and should provide a great deal of freedom, it punishes them, charging them with being polluted and oligarchs.”<sup>387</sup>

If we have a ruler who is not responsible with their power and becomes corrupt, the citizens will speak up. This is avoidable if the ruler is liberal with the freedom he allows, not limiting any actions of the citizens. When people feel they have lost their rights or freedom, they will protest in the streets, as witnessed with the travel ban, the women's march or the day without immigrants.<sup>388</sup> In all of these cases, the political powers have been accused of being corrupted, or inept and especially in the case of DeVos,<sup>389</sup> it has been claimed that politicians used money to buy their positions.

To maintain his power, a tyrant must set “a war in motion, so that the people will need a leader.”<sup>390</sup> Trump has done so with the media (twitter specifically) calling them “the enemy of the American People.”<sup>391</sup> Arendt explained that to maintain power, a tyrant must isolate himself

---

<sup>386</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 563d

<sup>387</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 562d

<sup>388</sup> Women's march: Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 2017, Day without Immigrants: Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>389</sup> Betsy DeVos has been accused over and over of using her political monetary contributions to attain a political appointment. She is in charge of the education department without once ever stepping into a public school.

<sup>390</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 566e

<sup>391</sup> @realdonaldtrump, Feb 17 2017

and isolate citizen from each other so that there are no rebellion.<sup>392</sup> Trump's attacks have separated him from the media and his actions have created a division through the United States. He has used Twitter as a direct address to the American people (to increase suspicion in government with wiretapping claims) and has created a war with the media, with those who judge his actions, holding him accountable. Making the American people suspicious of the condemnatory system that will hold Trump's administration in check, the herd is left to blindly follow their new shepherd. The tyrant remains in power by spending the money of the citizens,<sup>393</sup> increasing taxes and prices of goods, so that citizens are preoccupied with labours and home economics and have no time or strength to participate in the political arena. If a new healthcare bill is passed only offering tax credits and cutting healthcare for the elderly and the poor,<sup>394</sup> we will see the majority suffer. Democracy falls into tyranny as people are forced to work to make ends meet, lose their freedom of knowledge about the administration and are at the mercy of any decision the tyrant may impose. This type of rule does not consider each citizen as an individual but only as a means to fulfill the greed of the wealthy. It is not a government caring for the weak but knowingly subduing them to maintain power.

“The characteristics of the first wave of modernity were the reduction of the moral and political problem to a technical problem, and the concept of nature as in need of being overlaid by civilization as mere artifact”<sup>395</sup>

Without morality, political problems are reduced to economics and natural sciences, not ethics and values. As long as moral problems are still understood in material exhibits, we cannot

---

<sup>392</sup> “The outstanding characteristic of the tyranny was that it rested on isolation – on the isolation of the tyrant of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from each other through mutual fear and suspicion.” Arendt, *the Human Condition*, p.202

<sup>393</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 567a

<sup>394</sup> Republican health care bill. Lohby and Ridgway, (March 24<sup>th</sup> 2017) What's inside the Republican Health Care Bill, *cnn.com*, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/24/news/economy/obamacare-repeal-republican-health-care-bill/>

<sup>395</sup> Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.89



exclaim whether there is a violation of someone's rights as a person. Material natural science uses nature to increase resources and political power.

## VI. Only a God Can Save Us Now

An article was published five days after the death Martin Heidegger, a renowned German philosopher, at his own request. He did not want it to be made public while he was alive. Heidegger was well versed in Nietzsche's moral beliefs, the Overman and the Last Man. He had witnessed the increasing dogma of materialism, a world of science and technology and less philosophical beliefs.<sup>396</sup> The renowned journal *Der Spiegel* asked Heidegger what people could expect from philosophers and how they would be impacting the changing world. Heidegger's response was a skeptical answer that there is very little that the ideas and the mind of philosophers can accomplish.

Heidegger believed that contemporary literature was "largely destructive,"<sup>397</sup> but that did not mean nihilistic. He did not see modern literature as active nihilism and rebellion against the establishment of creating new values. As the modern world around him was becoming more and more engrossed in technology and natural science, Heidegger was aware of what was being lost. As technology increasingly treated humans as a common grouping of cells, we lost a part to our own humanity, of Being.<sup>398</sup> Literature concentrated more on technology, natural sciences built upon natural sciences. The means of a happy life, material need satisfaction, and the technology to fulfill desires became confused for the end purpose.

"The satisfaction of natural desires is contentment and that may be the ultimate end of natural existence. But to take it as the ultimate end of human existence is to degrade our divine aspirations for limitless perfection. Hence [Nietzsche's] spiritual campaign is to

---

<sup>396</sup> Heidegger, *Only a God can Save Us, A Spiegel Interview*, p. 57

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57

<sup>398</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*

wake up humankind from the sleep of secular culture and rekindle their divine aspiration.”<sup>399</sup>

As technology expands, new technology is built based on its foundations, and at the time of Heidegger, the world was becoming smaller while space was becoming a much more attainable goal. Instead of thinking about morality and human values, the world of the Fifties and Sixties was busy with what new technological fields would be unlocked next. When questioned, “And now what takes the place of philosophy?” Heidegger’s answer was, “Cybernetics,”<sup>400</sup> the science of communication within machines, technology and animals. Heidegger was asked the place of philosophy in the modern world.

“If I may answer briefly, and perhaps clumsily, but after long reflection: philosophy will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavor. Only a god can save us now. The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and poetizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god, or for the absence of a god in [our] decline, insofar as in view of the absent god we are in a state of decline... we cannot bring him forth by our thinking. At best we can awaken a readiness to wait [for him]... the first help might be the readying of this readiness. It is not through man that the world can be what it is and how it is – but also not without man.”<sup>401</sup>

Heidegger did not mean the Jewish, Christian or Muslim god specifically who must save us. He meant any god form, not divine intervention, nor an almighty to come down and smite his enemies. Nietzsche and Heidegger both observed qualities in humanity that natural science could not calculate. Material science classified humans as an animal species on earth, but we are vastly different. It is religion that has inspired and attempted to explain the part of the soul that separates human from beast. In the name of faith people have been able to erect amazing temples that have lasted centuries. We have written poetry and literature that has withstood the test of

---

<sup>399</sup> Seung, *Nietzsche’s Epic of the Soul*, p.49

<sup>400</sup> Heidegger, *Only a God Can Save Us: The Spiegel Interview*, p.59

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57-58

time including Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which through a long journey, teaches the reader about the human soul, happiness and passions. It discusses which moral choices in life are good and which will end in tragedy, encouraging reader to live the best life.<sup>402</sup> Above all it addresses the many desires of the soul, which to follow and which to moderate. The god of any religion will inspire people to act greater than any animal, controlling instincts and desires to achieve greatness. Faith teaches morals, virtues and passions for life that no science could ever explain.

“the faith in God and the belief in miracles are closer to the truth than any scientific explanation, which has to overlook or explain away the creative in man... these values had a necessity, a sustainability more compelling than health or wealth.”<sup>403</sup>

Humanity cannot be limited to the materialism that cannot explain why people have faith, have values or passions. A new god will bring a figure head into the lives of people, hopefully inspiring them again to act, create and even revolt. Philosopher T. K. Seung argued that Nietzsche “stresses the importance of religion for all social strata.”<sup>404</sup> Religion does not say that everyone is equal. There are educated teachers, leaders and shepherds that can guide the general populous. Faith encourages education, if not for most people than at least for those considered experts. Democracy falls victim to a loss in experts and an overabundance of equality.

Christianity at its conception was not the dominant religion but provoked its followers to act out against oppressors. Jesus was a rebellious outlaw and Nietzsche admired him for it. Nietzsche and Heidegger both wanted to empower people to act and live each day to the fullest, not resorting to an animal life of comfort from technology. Nietzsche wanted to “restore

---

<sup>402</sup> Dante, *The Divine Comedy*

<sup>403</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.199

<sup>404</sup> Seung, *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul*, p.300

Christianity to its original spirit.”<sup>405</sup> His declaration that “God is dead” wasn’t an event to celebrate but one that humanity should have been ashamed of.

“‘God is dead,’ Nietzsche proclaimed. But he did not say this on a note of triumph, in the style of earlier atheism – the tyrant has been overthrown and man is not free. Rather he said it in the anguished tones of the most powerful and delicate piety deprived of its proper object. Man, who loved and needed God, has lost his Father and Savior without possibility of resurrection.”<sup>406</sup>

Humanity needs a father figure that they had lost in the death of god. Heidegger said that there was no human endeavor that could save us but we must only be prepared. Humanity had become so engrossed with materialism that they could no longer understand the passions of the human soul. There is more in this world, and in the human soul, than can be explained by our natural sciences.

“The serious problem is that our studies do not even raise [the ends of life] questions any longer. To be sure, many professors speak out on the great issues, but very few as a result of their learning. They speak as private persons; their sciences teach them little about those issues, which are admittedly so important. The trivial is well-known; the great is left to passion and personal taste. The university is in better possession of the means to ends than ever before; but never has it been able to shed so little light on these ends. At the root of the problem is modern natural science.”<sup>407</sup>

I will repeat myself again, natural science has done amazing things from creating medicine that battles disease, to invent an internet of vast information at our fingertips. It is almost impossible to consider life without the amenities that natural science has provided for us. It was the mistake of the Enlightenment to forget that there is more to life than natural science. Once materialism took hold, we began to define all aspects of human life and morality by the laws of natural science, which was an error.

---

<sup>405</sup> Seung, *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul*, p.300

<sup>406</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p. 195

<sup>407</sup> Bloom, *Giants and Dwarfs*, p.153

“The petty will of the present, the will of the last man, of democratic society that sees the principle goal of human life as preservation and prosperity. The denial of suffering, however, is a denial of life in its greatest and highest moments.”<sup>408</sup>

We cannot remove *telos* from the examination of a good life nor try to explain it with natural sciences.

## VII. Classical Political Philosophy

If humanity has no *telos*, there would be no point in finding universal moral truth.

“The father of the modern theory of social progress was Machiavelli, for it was he who proposed that politics be liberated from the moral constraints of classical philosophy, and that man conquer *Fortuna*.”<sup>409</sup>

Machiavelli encouraged social progress because to prosper a government must be wealthy enough to sustain its inhabitants. It was classical philosophy, prior to Descartes that said we are to respect nature for the good in itself. Machiavelli explained that politics must be divided from philosophy because without classical thought, politics could take any natural resource it needed from nature regardless of the consequences. With the Enlightenment, humanity rejected the philosophical studies and *telos* of the past in favour of natural science. The tradition of trying to find the best life can be traced back as early as Plato. Politics, without a conception of universal truth, turned its attention towards material laws concerned with economics and technology.

“The tradition that originated in classical Greece was rejected in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in favor of a new political philosophy.... The new political philosophy was related to political philosophy or political science, and through the medium of a new concept of science.”<sup>410</sup>

The world became our playground and mathematics became the shoes that we used to walk all over it. To understand a deity, we cannot use material means to explain an immaterial being.

---

<sup>408</sup> Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, p.212

<sup>409</sup> Fukuyama, *the End of History*, p.57

<sup>410</sup> Strauss, *On Classical Political Philosophy*, p.49

Natural science does not hold the tools to discover and uphold justice. Nietzsche warned against the consequences of the Enlightenment and praised the Greeks for their myths and values.<sup>411</sup> The Greeks believed in Gods, created for Gods, sacrificed for Gods and went to battle for Gods, not for material comforts.

“My own argument obliges me to agree with Nietzsche that the philosophers of the Enlightenment never succeeded in providing grounds for doubting his central thesis.”<sup>412</sup>

Modern society, myself included, would not want to lose the progress made in technology since the Enlightenment, but we must acknowledge that our moral education fell by the wayside. We have had tunnel vision, concentrating on only one world when in fact a human life has many aspects.

Strauss was one of the pioneering philosophers to suggest that maybe we did not succeed in improving humanity as a whole. Maybe the original Greek philosophy and politics were closer to the truth of humanity than science could ever be.

“In order to perform his function he has to raise ulterior questions, questions that are never raised in the political arena; but in doing so he does not abandon his fundamental orientation, which is the orientation inherent in political life. Only if that orientation were abandoned, if the basic distinctions made by political life were considered merely ‘subjective’ or ‘unscientific’ and therefore disregarded, would the question of how to approach political things in order to understand them, that is to say, the question of method, become a fundamental question, and, indeed, *the* fundamental question.”<sup>413</sup>

What is the offered solution? Leave science where it is but return to a time of moral study and classical political philosophy. It differs from today’s study by not using the catchphrases like subjective or relative truth. Morality has a universal truth to it, and it can be discovered.

---

<sup>411</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

<sup>412</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.177

<sup>413</sup> Strauss, *Classical Political Rationalism*, p.52

Political life in Greece was separate from the home life. The Greeks believed that you could not have a virtuous city without having virtuous citizens.<sup>414</sup> We cannot leave it to the political establishment to provide us with the good life, but instead an education of each individual citizen is the most important foundation for a just society.

“The Cartesian solution of the [human discovery] perplexity was to move the Archimedean point into man himself, to choose as ultimate point of reference the pattern of the human mind itself, which assures itself of reality and certainly within a framework of mathematical formulas... [Which] permits replacement of what is sensuously given by a system of mathematical equations where all real relationships are dissolved into logical relationships between man-made symbols.”<sup>415</sup>

Natural science has reduced our understanding of the human soul to materialistic terms. A recently published article in *Maclean's* noted that in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, child tantrums and “cranky behavior” is diagnosed as “disruptive mood deregulation disorder,”<sup>416</sup> and those who overeat once or twice a week could be labeled with “binge-eating disorder.” Contrary to religious morality saying humanity should control sexual desires, the “female sexual interest/arousal disorder” claims that women not aroused by their partners or who are constantly seeking sexual pleasure are not of fit mind. Psychologists do not teach that we are in control but in fact that we are controlled by our mental imbalances, a material cause. Psychology cannot find the cause of creativity, of desires or of moderation. Material causality cannot define why we have passions nor determine human actions and relationships.

“Once having been invented, the scientific method became a universal possession of rational man, potentially accessible to everyone regardless of differences in culture or nationality. Discovery of the scientific method created a fundamental, non-cyclical division of historical time into periods before and after. And once discovered, the progressive and continuous unfolding of modern

---

<sup>414</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Book II

<sup>415</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.285

<sup>416</sup> Kingston, Anne. *MacLean's, Is She a Brat, or is She Sick?* p.52

natural science has provided a directional Mechanism for explaining many aspects of subsequent historical development.”<sup>417</sup>

Science attempted to predict human attitude and outcomes by the laws that explained why some plants and animals flourish while others fail. Psychology claimed people are cultivated only by environment and biological composition. People are not fully determined by the environment they grew up in. Simply look at siblings who grow up in the same household with similar upbringings, they can be as different as complete strangers. The human soul is not determined by its material surroundings and therefore something true for the Greeks might in fact be true for us in the twenty first century.

As seen, Rousseau did not believe that moral progress came with scientific progress. However as natural science progresses throughout chronological time, people began to believe that so did humanity in general.<sup>418</sup> The misconception came to be that because we had progressed further along in years that we were instantly better than our predecessors. Their moral and philosophical achievements were ignored because clearly the invention of television and internet made us better people. Historians began ignoring that there could be universal truth to historic events. If our learning is linear and chronological, it could be concluded that we were better off in today’s world,<sup>419</sup> reaching a level of education that could not be rivaled by the past.

“The only standards that remained were of a purely subjective character, standards that had no other support than the free choice of the individual. No objective criterion henceforth allowed the distinction between good and bad choices. Historicism culminated in nihilism.”<sup>420</sup>

---

<sup>417</sup> Fukuyama, *the End of History*, p.73

<sup>418</sup>“Modern natural science may be regarded as a possible ‘regulator’ of directional historical change.” Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.80

<sup>419</sup> Veenhover, Ruut. “Life is Getting Better: Societal Evolution and Fit with Human Nature.” *Social Indicators Research*. 2010 May

<sup>420</sup> Strauss, *an introduction of Political Philosophy*, p. 108



Subjectivity has led to the increase in passive nihilism; the nihilism that Nietzsche warned against. Our past may have the moral answers we need but if we refuse to consider them, we are not making any progress.

“*either* one must follow through the aspirations and the collapse of the different versions of the Enlightenment project until there remains only the Nietzschean diagnosis and the Nietzschean problematic *or* one must hold that the Enlightenment project was not only mistaken, but should never have been commenced in the first place.”<sup>421</sup>

Do we continue down the same path we have been travelling or return to Aristotle and Socrates? Nietzsche’s nihilism called for a revolution and destruction of the Enlightenment thinking. Nietzsche felt the will to power was the truth of the human soul but that would result in further relativism.<sup>422</sup> Natural science progresses in a linear fashion, but philosophical knowledge does not. A time before the Enlightenment might hold the answers to some ethical and philosophical questions.

“If the historicist contention is to have any solidarity, it must be based not on history but on philosophy.”<sup>423</sup>

We must return to a time when morality had certain truth and justice was more than relative. I believe it is universally true that at each point in a person’s life they will encounter specific questions: about their purpose, about what is justice and what is the best life. We can only receive answers to these kind of questions from people who themselves believe in the possibility of permanent objective truth.

“So let us consider the question: is it possible for mankind as a whole to reverse the directionality of history through the rejection or loss of scientific method?”<sup>424</sup>

---

<sup>421</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.118

<sup>422</sup> “Nietzsche’s problems remain unsolved and his solutions defy reason.” *Ibid.*, p.114

<sup>423</sup> Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.109

<sup>424</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.82

Fukuyama asked a question whose positive answer, as he knew would require too large a sacrifice for people. We must start with an education that does not narrow its view to only teach modern science but can promote the understanding of the soul with all of its passions and virtues. This education would not only be in institutions but also we must inspire modern society with literature, arts and entertainment.

### VIII. An Education of Heroes

Let us not forget the story of Frankenstein. The young and ambitious will look towards sciences and technology for the immediate gratification of observable results. If we only concentrate on physical sciences and do not include respect and admiration for the lessons we can learn from history, as Shelley warned, we will lose knowledge of morality and human passions.

Morality is not chronological like natural science, but progress throughout the years is possible. History is not a perfect circle. There are repeating patterns. We can learn from the past, but our situations have changed. There is social progress and patterns and even retrogression. In learning from the past we can advance even further than before.

“Given the grip of modern natural science, it is difficult to sustain the idea that history is cyclical... but recurrence of certain long-standing historical patterns is compatible with a directional, dialectical history, as long as we understand that there is memory and movement between repetitions.”<sup>425</sup>

Instead of a straight line, morality and philosophy progress in a type of spiral, usually moving forward chronologically but at times moving retroactively, reviving past theories. We do not return exactly to where we were because, as explained, there is memory and forward movement.

---

<sup>425</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.127

Rousseau believed that our progression in science did not guarantee a progression in ethics.

What then are we to teach the next generation?

A recent article was published in Maclean's magazine. It discussed how some schools are changing mandatory curriculum in order to include teaching classes in moral education. When education should be celebrated, this topic incites more questions than answers. It has already been established that this modern society in general believes that truth is relative or subjective. If so, which or whose morals are being taught?

“[Parents] ask whose values are being taught and how much time teachers are spending on morals instead of math, and on gratitude instead of grammar. Critics wonder if character is even teachable.”<sup>426</sup>

That question aside, I also find it interesting that parents are concerned in the amount of time this may remove from math and science. In a world of unsure values, parents want evidence that their children have a solid foundation in the subjects that will later lead to lucrative careers. “One father told Glaze he didn't want his son being taught to be honest because it would compromise his future as a businessman.”<sup>427</sup> That seems shocking to hear, but when the previous generation does not learn a universal morality, it will not be taught to the offspring either. A modern good life seems to be measured in wealth and objects, or followers on Instagram. The father can justify poor treatment of other people, treating them as means, if the outcome is successful business and economic growth.

“Modern education, in other words, stimulates a certain tendency towards relativism, that is, the doctrine that all horizons and values systems are relative to their time and place and that none are true but reflect the prejudices or interests of those who advance them.”<sup>428</sup>

---

<sup>426</sup> Campbell, Meagen, “Schools are teaching values. But whose values?” URL = <<http://www.macleans.ca/society/schools-are-teaching-values-but-whose-values/>>

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.306

If there is no objective morality, how can these teachers be deciding what to teach? In a general curriculum, the math, grammar and sciences are agreed upon culturally. These curriculums are also problematic because they are relative to time. Some schools hesitate to teach the theory of evolution in favor of creationism.<sup>429</sup> Creationism itself was not by the supported by the church, the authority on the catholic canon.<sup>430</sup> The Catholic Church believed that evolution could agree with the ideas of an omnipotent God and first mover.<sup>431</sup> In modern liberal democracy, the educated expert is gone and the opinion of the herd is keeping evolution out of science classes. Objectivity was lost for subjective, unscholarly google-able perspective.

Some people believe in honesty while others believe in acquisition of monetary goods at whatever cost. Which set of morals are right? The sheer idea that we can be moral people shows that to be a common value. With this cornerstone, it can be understood that there is something universally agreed upon.

“The game of chess presupposes, indeed is partially constituted by, agreement on how to play chess.”<sup>432</sup>

We cannot even aspire to teach the game of chess without knowing that there are rules by which to play. We cannot aspire to raise a just society without knowing there is such a thing as universal justice. Values about technology will be needed, just as the population increases and more of nature is needed to fulfill the desire of a larger populous.<sup>433</sup> However, as the critics made

---

<sup>429</sup> Ruse, Michael, "Creationism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/creationism/>>.

<sup>430</sup> Wofford, Taylor, "Pope Francis's Remarks on Evolution are not that Controversial among Roman Catholics" URL= <http://www.newsweek.com/pope-franciss-remarks-evolution-are-not-controversial-among-roman-catholics-281115>

<sup>431</sup> Al Farabi's approach to emanation and the creation of the universe and world allowed for the ability for animals to evolve, adapt and change throughout time but, along with the Catholic Church, believed the rational thought could not come from evolution. The higher faculty of intellect could not develop out of non-intellect. López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier, "Al-Farabi's Psychology and Epistemology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/al-farabi-psych/>>.

<sup>432</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.125

<sup>433</sup> "Modern man is a giant in comparison with earlier man. But we have also to note that there is no corresponding increase in wisdom and goodness. Modern man is a giant of whom we do not know whether he is better or worse than earlier man. More

light of, could character actually be taught to this or the next generation, or is it something that must develop as we live our lives and grow?

We are not taught human passions from textbooks. Plato wrote his works as a dialogue, a form of play and discussion between characters. There are stories about the human condition that speak more truth than scientific method ever could. We have stories or plays about politics, where corruption is shown for the evil it can cause or stories about honor and courage that make the average person a hero. Stories about war can inspire people to rebel and change their lot in life.

“[Socrates] demands particularly that the gods be presented as models of human excellence, i.e., of the kind of human excellence to which the guardians can and must aspire to.”<sup>434</sup>

As MacIntyre suggested, we can return to the ethics of Aristotle using role models as guidance, a path to follow for how we can achieve our dreams. People have faced the problems of the past, problems that each person will face, and can give us examples of how to live.

“The faith in God and the belief in miracles are closer to the truth than any scientific explanation, which has to overlook or explain away the creative in man.”<sup>435</sup>

Humanity is different from the animals in more than just the fact that we are rational and intelligible. We are also creative. The stories and myths of humanity have been reflective of the beliefs of the culture at the time. Stories of heroes, wars, people overcoming injustices, these spoke to mankind more than natural science ever did.

“The understanding of heroic society – whether it ever existed or not – is thus a necessary part of the understanding of classical society and of its successors.”<sup>436</sup>

---

than that, this development of modern science culminated in the view that man is not able to distinguish in a responsible manner between good and evil – the famous value judgement. Nothing can be said responsibly about the right use of that immense power. Modern man is a blind giant.” Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.264

<sup>434</sup> Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.183

<sup>435</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.199

<sup>436</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.121

Homer tells stories of gods and heroes, Shakespeare wrote about love, justice and tragedy. These stories inspired people how to live, dream and attain. Without hope, without these forms of guidance, “men and societies need myths, not science, by which to live.”<sup>437</sup> With the announcement of the death of God, we lost all these myths. A faith in natural science stopped humanity from looking to the teaching ability of poetry and stories. Bloom noted that there “is no prescription for creating the myths”<sup>438</sup> and no standardized testing that will tell which myths will be influential. Mathematics and natural science cannot define morals nor find “the cause of values.”<sup>439</sup> People adapt and welcome stories, they crave them. It is this poetry and literature that teaches humanity how to act, to live, and the ‘why’ of human life.

Mythology and literature has a greatly influential effect on the populous. People are more inspired by stories that revive emotions within themselves, inspiring them to act a certain way or empathize with the characters. I cannot teach my two-year old child what sharing is by telling her that people share. I educated my daughter how to put things in the garbage by demonstration. An education of morality and values must first be shown by example before it can be understood. I guarantee my daughter does not know why to put trash in the garbage, nor does she know where it ends up, but she did see me do it and repeated my actions. Children especially learn by examples and by imitating them. They play pretend, dressing up like firefighters, doctors or playing mommy to a little doll. Children are taught by examples, by characters who are noble or wise, who act as we would hope to act.

We must be careful however as the success of mythology has been known by Greeks and modern writers and leaders alike. Lincoln expressed in *Theorizing Myth* that stories have been

---

<sup>437</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.219

<sup>438</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.199

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

used not just for inspiration by individual writers but also as propaganda, in promoting of the ruling class. Lincoln even argued how the Nazi's (incorrectly) adapted the Overman to promote their own beliefs of superiority in race.<sup>440</sup> Although literature and Greek myths have their place in teaching humanity, we must be aware of intentions of how the myth is being used and interpreted. Plato spoke of stories for the education of the guardians but was also specific to note that there was need for censorship and that only specific stories and interpretations be used. Plato's attitude of simplicity of myth dismissed how the ruling class may use the stories for their own intentions.<sup>441</sup> Lincoln failed to recognize that Plato and Nietzsche, although their writings and myths have been misinterpreted at times, both the writers themselves were not from a political agenda. As myths age, they can and have been used to cause harm, but that is not the fault of the writers themselves but those who ignore the source and apply the stories for their own goals. This mimics the misapplication of the laws of natural science to human behavior. There is truth in the original subject, science holds truth of the material world, literature holds truth of the human soul but when science is directed at the human soul, detrimental results can occur. Myth and literature but not be considered through our own eyes, but from their original source and writer. Education of myth and literature requires what modern democracy lacks, respect and reverence for the expert who can understand the origins and has tested the stories with a hammer. Adorno and Horkheimer note that mythology had been adapted after the Enlightenment for differing goals and attack on reason.<sup>442</sup> They agreed that "myth was always obscure and luminous,"<sup>443</sup> which does allow for fluidity in interpretation, however also reflects how it can be a source of knowledge and education. As the

---

<sup>440</sup> Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, p.119

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p.208

<sup>442</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, p.xvi

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xvii

Enlightenment concerned itself more with objective scientific knowledge, the immaterial aspects of human life were ignored.

“Humans believed themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown. This has determined the path of demythologization of enlightenment, which equates the living with the non-living... nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the ‘outside’ is the real source of fear.”<sup>444</sup>

The way in which myth has been used can cause harm or good, but Adorno and Horkheimer recognized that myth, like reason and science is only one part of human knowledge.<sup>445</sup> The error and loss of ethical understanding occurred when humanity attempted to remove fear of the unknown and explain all of humanity by material or non-living scientific means. The human soul must have its own education of passions and for that I suggest stories, literature and when appropriate, myth. In education, myths and stories can be used coherently as “form and subject matter do not simply diverge; they conduct an argument,”<sup>446</sup> like Homer, the ring of Gyges or Plato’s cave. They explain by demonstration the consequences of one’s actions and the hope for the future. There is a good reason why greedy businessmen, consider Ebenezer Scrooge, are not praised for their love of money, but can be reformed by events and stories to love their fellow man.

“Read the hearts of men; it is by means of history that he will see them, a simple spectator, disinterested and without passion, as their judge and not as their accomplice or as their accuser. To know men, one must see them act.”<sup>447</sup>

Stories of hero actions, stories of justice and love will teach more than a lecture on ethics ever could.<sup>448</sup> In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante taught not only what put those in Hell but also what rose

---

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., p.11

<sup>445</sup> Denial of the truth of the human soul and nature in exchange to master nature and other people “is the germ cell of proliferating mythical irrationality: with the denial of nature in human beings, not only the *telos* of the external mastery of nature but also the *telos* of one’s own life becomes confused and opaque.” Not addressing people or nature as ends in themselves also leads to a misunderstanding of myth and increasing subjectivity. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.42

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., p.37

<sup>447</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p.237

<sup>448</sup> Shakespeare argued that the men studying philosophy and ethics alone were soon distracted by urges of passion and love. Lectures alone do not encourage people to act but appealing to their passions. Shakespeare, *Love’s Labours Lost*.



people to paradise. Jane Austin taught about noble love, without societies borders. The examples are endless but sufficient to show why these writers have become so important to us. There is no way that these stories can have any weight in the natural sciences either. To try and define stories in material terms would resemble

“Milton [being] considered to have written his *Paradise Lost* for the same reasons and out of similar urges that compel the silkworm to produce silk.”<sup>449</sup>

This example demonstrates that we cannot look to antiquity with the lenses of natural science, because it cannot explain the human traditions that are created. Science cannot measure the creativity and truth of great novels or poems. By teaching children and adolescent examples of greatness from the past, they can learn how to relate those lessons to future dilemmas. Plato did not write in lecture form but in a dialogue so that we could see examples of people working together to come to feasible solutions and find universal justice.

“We can hope to produce a nation full of students who have examined their beliefs Socratically and who have mastered some techniques by which they can push that inquiry further. We can and must produce students whose moral and political beliefs are not simply a function of talk radio or peer pressure and who have gained the confidence that their own minds can confront the toughest questions.”<sup>450</sup>

Education needs a distinctive change, not only as natural science but as universal truth and history that can be to our modern democracy regardless of when it happened.<sup>451</sup> The revelations of history cannot continue to be understood as being purely relative to their time.<sup>452</sup> If there can be truth

---

<sup>449</sup> Arendt, *the Human Condition*, p.321

<sup>450</sup> Nussbaum, p.39 <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ff0709s.pdf>

<sup>451</sup> MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, p.54

<sup>452</sup> Zarathustra does not want to lose anything of mankind's past; he wants to pour everything into the mold.” Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p.88

throughout different human societies in the world today, it follows that there can be truth throughout differing times.

“What ‘scientific’ psychology and sociology had to say about man proved to be trivial and poor if compared with what could be learned from the great historians.”<sup>453</sup>

We learn the immaterial values from poetry, history and philosophy of the past. We can see examples of greatness to be honoured, kindness shown to fellow man and the consequences for evil. A commonality among mimetic or fictitious characters is that they share a desire, some for glory, and some for love. This desire is one that is not celebrated in modern democracy but subdued. In a herd, it is more beneficial to teach the members to be muted than to stand out.

“Modern society would henceforth be composed of what C.S. Lewis called ‘men without chests’: that is, people who were composed entirely of [material] desire and [scientific] reason, but lacking that proud self-assertiveness that was somehow at the core of man’s humanity in earlier ages.”<sup>454</sup>

In older literature and history, we witness examples of men and women doing extraordinary acts that proclaim their existence. Humanity is the only animal that feels embarrassment or shame and also wishes to declare its personal self and be remembered throughout history.

## IX. The desire for recognition

The ability to feel pride, regret, and honour cannot be taught through materialism. Each person desires to make an impact on this world, a desire that is not visible in animals. This was understood throughout generations of philosophers who used it for both good and detrimental reasons. When you can understand the human soul, you can appeal to its desires to curry favor with your readers and followers.

---

<sup>453</sup> Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, p.107

<sup>454</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.188

“Plato spoke of *thymos*, or ‘spiritedness,’ Machiavelli of man’s desire for glory, Hobbes of his pride or vainglory, Rousseau of his *amour-propre*, Alexander Hamilton of the love of fame and James Madison of ambition, Hegel of recognition.”<sup>455</sup>

Each human has a desire to be recognized as a rational soul with needs and wants. The magnitude at which people fulfill this desire differs, but each has it nonetheless. Some people only want to find love and prefer a quiet life. It is in this love and partnership that each person recognizes the humanity in the other. Some people desire recognition even more than the desire for comfortable self-preservation. Politics is a battle of recognition, a person admired enough to get the support needed, sometimes spending exorbitant amount of money to campaign. Expertise in any field, science, humanities, arts, experts require an unconscionable amount of time and work to get the proper education and the respect that should come with it. Remember however that in our democracy, there has been a decrease in expertise and with that, we have seen a decrease in those who are willing to sacrifice material comforts in order to be recognized.

“Whoever consciously aims at being ‘essential,’ at leaving behind a story and an identity which will win ‘immortal fame,’ must not only risk his life but expressly choose, as Achilles did, a short life and premature death.”<sup>456</sup>

The Greeks, with a symbol such as Achilles, understood this example of the human desire for recognition that material science cannot understand. An animal will exist for self-preservation above all, it is the greatest of instincts. First of all, there is a desire in humanity to sacrifice life and limb to win a fame that extends long beyond their own physical existence. Secondly, the Greeks expressed this desire, not by lecture and dry words but by poetry and passion. Passions and values are not visible themselves but we can observe their influence on actions as the driving force.

---

<sup>455</sup> Fukuyama, *The end of History*, p.162

<sup>456</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.193

“The question of the end of history then amounts to a question of the future of *thymos*: whether liberal democracy adequately satisfies the desire for recognition.”<sup>457</sup>

The internet, Facebook, twitter and Instagram have created environments where the desire for recognition can be addressed. This fame is so fleeting that it does not even last fifteen minutes. It is only temporary and the problem is when a person attains recognition for an act, the next person must do something bigger and more extravagant. This is not recognition as a human but only as a source of entertainment and therefore does not entirely fulfill the desire, leaving the person to keep looking for further means by which to accomplish their goals. Working like an addiction would, recognition on social media only satisfies enough of the desire for a small amount of time, actually leaving a greater hunger for more attainment in the near future. Actualizing the desire for recognition in modern democracy is so short-lived that the satisfaction is never brought to fruition.

“A man would not only be incapable of receiving recognition and response from others; not only would others not know, but he would not himself know who he was.”<sup>458</sup>

Worrying about how many “likes” a post receives lasts until the next picture is on social media, and “going viral” is valid only until the next video becomes popular. These types of recognition are understandably different from finding someone who will love you for who you are, from holding a world record or being the historic person who discovered penicillin. By analogy, if you are thirsty, the recognition one receives from the Internet is like having a small sip of water, it moistens the mouth, but the desire is not quenched. To make the long walk to the fountain worthwhile, recognition must be memorable and lasting. This modern democratic recognition is only a shadow of the pride and honour that people in earlier times would work towards.

---

<sup>457</sup> Fukuyama, *End of History*, p.289

<sup>458</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.124

“We can make use of [Nietzsche’s] insights concerning the uneasy relationship between democracy and the desire for recognition. That is, to the extent that liberal democracy is successful at purging [desire for great recognition] from life and substituting for it rational consumption, we will become last men. But human beings will rebel at this thought. That is, they will rebel at the idea of being undifferentiated members of a universal and homogeneous state, each the same as the other no matter where on the globe one goes.”<sup>459</sup>

Modern liberal democracy may try to diminish the desire for recognition in favor of comfort and material desires. Without an education that includes an understanding of humanity’s natural immaterial desires, we will continue to teach natural sciences proclaiming that we as rational animals only need food, shelter and reproduction to survive. The Last Man has left us with

“A society of *bourgeois* who aspired to nothing more than their own comfortable self-preservation. For Nietzsche, the very essence of man was neither his desire nor his reason, but his *thymos*: men above all was a *valuing* creature.”<sup>460</sup>

Humanity is distinguished from rational animals by the desire to be recognized as autonomous ineligible individuals. A loss of virtuous stories about honourable people and courageous acts coupled with an excess of materialistic science has left us with a society of Last Man.

Three hundred years ago, Rousseau was able to predict what would happen when society did not recognize the immaterial passions that humanity has.<sup>461</sup> Physical science and psychology alone cannot explain the desires that people have. Nietzsche, imitating literature like *Robinson Crusoe*,<sup>462</sup> or *Divine Comedy*, wanted to inspire people’s actions and wake them from the herd by literary characters. Zarathustra was an example of a heroic person, created for us to learn from and

---

<sup>459</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.314

<sup>460</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.188

<sup>461</sup> “When this child, slave and tyrant, full of science and bereft of sense, frail in body and soul alike, is cast out into the world, showing there his ineptitude, his pride, and all his vices, he becomes the basis for our deploring human misery and perversity. This is a mistake.” Rousseau *Emile*, Book One, p.48

<sup>462</sup> The one book that Rousseau said Emile would need because it taught scenarios when a person would have to survive on their own instincts, desires and nature. Rousseau, *Emile*, p.184-195

mimic.<sup>463</sup> Nietzsche's work was an attempt to influence his readers and revitalize the desire for recognition in his will to power. Unlike hunger or exhaustion, desires that can be satiated in solitary, *thymos* is a more complex, more human desire. In nature, events and desire fulfillment are cyclical, never changing, but when a person is recognized as historic it is because they have altered the course of humanity. We can only exert social power by being recognized as an individual. After the Enlightenment, an increase in rational thinking changed understanding human passions to understanding humans as rational animals. This attempt at over-rationalizing human existence "failed."<sup>464</sup> Nietzsche attacked and

"Disposes of both what I have called the Enlightenment project to discover rational foundations for an objective morality and of the confidence of the everyday moral agent in post-Enlightenment culture"<sup>465</sup>

Nietzsche, by poetry and prophesy of Zarathustra, guided people to the promise of the Overman. By "philosophizing with a hammer," he wanted to destroy all previous material and false idols. Ideological heroes and literature cannot be physically destroyed by his hammer like the physical world can be. An understanding of human passions and desires can help humanity to see the soul as more than just a construct, un-existing for natural science. Once we no longer treat people like rational animals alone, we can begin to make claims about values and virtues. Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power embraced the strengths and weaknesses between different people, different genders and different cultures.

---

<sup>463</sup> "Nietzsche's life work can be seen, in a sense, as an effort to shift the balance back radically in the direction of [the desire for recognition]. The anger of Plato's guardians no longer had to be constrained by any concept of the common good. There was no common good: all efforts to define such a god simply reflected the strength of those doing the defining. Certainly a common good that protected the self-satisfaction of the last man was impoverished." Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.334

<sup>464</sup> "The Enlightenment project of discovering new rational secular foundations for morality had to be undertaken. And it was because that project failed." McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.117

<sup>465</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.113

“Human beings are inherently *unequal*; to treat them as equal is not to affirm but to deny their humanity.”<sup>466</sup>

With this approach, the Enlightenment project to reduce humanity and human values to equality and rationality has not been entirely successful.<sup>467</sup> As I have argued, literature and the traditions and values it exudes speaks more to the human soul than rationality and natural science ever could. The Greeks understood the power of poetry to resonate with truth, good and justice.

Once we allow for a more encompassing education, language will no longer be value neutral.<sup>468</sup> A person can rationalize how much ammunition is needed to kill children in school. Rationally, he can use science to figure out the money needed, what to purchase and the most populated time for attack. Material psychology and popular culture will then diagnose him with a chemical imbalance, being deemed insane. However, I do not know one person who would not agree that this is an evil action. Without attaching a value to this act, we forget to look at the ‘why’ behind his action. Why did he attack, what was his motivation? Natural science will not measure an immaterial cause like a lack of morality or education to justify the actions, still we know this was wrong. Our society attempts to eliminate value judgments but this should not be the case. Some pop culture produces novels that fail to show human nature or lessons or morality. *Twilight*, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, or Dan Brown’s novels are feeding a lust for sex, material satisfaction or hidden messages and secret societies. These do not speak to the human soul but only the materialism that we believe in. It does not teach the truth of love or honour. Instead of treating inattentive children as having a measurable material imbalance, we can simply address them as rude or inattentive. We can begin again to use language that requires humanity to understand itself

---

<sup>466</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.289

<sup>467</sup> “It is yet another of Nietzsche’s merits that he joins to his critique of Enlightenment moralities a sense of their failure to address adequately, let alone to answer the question: what sort of person am I to become?” McIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.118

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58

as valuing, as Nietzsche had proclaimed. If we know the objective truth of the human soul and reduce subjectivity that came with the Enlightenment, humanity can begin again to say what is wrong, what is right and what is the good life. In this way characters like Zarathustra can state

“Philosophy once proudly proclaimed that it was the best way of life, and it dared to survey the whole, to seek the first causes of all things, and not only dictated its rules to the special sciences but constituted and ordered them.”<sup>469</sup>

With an understanding of the human soul and morality, life will be reflected accordingly. There are actions in this world that our modern liberal democracy has attempted to make value-neutral. If we are all equal, if we are only physical rational animals and there is no God, there is no morality to govern our actions, only a desire to fulfill material needs.

As said, one of the most popular philosophical myths is Plato’s cave. It survived over two millennia, being analyzed throughout philosophy and literature in an attempt to explain the truth of the human condition and of the world. Something could not have survived such a test of time if it did not hold a universal truth and able to speak to generations over decades and different cultures. With such a general agreement, there must be a form of universality that has drawn so many people to analyze its symbolism and truth. Plato believed in an objective idea of honour, love and justice and that humans could emerge from the cave to see the world as it actually is.

“Ordinary life on earth, is located in [Plato’s] ‘cave, ‘in an underworld; the soul is not the shadow of the body, but the body the shadow of the soul.”<sup>470</sup>

Material knowledge is the lowest form of knowledge on the “line” and people should aspire towards the highest form, knowledge of the Good. This is the language that we can understand; that there is a realm of absolute universal ideas of the Good and justice. Plato used a myth for this

---

<sup>469</sup> Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, p.377

<sup>470</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.292



message. Math, science and technology will supply the body, but literature and poetry will feed the soul. Once we understand our desires through a well-rounded education, we are able to judge whether something may be beneficial or detrimental to the wellbeing of our own body and soul.

## Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was not to find certain moral truth. This has been attempted by philosophers from Plato, to Aquinas, to Kant and into modernity. Questions like: what is the good life or what is the purpose of life are unable to be answered right now, especially by myself specifically. Can we have certain truths about morality? I believe we can, but I am convinced that we cannot find them in the natural sciences. My goal, like that of Nietzsche, was to demonstrate the errors that humanity has been making since the Enlightenment, to fight the fallacies of subjectivism and argue against the belief that modernity being necessarily more moral than other times in human history. This goal does not differ from the Existentialists, who were unable to give us certain moral truths, but tried nonetheless. More importantly, they knew that the roots for ethical truth were not to be found in modern society, nor in indoctrination.<sup>471</sup> It was *mauvais foi*<sup>472</sup> that trapped people in an economic consumerism that could not truly make them happy. Like Heidegger said, it is not technology that will save us, but a god, an inspiring instance that teaches us to be more than consumers and rational animals. Life is more than a dwelling in mediocrity. Universal truth may or may not exist, but if we continue to proclaim that truth is only subjective and relative, we risk that humanity will no longer search for a universal good. We are at a crossroad, where we must choose whether we want to accept this world as a democratic herd, devoid of morality and controlled by the will to power, or return to the ancient value-practices of Plato and Aristotle, according to which truth and morality are objective and universal. It is then the duty of virtuous citizens to not only search for the good but also to live as justly as possible.

---

<sup>471</sup> See further clarification in Section 3.2, pages 67-68

<sup>472</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

It is hard to say for certain at this point whether or not we are in a time of the Last Man. I do believe that there are many examples of those living lives of rational animals, wasting their time doing something that doesn't make them happy, living for the weekend. But I have not lost hope in modern democratic man. Else we would not have any of the writers that I referred to in this thesis. Strauss, Bloom, Fukuyama, and the Existentialists all recognized that the danger of the contemporary society lies in transforming its citizens into consumer herds of sheep. When citizens are so preoccupied with home economics and personal health for a longer life, they stop questioning if what they are doing is actually making them happy. Since Nietzsche, there have been numerous writers who have used their platforms to speak out against the indoctrination and infantilization of people by religious or government organizations, and against the reanimalization of humanity.

In this process of writing, I was able to recognize my own naïveté. I was idealistic in thinking I could find universal objective moral truth. I did come to find however, that I was not the only person with such a large endeavor. Many philosophers and writers have come before me, reaching towards that same goal. This emphasises my point that to understand the human soul, we must also be willing to look to historic authorship in literature and philosophy. There are questions in humanity that will arise no matter what century or society we are in. We may be more technologically advanced, but that does not mean we are more ethically or philosophically advanced. The articles that I critically discussed are just a small sample of those writers who believe that we are living in the best era possible, simply because of technology. To them I say that they are wrong. Technology and natural science have made life easier but not more just, and we must reverse ignorance where it casts away the passions and understanding of the human soul. The philosophy of antiquity could hold the truth, or the methods of discovering truth, that our

modern society has sacrificed. I do know one thing with certainty: we cannot allow material natural science alone to dictate a person's actions or beliefs. It reduces our actions to those of rational animals. Instead, we must understand human passions and temper our actions and education according to a search for guidance and truth, as we have witnessed in history. Thus we have a chance to prevent Nietzsche's proclamation about the likely coming of the Last Man.

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2002
- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1993
- Aquinas. *Summa of the Summa*. Edited by Kreeft, Peter. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 1990
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1998
- Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited by McKeon, R. New York: The Modern Library. 1941
- Augustine. *Against the Academicians and the Teacher*. Translation by King, Peter. Indianapolis: Hackett publishing Company, Inc. 1995
- Augustine. *Confessions*. Translation by Chadwick, Henry. Oxford. 1991
- Augustine. *On Free Choice of the Will*. Indianapolis: Hackett. 1993
- Bandow, Doug. (2013) “Americans are Living Better than They Have at Any Point in Human History” *Forbes*. July 20 2017. URL = <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2013/11/19/americans-are-living-better-then-they-have-at-any-point-in-human-history/#77c1f4697971>>
- Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1987
- Bloom, Allan. *Giants and Dwarfs*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1990
- Breazeale, Dan, "Johann Gottlieb Fichte", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Jan 12 2017. URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/johann-fichte/>>
- Campbell, Meagen, “Schools are teaching values. But whose values?” *Maclean's*. (February 2017) March 16 2017. URL = <<http://www.macleans.ca/society/schools-are-teaching-values-but-whose-values/>>
- Camus, Albert. *The Fall*. New York. Vintage Books. 1984
- Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*. New York. Vintage Books. 1984
- Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. New York. Vintage Books. 1988

- Carlson, Kathryn. "No Winners: Children Still Keeping Score Despite Move to End Sports Competition." *National Post*. (September 2012) Jan 12 2017. URL = <<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/no-winners-children-still-keeping-score-despite-move-to-end-sports-competition>>
- Connolly, William, E. *Political Theory and Modernity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc. 1988
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. New York: Open Road. 1948
- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translation by Cress, Donald. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. 1993
- Falcon, Andrea, "Aristotle on Causality", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), December 15 2016. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/aristotle-causality/>>.
- Frankfurt, Harry. G. *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen*. Princeton. Princeton University Press. 2008
- Frazer, Michael. 2006. "The compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on sympathy and strength." *Review of Politics* 68, no. 1: 49-78. March 10 2017. URL = [https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3350069/frazer\\_compassion.pdf?sequence=2](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/3350069/frazer_compassion.pdf?sequence=2)
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press. 1992
- Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago press. 1995
- Goethe, Johann von. *Faust*. Translated by Luke, David. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987
- Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Translation by Baillie, J.B. New York: Dover. 2003
- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche volume Two*. Translation by Capuzzi, Frank. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1982
- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche volume Four*. Translation by Capuzzi, Frank. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1982
- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 1977

- Kenny, Charles. "2015: The Best Year in History for the Average Human Being." *The Atlantic*. Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 2015. June 8 2017. URL=  
<<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/12/good-news-in-2015/421200/>>
- Kingston, Anne. 2013, "Is she a brat, or is she sick?" *Maclean's*. (March) p. 52-57
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Translation by Nichols, James Jr. Basic Books. 1969
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction a la lecture de Hegel*. Gallimard. 1947
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. Translation by Frost, B.P. and Howse, Robert. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. 2000
- Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche's Teaching*. New Haven: Yale University. 1986
- Lewin. Tamar, (Oct 30, 2013) "As Interest Fades in the Humanities, Colleges Worry," *New York Times*. Oct 19 2016. Retrieved from, URL= <  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/31/education/as-interest-fades-in-the-humanities-colleges-worry.html> >
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Theorizing Myth*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1999
- Lokhorst, Gert-Jan, "Descartes and the Pineal Gland," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Oct 19 2016. URL = <  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/pineal-gland/>>
- López-Farjeat, Luis Xavier, "Al-Farabi's Psychology and Epistemology." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Oct 20 2016. URL = <  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/al-farabi-psych/>>.
- Lowith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. Translation by Green, David. E. New York: Columbia University. 1964
- Luhby and Ridgway. "What's inside the Republican Health Care Bill?" *CNN.com*, (March 24th 2017) March 30 2017. URL = <  
<http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/24/news/economy/obamacare-repeal-republican-health-care-bill/>>
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 2007
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *God, Philosophy, Universities*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2009

- Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Translation by Mansfield, Harvey. C. Chicago: University of Chicago Pres. 1985
- Menn, Stephen. *Descartes and Augustine*. Cambridge University Press. 1998
- Nichols, Tom. *The Death of Expertise*. The Federalist. 2014, Jan 19 2017. URL = <<http://thefederalist.com/2014/01/17/the-death-of-expertise/>>
- Nietzsche, Frederick. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Translation by Kaufmann, Walter. New York: the Modern Library. 2000
- Nietzsche, Frederick. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Translation by Kaufmann, Walter. New York: Viking Penguin. 1954
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Translation by Kaufmann, Walter. Vintage Books. 1974
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Translation by Kaufmann, Walter New York: Vintage Books. 1957
- Nussbaum, Martha. "Cultivating Humanity and World Citizenship." *Forum Futures*. 2007 p.39 Dec 15 2016. URL= <<https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ff0709s.pdf>>
- Oppy, Graham, "Ontological Arguments," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Oct 20 2016. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/ontological-arguments/>>.
- Plato, *The Republic*. Translation by Bloom, Allan. Basic Books. 1986
- Roth, Michael. *Knowing and History*. Ithaca: Cornell University. 1988
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile*, Translation by Bloom, Allan. Basic Books. 1979
- Rosen, Stanley. *The Mask of Enlightenment*. New Haven: Yale University. 2004
- Ruse, Michael, "Creationism," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Jan 12 2017. URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/creationism/>>.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. New York: Washington Square Press. 1984
- Seung, T.K. *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul*. Lanham M.D.: Lexington Books. 2005



- Shakespeare, William. *Love's Labour's Lost*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 2001
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Penguin. 1985
- Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man*. Oxford University Press. 1998
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *You Must Change Your Life*. Translation by Hoban, Wieland. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2013
- Slowik, Edward, "Descartes' Physics," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Sept 15 2016. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/descartes-physics/>>.
- Strauss, Leo. (Spring 1999) *German Nihilism*. Interpretation Vol. 26, No. 3. 354-372
- Strauss, Leo. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1975
- Strauss, Leo. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1952
- Strauss, Leo. *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago. 1989
- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1996
- Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons*. Translation by Matlaw, Ralph E. New York: Norton and Co. 1966
- Veenhover, Ruut. "Life is Getting Better: Societal Evolution and Fit with Human Nature." *Social Indicators Research*. 2010 May; 97(1): 105-122. Doi: 10.1007/s11205-009-9556-0. July 6 2017. URL =<<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2848343/>>
- Zacharias, Ravi. *The Real Face of Atheism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990