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Nietzsche in Liberal Democracy

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Abstract

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Friedrich Nietzsche's primary project is the development of the Superman, for the Superman presents the only hope of salvation from Nietzsche's worst fear, the herd animal referred to as the "last man." The "last man" is Man's evolutionary end point and state of permanent degradation; once the "last man" is realized there can be no hope of further progress or the Superman. The Superman comes to power by way of Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority, and is made necessary by the death of God. The death of God renders Man morally aimless and causes him to create meaning, which results in the artificial construct of morality and the notions of both good and evil. The Superman overcomes morality by exercising the Will to Power, the fundamental driving force of all living beings, which manifests itself variably in each individual. While Nietzsche is popularly considered a firm critic of democracy, both he and Alexis de Tocqueville recognize the inevitability of the egalitarian revolution. If Nietzsche's primary project can be accomplished, it must do so within liberal democracy. Paradoxically, the rise of an inherently undemocratic person, the Superman, within liberal democracy seems counterintuitive. Nevertheless, the Superman will use both the benefits and shortcomings of liberal democracy to his advantage. During the Superman's development, liberal democracy does not hinder his individualism. However, once the Superman constructs a horizon for the masses, liberal democracy is rendered a wholly inadequate regime. Under the Superman's command, an order of rank must be implemented in society. This thesis argues that liberal democracy provides adequate conditions for the development of Nietzsche's Superman, but inadequate conditions for his rule.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY	23
1.1 DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA	23
1.2 THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO	35
CHAPTER 2: FREEDOM	39
2.1 POLITICS AS A VOCATION	42
2.2 DEATH OF GOD	47
CHAPTER 3: LAST MAN AND SUPERMAN	51
CONCLUSION.....	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	73

Introduction

Political philosophy is rife with theories concerning democracy and its foundations, practice, and future implementation. While many political thinkers are renowned for their endorsement of liberal democracy, several are recognized for their critique of it; Friedrich Nietzsche exists among the latter. Often accompanying an analysis of liberal democracy is the concept of freedom. Freedom is instrumental in Nietzsche's overall project of the creation of the Superman, for the Superman requires the freedom to develop with few encumbrances. The degree to which an individual possesses freedom is contingent on the boundaries of one's horizons; if Nietzsche's primary project is achieved, the Superman will comprise a horizon. Though Nietzsche does not condone democracy, he realizes that it is inevitable. In order to determine the feasibility of Nietzsche's project within the inevitable democracy, one first must determine if democracy functions as a horizon, and to what extent. Given the inevitability of the egalitarian revolution, a Superman's survival is dependent on his ability to thrive within a liberal democracy. Is democracy an adequate condition for the development of the Superman as a horizon?

While this question does not have a clear answer within Nietzsche's texts or the existing secondary literature, it has important implications for Americans on a societal level. Existing secondary literature focuses on Nietzsche's critique of democracy instead of how Nietzsche's project can be fulfilled within it. Analyzing Nietzsche's conception of democracy will allow us to determine whether or not Nietzsche's project is feasible for the U.S and the Western world. The issue also poses the question of whether or not

democracy is conducive to the development of personal freedoms and exceptional individuals. Evaluating democracy through the lens of Nietzsche is particularly interesting because of his extreme disdain for democracy and its detrimental impact on mankind. Frequently, Nietzsche's arguments and the rationale behind them are subversive to modern society's current principles, but they are nonetheless logical. It is interesting to evaluate freedom and democracy through this lens because Nietzsche, in particular, expresses horizons as a limit on reason and as a delusion, albeit a necessary one. Nietzsche brings to the forefront negative aspects of democracy that are not mentioned in a typical critique of democracy, such as a liberal democratic regime leading to the mediocrity of mankind.¹ I argue that the answer to the question at hand is two-fold: democracy is adequate for the development of the Superman, yet entirely inadequate for his rule.

In order to begin to answer the question of whether or not democracy provides the adequate conditions for the survival of the Superman, it is necessary to define and understand key concepts, namely democracy and freedom. Nietzsche's works are the main sources of relevant literature to answer this question, in addition to contributions made from Hegel and Tocqueville. Hegel and Tocqueville's respective characterizations of democracy offer a useful context for Nietzsche's. Hegel plays a key role for Nietzsche; Nietzsche's philosophy is a purposeful attack on Hegel's, while it operates largely in harmony with Tocqueville's. By analyzing the rationale of other political thinkers, Nietzsche's own conceptions are highlighted. Further, secondary sources offer clarity during a rigorous interpretation of Nietzsche's texts, and they offer a method to interpret them. Though secondary sources provide the advantages previously described, ultimately

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter

they remain inadequate authorities on the text. Given that the only authority for the primary texts is Nietzsche, all interpretations will center on his arguments alone.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra provides a good deal of information about Nietzsche's ideal man, what he refers to as the "Superman," or "overman"². Whatever political regime Nietzsche advocates must be suitable for the development of the Superman, or multiple supermen, if possible; the Superman is Nietzsche's primary and fundamental concern, so he must "endorse" a political system that would support his development. His critique of democracy is shown through his disdain for the general "man". Nietzsche explains that "man" on the whole is something that must be overcome.³ While liberal democracy embraces man and encourages individualism, Nietzsche believes man should be overcome, with his conceptions of morality and the tendencies that weaken him. The Superman comes to being only when man overcomes himself. For various reasons that will be discussed in more detail in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche is not in favor of man or a political regime that caters to man, such as liberal democracy. Democracy treats all men equal, and Nietzsche promotes an extreme hierarchical society that caters to the Superman. Nietzsche does not believe that all men are created equal, and thus should not be treated as such.

While democracy is not the ideal system in which the Superman can thrive, it could be the one in which he is achieved. He states, "Man is a rope tied between beast and superman."⁴ He draws a clear distinction between man and Superman, one that is vital to understanding Nietzsche's project. The Superman requires a certain political and

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book For All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1966), p. 12.

³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 12.

⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 14.

social situation in which he can thrive. It is clear throughout *Beyond Good and Evil* that the system in which the Superman can thrive must be hierarchical to enable him to lead the mass of lesser men. The Superman's existence is vital for Nietzsche because the Superman is the only avenue through which mankind can be saved from the "last man". The "last man" represents the devolution of mankind, and once the "last man" is reached there can be no hope for the Superman or humankind as a whole. The Superman constitutes mankind's last hope, so Nietzsche is primarily concerned with his survival. Nietzsche's project is the development of the Superman, and so he advocates the system that allows for his creation and his development. If he requires certain political and social conditions, and democracy does not provide those conditions, then democracy does not provide for his existence and therefore the development of any new horizon. Although Nietzsche thinks that the Superman is extremely unlikely, the Superman remains his primary concern and pursuit. It remains unclear what Nietzsche regards as the ideal political regime; however, he clearly expresses what it is *not*. He also describes certain aspects of a regime that are conducive to the Superman's development, including the survival of individuality, freedom, and a hierarchical system.

The death of God in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is one of Nietzsche's most fundamental constructs. Nietzsche does not articulate a clear definition for the death of God in the primary literature. Regardless, Nietzsche understands that man is responsible for the death of God through his study of history.⁵ God was a horizon, and through the excess of history and knowledge pursued by man, the horizon of God was shattered. Nietzsche understands that the death of God reflects the decay of morality.

⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Beyond Good and Evil discusses the “free spirits”, a new kind of philosopher that Nietzsche advocates. The “free spirits,” unlike the old philosophers, “use danger, stoicism, everything evil,”⁶ for their benefit. The free spirits represent a new man of which Nietzsche approves. They embrace struggle and do not focus their efforts on avoiding it, much unlike their counterparts. Nietzsche also discusses the Will to Power, which he defines as the inherent struggle for supremacy between our instincts and drives. The Will to Power is more fundamental to the human condition than even the will to self-preservation, which in itself is a low level of the Will to Power. The Will to Power is key to understanding the last man and the Superman. The last man represents a dissipation of the Will to Power. Nietzsche understands the Will to Power to be the fundamental organic component of mankind. Therefore, the last man represents a permanent degradation of man from which no progress can be made. The Will to Power must remain in order to maintain the adequate conditions for the Superman. Once the last man is realized the Will to Power is lost and the Superman is no longer a possibility. The free spirits provide a tangible embodiment of the Will to Power. The fundamental nature of the Will to Power suggests its importance, and it must be a serious consideration in making sure democracy contains the adequate conditions for the Superman’s development. To some extent, freedom can be understood as the unencumbered Will to Power. In order for a person or Superman to be truly free, the will to power must be able to manifest itself without interference. Freedom of instincts and drives are necessary for the Will to Power to exert itself.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, “On Peoples and Fatherlands” provides an account of the most concrete political implications among all of Nietzsche’s works. Nietzsche

⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 44.

explicitly states that democratization will lead to the “mediocritization” and leveling of man.⁷ Man will become a “multi-purpose herd animal”⁸. But the Superman must be able to lead the lesser beings. The lesser beings will be created by the process of democratization, and will be in need of a master. The text strongly suggests that democracy is not a suitable regime for the development of the Superman because in order for a Superman to lead, he must not follow the will of lesser beings. A democracy is fundamentally the rule by the people. The non-extraordinary men must accept their position and follow the Superman. However, democracy offers something virtually all other regimes forbid: freedom and individuality. Democracy offers conditions in which the Superman can be fostered, namely the freedom for the Superman to develop without too many impediments that is so crucial. There are certain advantages and disadvantages that democracy poses for the Superman. Interpreting these advantages and disadvantages, and weighing those conditions against the bigger picture of the Superman and his overall development, is the crux of this thesis.

Nietzsche found that Europe is increasingly embracing the path of the democratic movement, which will promote breeding between races. In turn, this act will make Europeans more similar and uniform. Nietzsche believes the Jews to be “beyond any doubt the strongest, toughest, and purest race now living in Europe; they know how to prevail even under the worst conditions (even better than under favorable conditions).”⁹ Nietzsche’s praise of the Jews sheds light on the qualities he values, and could potentially contribute to the discussion of Nietzsche’s view of the conditions necessary for the Superman.

⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 251.

The *Use and Abuse of History* introduces and explains the concept of horizons. A horizon is the fusion of a belief system and perspective. Horizons take several forms, including race, nationality, religion, and political systems. Horizons constitute a limit on one's perspective, and hinder an individual's full capacity to reason. However, Nietzsche explains that this hindrance is beneficial. He explains in the *Use and Abuse of History* that "a living thing can only be healthy, strong, and productive within a certain horizon; if it is incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end."¹⁰ An individual's understanding is wholly dependent on the limits to which his or her horizons extend. Horizons provide the context by which one differentiates right from wrong; one is only as free as one's horizon allows.

Nietzsche discusses the historical process in relation to horizons. It is important to clarify what is meant by "history." Nietzsche regards history as more than a recollection of past events. History is wisdom, knowledge, and awareness. Given that horizons are necessary for happiness, a happy life is dependent on the complete rejection of the historical process. History annihilates horizons because history exposes the illusions that horizons are.¹¹ He discusses the concept of horizons in contrast to the ahistorical nature of the beast. The beast has narrow horizons, and lives happily within them.¹² Nietzsche states, "We wish rather today to be joyful in our unwisdom and have a pleasant life as active men who go forward and respect the course of the world."¹³ Nietzsche offers support in the text for the popular slogan "ignorance is bliss" when he states that with an

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p.7.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*.

¹² Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p. 8.

¹³ Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p. 11.

“excess of history, life becomes maimed and degenerate.” This notion raises the question of the relationship of the Superman to horizons.

Nietzsche rejects the value of the historical process, in stark contrast to several other political philosophers, namely Hegel. It is important to note the value Hegel places on the “end of History” and Nietzsche’s rejection of history in order to examine how it will impact the possibility of freedom from Nietzsche’s standpoint. “The unrestrained historical sense... uproots the future, because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of the only atmosphere in which they can live.”¹⁴ In evaluating whether democracy will provide adequate conditions for the Superman’s development and the survival of freedom it will be vital to determine what the historical implications of democracy are.

Nietzsche’s primary texts lend support for the fact that he condemns the historical man who is always “calculating and parleying with facts” as lacking freedom.

By using descriptions from other political thinkers, including Tocqueville and Hegel, one can discern the most fundamental characteristics of democracy as Nietzsche perceived it. Readings of *Democracy In America* and *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* reveal that Nietzsche is fundamentally rejecting Hegel, and Tocqueville offers criticisms of liberal democracy with which Nietzsche would agree. While Hegel is deterministic and teleological, Tocqueville is not. While Tocqueville does not see history predetermined in the Hegelian sense, he understands the spread of the egalitarian revolution as the wave of the future. Tocqueville is primarily concerned with the protection of freedom; he understands democracy to be inevitable, and so he determines that in order for freedom to be protected, it must be connected to democracy.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p. 42.

According to Tocqueville's *Democracy In America*, an effective democracy promotes individual freedom. Experiencing freedom endows individuals with a sense of purpose. With this sense of purpose, citizens take part in public affairs, which prevents the spread of despotism. With individual freedom, citizens also challenge questionable legislation and create public offices catered to their endeavors. In Tocqueville's understanding of democracy, citizens use freedom to construct the very institutions that protect it. Another way to protect freedom was to fuse it to religion, although Tocqueville anticipates that the death of God terminates that possibility. The spirit of freedom and spirit of religion were complementary, "Religion sees in civil freedom a noble exercise of the faculties of man...Freedom sees in religion the companion of its struggles and triumphs...It considers religion as the safeguard of mores"¹⁵ Religion held people to a high moral standard and enabled freedom to be corrected.

Democratic nations also have a passion for equality; equality is the dominant attribute, as it is of all regimes in the world today. Tocqueville believes that people like freedom, but they love equality. He states, "What they love with an eternal love is equality; they dash toward freedom with rapid impulse and sudden efforts, and if they miss the goal they resign with themselves; but nothing can satisfy them without equality, and they would sooner consent to perish than to lose it."¹⁶ The state's main purpose is to promote equality, which is anathema to Nietzsche. Nietzsche and Tocqueville agree on the inevitability of the egalitarian revolution. Tocqueville is a trenchant observer of democracy, and he offers an ahistorical framework in which Nietzsche can operate and fulfill his project by creating a new horizon, the Superman. Democracy will enable the

¹⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 43.

¹⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 52.

Superman to create a horizon by fostering his development. Tocqueville provides a suitable vehicle for Nietzsche's reasoning because he allows for liberal democracy that is ahistorical while Hegel does not, and that represents the fundamental divide between Hegel and Nietzsche. Tocqueville's ahistorical construct of democracy means that it is not historically determined, which agrees with Nietzsche's rejection of the historical process. Both Tocqueville and Nietzsche's rejection of historical determinism allows for the possibility of the Superman.

Hegel is Nietzsche's great antagonist; primary sources make this obvious. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* embraces both reason and the historical process, and Nietzsche rejects both, but the historical process vehemently. Hegel's philosophy is a strong contrast to Nietzsche because Hegel thinks democracy is the wave of the future. Hegel believes history leads to freedom by way of reason; it is precisely this reason that distinguishes us from animals.¹⁷ "Thought is, indeed, essential to humanity. It is this that distinguishes us from the brutes. In sensation, cognition, and intellection; in our instincts and volitions, as far as they are truly human, Thought is an invariable element."¹⁸ Hegel believes thought to be the distinguishing aspect of man. When philosophy is incorporated with thought, it becomes reason. Without reason, man acts on impulse and passion alone. It would seem as though reason would limit freedom because it limits primal drives. However, Hegel makes the argument that the lack of reason *promotes* freedom, for it releases man from the constricting and overwhelming nature of instincts. Hegel argues that the man who acts upon will uninformed by reason is not at all free. Hegel describes

¹⁷ Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956)

¹⁸ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 8.

this man as the Despot, a slave to his own instinctual drives.¹⁹ This concept is the antithesis of Nietzsche's understanding, in which reason is the oppressor. Reason will annihilate horizons.

Hegel also discusses the historical process. The historical process is characterized by "the actions of men [that] proceed from their need, their passions."²⁰ He regards the unfolding of freedom as the purpose of history manifested in the state. He states that history is necessary to achieve true individual freedom, for freedom is only recognized through the historical process. Hegel discusses two types of freedom in the *Philosophy of History*. The first, formal freedom, allows man to act in any way that he desires.²¹ The second, transcendent freedom, is achieved during the adoption of reason and rational thinking.²² The historical process culminates in this realization. Also, society and the state are the conditions in which freedom is realized, thereby connecting individual freedom to societal institutions. These are the notions that Nietzsche rejects.

There is a growing source of secondary literature that seeks to clarify interpretation of Nietzsche's texts. Examining the secondary literature both clarifies certain inconsistencies and introduces new possibilities in understanding Nietzsche. Additionally, secondary sources offer a method of interpretation when examining the primary texts. They can be useful because Nietzsche often makes unclear comments and is often misunderstood. However, secondary sources do not offer definitive opinions. The purpose of this thesis is a critical interpretation of Nietzsche, and so his texts will compose all core arguments. According to Merrick, there are contradictions in

¹⁹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 8.

²⁰ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 20.

²¹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*.

²² Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*.

Nietzsche's treatment of freedom. In the *Genealogy of Morality*, he warns against the "hundred-times-refuted theory of free will."²³ Yet, in both *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche clearly praises and prefers the man who exercises free will. Similarly, Grillaert explains that the notion of free will is inconsistent for he "rejects free will as the ultimate cause of human action; on the other hand he attributes a positive connotation to freedom of the will."²⁴ He holds that, under a rejection of free will, Nietzsche contends that humans are not morally accountable for their actions; humans are held morally responsible for their actions to the extent of their free will, and when an individual lacks free will, he or she is no longer held responsible.²⁵ Advocates of free will understand it to function between the subject and the object, or the actor and the action. There is a dichotomy at play. Nietzsche rejects this notion, which in turn undermines the system of judgment and punishment.²⁶ The systems of judgment and punishment on both a personal and institutional level are weakened if man does not possess free will because man could not be held accountable for any of his actions. This will surely have tangible ramifications for democracy. If mankind lacks free will, then mankind will not possess freedom.

Best discusses the advent of modern western political thought. While the text does not offer an in depth analysis of Nietzsche, Best places Nietzsche within a broader historical context. Best refers to the ancients Socrates and Aristotle; they both provide a stark contrast to Nietzsche.²⁷ Best describes Nietzsche as a "crosscurrent," to whom

²³ Allison Merrick, "Nietzsche and the Necessity of Freedom by John Mandalios (review)," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 44, no.1 (2013): p. 132

²⁴ Nel Grillaert, "Determining One's Fate: A Delineation of Nietzsche's Conception of Free Will," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 31, Spring (2006): p. 42.

²⁵ Grillaert, "Determining One's Fate: A Delineation of Nietzsche's Conception of Free Will"

²⁶ Grillaert, "Determining One's Fate: A Delineation of Nietzsche's Conception of Free Will"

²⁷ Judith Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, (Lanham: University Press, 1997)

neither politics nor man is a natural phenomenon.²⁸ She explains that for Nietzsche man is always changing and his qualities are not definitive. There are no natural rights or freedoms that exist for man in the state of nature.²⁹ Natural rights are dependent on a set of fixed and uniform characteristics among all men, and because Nietzsche rejects the notion of these fixed characteristics, he also rejects natural rights. As such, political philosophy cannot cater to human nature because there is no unconditional human nature that exists across time.³⁰

Best highlights the clear contrast that Nietzsche poses to the ancients in regard to human nature and history. “Neither nature nor history is rational or purposeful.”³¹ Life has no greater purpose and exists for the sake of itself. The individual human life is a process of becoming, which contrasts with theories that life has an inherent truth or purpose. However, Best states through her interpretation of Nietzsche that we derive purpose within our horizons. While all horizons are false, they are necessary for a life lived “healthily and energetically”³². Nietzsche believes that truth, or history, is a fatal disease that robs purpose and passion from Man. Best offers an analogy of horizons to Plato’s notion of men chained together in a cave. This allegory describes the fundamental difference between Nietzsche and the ancients. Plato describes the men chained together in a cave, seeing only shadows of what truly exists, and therefore believing the shadows to be true. When one man breaks the chain and leaves the cave, he sees real things, such

²⁸ Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 106.

²⁹ Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 107.

³⁰ Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 107.

³¹ Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 115.

³² Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 115.

as the sun. Upon this realization, Plato describes this man as the happiest man. Nietzsche says this man possesses the utmost despair, for he finds no sun at all.³³

Loeb offers insight regarding the study of Nietzsche's primary texts. While scholars often regard *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a scattered work, an "embarrassment that needs to be finessed," Nietzsche thinks that his other texts prime the reader to better understand *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.³⁴ Scholars often look to the work for textual support, but disregard it to a certain extent because particular ideas are not revisited in his other works to any substantial degree; these philosophical ideas include the Superman and the Eternal Recurrence.³⁵ As such, Loeb strives to place the Superman in Nietzsche's other works, contrary to the popular notion that it does not warrant much attention. Loeb highlights the importance and relevance of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the study of Nietzsche. This is vital in determining Nietzsche's immediately ideal environment, for the Superman's importance cannot be understated.

Considering a possible future that can promote development of the Superman, Nietzsche's primary texts beg the question, what would Nietzsche have to say about our current American regime? Clearly liberal democracy runs against the grain for Nietzsche, but to what extent? The primary and secondary literature suggests that democracy is subversive to the freedom of the Superman. What remains to be understood is what constitutes the ideal environment and regime to achieve Nietzsche's ultimate project of the development of the Superman and the exact nature of the Superman's place within it.

³³ Best, *The Mainstream of Western Political Thought*, p. 115.

³⁴ Paul S. Loeb, "Finding the Übermensch in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 30, Fall (2005)

³⁵ Loeb, "Finding the Übermensch in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality"

The resources for this thesis are comprised by both primary and secondary sources, with a stronger emphasis on the former. While secondary sources serve to clarify the topic and offer insight into the process of analyzing Nietzsche's texts, and sometimes highlight common misunderstandings of Nietzsche, primary texts constitute the substance of the thesis. A research plan for drafting a political philosophy thesis requires determining the proper texts for a theory, gathering data, discerning the relevant aspects of that data, and finally analyzing the data to draw conclusions.

Choosing the proper texts is the first step in the current research plan. While it is important to be thorough and it would be ideal to analyze Nietzsche's body of work as a whole, that is impossible for this thesis. However, one can focus on the texts that are the most relevant to the research question. As previously stated, Nietzsche's primary texts will compose the body of the thesis. *The Use and Abuse of History*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Beyond Good and Evil* will be used in their entirety, and other textual references will be helpful. The concept of horizons, which contains or can contain Nietzsche's notion of freedom, is explained in detail in *The Use and Abuse of History*. Of course, the concept of horizons is instrumental to the explanation of freedom. This text will offer an explanation of horizons and ultimately provide the basis for their relationship with freedom. This text also offers an extensive discussion of history and its advantages and disadvantages. In his later texts the advantages of history are repressed. *The Use and Abuse of History* offers a fundamental discourse on the relationship among horizons, history, personal freedom, and a "happy" life. *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* discuss the Superman and the last man; the former is a possibility for mankind to overcome itself, while the latter represents the overall deterioration of

mankind. These texts are essential for deriving political implications for Nietzsche's philosophies. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in particular offers insight into morality when Nietzsche discusses the death of God. This text allows a connection to be drawn among the deterioration of morality, the subsequent deterioration of man, and its political consequences.

Primary texts regarding democracy are also fundamental for this thesis. Tocqueville and Hegel provide insights regarding democracy in *Democracy in America* and *The Philosophy of History*, respectively. These texts are significant in that they share important albeit different relationships with Nietzsche's works. Tocqueville provides an ahistorical account of liberal democracy, which provides context and an avenue by which one can navigate Nietzsche's philosophy. Hegel is equally important, for Nietzsche finds himself in fundamental disagreement with Hegel's historical construction of liberal democracy. While Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to Tocqueville in his texts, basic interpretations of Tocqueville and Nietzsche, respectively, reveal that they are in agreement about fundamental aspects of liberal democracy and history.

Secondary sources are helpful to construct a compelling thesis. Not only do secondary sources clarify the subject matter, but they also implicitly provide guidelines for the interpretation of challenging texts. Secondary texts serve as commentary for Nietzsche's work. An understanding of the secondary literature clarifies concepts that may be unclear, for they offer another perspective and interpretation of the text. By evaluating alternative perspectives, the objective of this thesis becomes much clearer. Furthermore, much insight can be gleaned through observing one scholar's approach in analyzing the text. Often, interpreting Nietzsche is an arduous and confounding task. By

examining other scholars' works, one can more easily construct a suitable approach for the process of interpretation. Merrick and Grillaert provide guidance for resolving discrepancies or contradictions within the text, specifically in regard to Nietzsche's perspective of free will. Best discusses the broader realm of modern western political thought, and places Nietzsche in a broader historical context. Best is useful for the clarity and simplicity she offers, and her brief discussion of the role that ancient political philosophy had to Nietzsche's work. Loeb's work is useful for its novel approach to the Superman; Loeb strives to place the Superman within Nietzsche's other texts. This is a useful and interesting endeavor, for it broadens the scope of concept validity; it creates the possibility that the Superman can be implicitly referred to within Nietzsche's other works. However, while secondary sources can foster a greater understanding of the text, equally likely are their own shortcomings and misunderstandings. Secondary sources do not serve as an authority on Nietzsche, but rather a tool to use in interpreting efforts and for minor clarifications. Secondary sources offer a useful model for approaching difficulties in interpretation by showing how to best understand the text and to keep distortions and biases to a minimum. It can also be useful to observe how scholars grapple with minor inconsistencies and how they substantiate arguments when the text is ambiguous. Ultimately, secondary sources are used only in terms of guidance for approaching the text, rather than relying upon their substantive arguments, which often contain misunderstandings. Given the complex nature of Nietzsche's philosophy, these misunderstandings often compound when relying on secondary sources authoritatively.

The translations of primary sources are an important component of any political philosophy thesis that relies on texts written in a non-native language. Nietzsche's texts

differ greatly among the available translations. For the sake of uniformity, among other reasons, Walter Kaufmann's translations will be used whenever possible. Kaufmann's translations provide the closest rendition of the text to Nietzsche himself. He often explains his translation of certain key terms, referring to the literal German meaning and its correlation with its English counterpart. The literal translation must be weighed with Nietzsche's intended meaning, and Kaufman clarifies both to provide a more thorough understanding. The level of clarification and explanation that Kaufmann offers provides the basis for using his translations whenever possible. Kaufmann's translations are also incredibly useful, as he offers his own interpretations of the text in the footnotes. It is important to note that Kaufmann's interpretations are isolated to the footnotes, rather than using his discretion to alter the text itself. The thesis will stray from one aspect of Kaufmann's translation, and that is the treatment of the Superman. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Kaufmann translates the übermensch as "over man", and uses that in the text. Kaufmann refrains from using "Superman" in order to avoid confusion with popular culture references. In this thesis, "Superman" will be used in order to better express the Superman's influence and characteristics. The reader can glean more when he or she reads "Superman" rather than "overman", as the latter can be ambiguous and confusing.

The process of gathering data and interpreting is an arduous task. As previously noted, Nietzsche's body of work as a whole must be considered, and the text is quite difficult to understand. It is essential to fully understand the text at the outset in order to discern the relevant aspects of the texts later on. Secondary sources are hugely helpful in this regard, as those scholars are well informed and provide their own evidence for

interpretations. A proper interpretation of the text requires the use of secondary sources and two or three readings of each primary text.

The process of interpreting the text is perhaps the most important for this thesis, for it defines the overall legitimacy of the work. While total and undeniable validity is impossible as Nietzsche himself is the only true authority on Nietzsche's texts, certainly a high degree of validity can be achieved through adopting proper interpretive measures. There is an inherent limitation in conducting work in political philosophy due to the indefinability of the subject matter. Specific words, sentences, or full aphorisms cannot be empirically analyzed or categorized. This limitation introduces a certain degree of discretion during an analysis of the text. Any remark Nietzsche makes is largely dependent on the context in which the remark is placed. In creating compelling evidence, Nietzsche's body of work as a whole must be analyzed, rather than "cherry picking" particular sentences or aphorisms to fit the theory. As a rule, any interpretation of the text must be substantiated elsewhere within that text or another text written by the same author. This research design is geared toward the best possible interpretation, rather than an infallible one. As such, discretion may be used at times when a degree of uncertainty remains. For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that in some cases a democracy will birth exceptional men.³⁶ While this remark is unsubstantiated elsewhere within *Beyond Good and Evil*, it is quite clearly stated and so it must be considered. That Nietzsche explicitly stated his reservations about being misunderstood is a testament to the complexity of his work. Misunderstanding Nietzsche, admittedly his greatest fear, could have serious implications. Given Nietzsche's work just prior to the turn of the twentieth century in the historical context of his native Germany, he was frequently

³⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

mistaken for a proto-Nazi by the Nazis themselves. Often, people used and misconstrued his work to substantiate their race-supremacist claims. This misunderstanding, while unsurprising, is wholly illogical given Nietzsche's vehemence against anti-Semitism and explicit, though brief, praise of the Jews for their strength and tenacity in *Beyond Good and Evil*³⁷. While this is only one example, it speaks to a much greater problem, that Nietzsche's work could be misconstrued to support the very doctrines he advocated *against*, and with disastrous consequences.

Concept validity is an extremely important consideration for this thesis. Each concept in the theory is intangible. The concept of horizons is introduced in *The Use and Abuse of History*. Nietzsche provides a clear explanation of horizons in this text and clearly defines the use of the term, which removes any ambiguity and increases the concept validity. Democracy is also clearly defined throughout the texts, though liberal democracy is not. Nietzsche uses the term "democracy" clearly and precisely. However, freedom is far more difficult to define. Freedom can be understood on a spectrum, ranging from personal freedom to institutional freedom. Personal freedom refers to the ability to reason without constraints. For example, the beast lacks personal freedom in this sense for his perspectives are extremely narrow and he does not possess all of the faculties necessary to reason properly. The beast's personal freedom extends only so far as his ability to reason permits; his ignorance limits his freedom. Freedom can also be understood in an institutional sense, which refers to the freedoms that any political institution, or regime, offers. Nietzsche implicitly refers to both throughout the texts, and so certain judgments must be made regarding the context of these remarks and to which version of freedom Nietzsche is referring. The concept of "history" is another that must

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 251.

be properly explained and defined. The concept of history is quite difficult to define for it means something to Nietzsche that has far broader implications than the notion of history that is popularly understood, which usually means “the past.” History is understood as knowledge, wisdom, and enlightenment, and he uses the term consistently throughout the text.

While a research plan for a thesis in political philosophy is more subjective in nature than empirical methodology, it is equally important in terms of standardizing and clarifying the approach to research. The dataset can be understood as Nietzsche’s entire body of work, with specific works acting as the most relevant texts. While total validity is impossible to achieve, substantiating claims with textual evidence provides legitimate support for conclusions. It is imperative to refer to the text in all aspects of the research process, whether it be discerning relevant information, resolving discrepancies, or formulating an interpretation. While a certain degree of discretion is applied, returning to the text as the ultimate authority ensures the most legitimate and rigorously defended thesis possible.

Adhering to a plan and chapter structure provides significant benefits for the overall composition of the thesis. Dividing the thesis into chapters ensures that it is well organized and that arguments are easy to follow. As of now, the chapters will be divided into the following: “Liberal Democracy,” “Freedom,” and “Last Man and Superman.”

Chapter one, “Liberal Democracy,” is the first content-based chapter. In it, the tenets of liberal democracy are outlined and explained, and the characteristics of democracy that Nietzsche requires for his project are highlighted. Both the advantages and disadvantages of democracy that will be advantageous for the Superman’s

development are discussed. This will be particularly relevant for *Democracy in America*. Chapter two explains Freedom. The *Use and Abuse of History* and the concept of horizons will be explained at length. Chapter two defines freedom, characterizes the conditions that promote and limit freedom, and characterizes freedom in terms of a liberal democracy. The last chapter, “Last Man and Superman,” will introduce both concepts and explain their relationship with each other. *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will be the main sources of information on these topics. This chapter will also explain the Superman in terms of the concepts already discussed, namely freedom. The goal is to offer a complete account of the Superman and how he will construct a horizon, and convey the severity of the condition of the last man. It will also place the Superman within a liberal democracy, composing the crux of the paper. In this chapter, conclusions will be derived from the previous concepts and the Superman will be considered in the context of liberal democracy. Chapter three brings the concepts previously discussed into a complete picture of the Superman within modern democracy. It shows how freedom is instrumental to the Superman’s development within liberal democracy.

Chapter 1

Liberal Democracy

Given Nietzsche's acknowledgement of the success of the egalitarian revolution, liberal democracy is the only political and social circumstance in which the Superman can arise. This thesis asserts that while liberal democracy creates an adequate atmosphere for the Superman to spawn, it is entirely inadequate for his rule. Crucial to this assertion is the identification of democracy's fundamental characteristics, specifically the advantages and disadvantages that will facilitate the Superman's development. At its core, democracy protects personal freedoms that promote individualism. Democracy is unique in this regard, and will allow the Superman to develop without fear of retribution. Tocqueville identifies widespread despotism as a potential threat to democracy; while despotism is a danger to democracy, this disadvantage is one the Superman can use to his benefit. Further, Socrates makes characterizations of both democracy and tyranny in *The Republic of Plato* that are particularly revealing when viewed through the lens of Nietzsche's philosophy and his ultimate project.

Democracy In America

Alexis de Tocqueville remains one of the most trenchant observers of liberal democracy, and his insights in *Democracy in America* serve to illuminate the most fundamental features of democracy and liberal democracy. Further, Tocqueville's ahistorical approach to democracy provides a proper vehicle through which Nietzsche can accomplish his project. Tocqueville writes in his introduction,

“A great democratic revolution is taking place among us: all see it, but all do not judge it in the same manner. Some consider it a new thing, and taking it for an accident, they still hope to be able to stop it; whereas others judge it irresistible because to them it seems the most continuous, the oldest, and the most permanent fact known in history.”³⁸

Tocqueville’s acknowledgment and acceptance of the egalitarian revolution provides the foundation and background of his work. He strives to explain the factors that made the U.S. successful in its pursuit of democracy, and by doing so illuminates liberal democracy’s defining characteristics. Impressively, most of his predictions about the character of America’s liberal democracy hold true today. At the turn of nineteenth century in France Tocqueville was placed in the perfect context to analyze democracy. Born just six years after the end of the French Revolution³⁹, Tocqueville did not view the effects of democracy catastrophically like many of his aristocratic contemporaries. In fact, he uniquely approved of democracy while his fellow aristocrats looked upon it with hopelessness, or tolerated it, at best. Indeed, he believed that the French should take advantage of the results of the Revolution.⁴⁰ Nietzsche’s birth in Germany just preceded Tocqueville’s death in 1859. Nietzsche completed most of his works in the 1870s and 1880s during the Franco- Prussian war, which was a time characterized by a newfound and increasing sense of German nationalism. The respective historical contexts in which both Tocqueville and Nietzsche operated influenced both of their work considerably, and primed them to respond to their present and future circumstances.

Often, Tocqueville draws comparisons between America’s success and Europe’s failure in creating and maintaining a democracy to identify the factors that both thwarted and contributed to their respective outcomes. He explains that all men, conscious or not,

³⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 3.

³⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, xix.

⁴⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, xx.

have aided democracy. Men who “did not dream of serving it” and “those who fought for it” alike were instrumental in democracy’s success.⁴¹ To further this sentiment, Tocqueville reveals that the “gradual development of the equality of conditions” is a providential fact that it is enduring and universal.⁴² Equality of conditions will prove especially advantageous for the spawning of the Superman.

Democracies decentralize power. Tocqueville draws an extensive comparison between the United States and France in regard to executive powers to highlight this defining characteristic of democracy. Sovereignty in the U.S. is divided between the Union and the states, while it is centralized in France, which defines the “greatest difference” between the president of the United States and the King of France.⁴³ The president’s reach of power is quite limited in terms of the legislature; he cannot dissolve the legislative body and he takes no part in its composition. Any influence the president has on the legislature is indirect and he is inferior to and dependent on it.⁴⁴ Public opinion acts as a directing and dominant power above the president.⁴⁵ In France, the King is “the absolute master in the sphere of executive power” and is inviolable.⁴⁶ The differences between the executive in the U.S. and the King of France highlight a crucial factor of democracy: the ruler does not lead with absolute, unregulated power. His influence does not extend to the legislature, a governing body elected by the people. The supremacy of public opinion’s power during presidential and legislative elections is a reflection of the power endowed to each individual in a democracy.

⁴¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, 8.

⁴² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, 8.

⁴³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 116.

⁴⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 116.

⁴⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 116.

⁴⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 116.

Public opinion has the capacity to limit the efficacy of the judiciary. The Supreme Court of the United States possesses the power to try both individuals and the state with the highest authority, but the Court's reach extends only so far as the public allows.

Tocqueville explains,

“Their power is immense; but it is a power of opinion. They are omnipotent as long as the people consent to obey the law; they can do nothing when they scorn it. Now, the power of opinion is that which is most difficult to make use of, because it is impossible to say exactly where the limits are. It is often as dangerous to fall short of them as to exceed them.”⁴⁷

The Supreme Court, the highest arbiter of justice and authority of the Constitution, is effective to the extent that the public obeys and respects it. Tocqueville writes, “No people has constituted as great a judicial power as the Americans.”⁴⁸ The Supreme Court is the sole tribunal of the United States. While the Supreme Court possesses immense power, relations among citizens are governed almost entirely by the state.⁴⁹ State sovereignty serves to prevent the federal powers in a democracy from becoming absolute. The Supreme Court acts as an arbiter of the Constitution, outlining the most fundamental democratic values.

Tocqueville explains that the United States has succeeded in combining the distinct advantages from small nations and large ones; it is “free and happy like a small nation” and “glorious and strong like a great one”.⁵⁰ Democratic nations allow for the unhindered circulation of ideas and the spirit of enterprise, making the people happy and free. Tocqueville writes of the federal system in the United States, “This need to improve constantly agitates the American republics and does not trouble them; ambition for power

⁴⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 142.

⁴⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 141.

⁴⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 141.

⁵⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 154.

makes way for love of well-being.”⁵¹ This need to improve undoubtedly propels Americans forward. Fundamental to this pursuit are the limited powers of the sovereign or the executive in the United States. Tocqueville boldly asserts, “Nothing is so contrary to the well-being and freedom of men as great empires.”⁵² Tocqueville reiterates throughout the text that a defining characteristic of liberal democracies is preserving individual liberties. He also reiterates that great empires and centralized powers only constrain those freedoms. Democracies succeed in allowing man to be free, happy, and ambitious by limiting the sovereign’s power and influence.

Crucial in a liberal democracy are an individual’s freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Freedom of the press is relevant not only in the political realm, but also in the personal opinions of men.⁵³ Freedom of the press “modifies not only laws, but mores”.⁵⁴ The press also “constantly lays bare” the secret springs of politics and forces public men to come in turn to appear before the court of opinion. It rallies interests around certain doctrines and formulates the creeds of the parties.”⁵⁵ Thus, freedom of the press is not only a right given to individuals in a democracy, but an avenue by which men can navigate their opinions, mores, and political persuasions. Tocqueville writes, “When an idea has taken possession of the mind of the American people, whether it is just or unreasonable, nothing is more difficult than to root it out.”⁵⁶ To censor the masses and infringe upon this right is both dangerous and impractical. The courts lack the power to moderate the press, for “the suppleness of human language constantly escapes judicial

⁵¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 53.

⁵² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 151.

⁵³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 172.

⁵⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 172.

⁵⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 178.

⁵⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 178.

analysis, offenses of this nature somehow elude the hand that is extended to seize them”.⁵⁷ In a democracy, in which the people are truly sovereign, Tocqueville regards censorship as a great absurdity.⁵⁸ He explains, “When one accords to each a right to govern society, one must surely recognize his capacity to choose among the different opinions that agitate his contemporaries and to appreciate different facts, the knowledge of which can guide him.”⁵⁹ In a democracy, the free flow of opinions allows for countless perspectives that can manifest in the press and then be shared among groups of individuals. Further, the press reaches most individuals in a democracy, as most small towns in the United States have their own newspaper.⁶⁰ While each newspaper has little power, the press remains the strongest power after the people itself.⁶¹ More importantly, the political newspapers can serve as advocates or critics of the administration, and can attack or defend it at will. This practice reflects the importance of free press in a democracy. Thus, sovereignty of the people and freedom of the press are fundamental components of a democracy.

Freedom of the press leads to a more powerful aspect of democracy, that of freedom of association. Tocqueville states, “The right to associate is almost confused with the freedom to write; already, however, an association possesses more power than the press. When an opinion is represented by an association, it is obliged to take a clearer and more precise form.”⁶² These associations serve to create bonds among men on personal and intellectual levels, gather future representatives, and forge a “separate nation

⁵⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 175.

⁵⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 174.

⁵⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 177.

⁶¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 178.

⁶² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 181.

inside the nation”.⁶³ The freedom to collectivize is powerful enough to form associations among citizens that could be subversive to the regime itself. A “separate nation inside the nation” serves as evidence of this freedom of association regardless of its character or creed. Freedom of association can be understood as the freedom of speech manifested in groups of individuals. The right to associate is a necessary guarantee against the tyranny of the majority.⁶⁴ The right to associate thereby protects the right to challenge the administration without fear of retribution. Tocqueville explains that in no other regime is this right so vital for the survival of liberty, for it protects against the arbitrary nature of the executive.⁶⁵

The idea of rights is central to the successful function of a democracy, for it binds society together with a mutual respect for each other’s individual liberties. Tocqueville identifies rights as the “idea of virtue introduced into the political world”.⁶⁶ The mutual respect for rights creates the basis for a functional society, for without it force would be the only factor that forges a union among citizens. In order to be successful, rights must be allocated to all men. By endowing all men with rights, each one in defending their own personal good, respects and recognizes the rights of others.⁶⁷ The respect for others’ rights extends to all classes of society regardless of status, as “the American submits without murmur to the power of the least of its magistrates”⁶⁸. The extension of political rights to each level of society gives to all men the right to property, which Tocqueville regards as one of democracy’s greatest merits.⁶⁹

⁶³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 181.

⁶⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 183.

⁶⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 183.

⁶⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 227.

⁶⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 228.

⁶⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 228.

⁶⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 228.

The respect for rights extends to the respect for the law. Reminiscent of the social pact aforementioned, each citizen of a democracy has a personal interest in the collective obedience of the law.⁷⁰ Each man submits to the rule of the law regardless of the distress it may cause him.⁷¹ The submission to the rule of the law is also a reflection of the loyalty and “paternal love” that all classes of men have for the legislation, and is reflective of their confidence in it.⁷²

The concept of individualism is among the defining characteristics of a democracy. Tocqueville illustrates how individualism is born in a democracy, and unfeasible in an aristocracy. Individualism is the sentiment that causes each citizen to “isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself.”⁷³ In the pursuit of equality, man turns to himself and his own instincts in isolation. By contrast, aristocracy doesn’t allow man to isolate himself, for it binds each man to his fellow citizens. Individuals are placed at a fixed post in an aristocracy.⁷⁴ Man is keenly aware of the individuals above him “whose protection is necessary to him”, and those below him whom “he can call upon for cooperation”.⁷⁵ In these ways, the aristocracy binds individuals together through familial and social bonds.

In stark contrast to aristocracy, democracy fosters individualism as equality grows. Tocqueville writes, “In democratic countries, on the contrary, when the duties of

⁷⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 230.

⁷¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 230.

⁷² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 230.

⁷³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 482.

⁷⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 483.

⁷⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 483.

each individual toward the species are much clearer, devotion toward one man becomes rarer: the bond of human affections is extended and loosened.”⁷⁶ Democracies do not forge social or generational bonds among its citizens, as individuals are not adhered to a fixed post. Democracies provide the opportunity for individuals to become self-sufficient, as nobody is wealthy or powerful enough to impose a substantial influence over their fate.⁷⁷ As such, individualism grows in a democracy because its adherents owe nothing to anyone and expect nothing from anyone.⁷⁸ Without societal bonds forging men together, they are granted the opportunity to design their own fate. The democracy “separates him from his contemporaries” and “constantly leads him back toward himself alone”.⁷⁹ The equality of man places each citizen beside one another, without a common bond to tether them together.

The principle of sovereignty is perhaps the most intrinsic characteristics of democracy, for it extends to both the administration and to individual citizens. Tocqueville briefly explains the nature of sovereignty in the U.S., “The principle of the sovereignty of the people is not hidden or sterile as in certain nations; it is recognized by mores, proclaimed by the laws; it spreads with freedom and reaches its final consequences without obstacle.”⁸⁰ Democracy’s immense power rests within the people, and the people define both its boundaries and its reach. The people participate in all aspects of the administration, including the drafting of laws by electing the legislature and electing the executive.⁸¹ The people comprise the jury that punishes those who

⁷⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 483.

⁷⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 484.

⁷⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 484.

⁷⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 484.

⁸⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 53.

⁸¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 55.

violate the laws they help to enact.⁸² Tocqueville describes the scope of the people's power, "The people reign over the American political world as does God over the universe. They are the cause and the end of all things; everything comes out of them and everything is absorbed into them."⁸³ The sovereignty and power vested in the American public makes democracy prosper. Institutions are democratic in both their nature and development because of the people's continued role in their practice.⁸⁴ The people are therefore free to express their passions, drives, opinions, and prejudices without lasting obstacles that could prevent them from manifesting in the direction of society.⁸⁵

A profoundly problematic aspect of democracy, one that the Superman can use to his benefit, is the possibility of widespread despotism. Tocqueville notes,

"During my stay in the United States I had remarked that a democratic social state like that of the Americans could singularly facilitate the establishment of despotism, and I had seen on my return to Europe how most of our princes had already made use of the ideas, sentiments, and needs to which this same social state had given birth to extend the sphere of their power."⁸⁶

The Superman could use this despotism to his advantage, akin to the rulers of France.

Those individuals under the despot that Tocqueville describes bear remarkable similarity to Nietzsche's "last man," a concept explained further in chapter three in much detail.

Tocqueville believes that if democracy established despotism, it would be "more excessive and milder, and it would degrade men without tormenting them"⁸⁷. That those under despotism are not slaves in the literal sense, of being bound, oppressed, or "tormented," puts them in a state of complacency and primes them for being ruled.

⁸² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 165.

⁸³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 55.

⁸⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 165.

⁸⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 165.

⁸⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 661.

⁸⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 662.

Reminiscent of Nietzsche's last men, these individuals survive while being weakened. The despot causes them to have weaker mores, renders them more humane, and causes them to share with their counterparts a sense of equality.⁸⁸

Tocqueville then reveals that the oppression brought about by democracy "will resemble nothing that has preceded it in the world."⁸⁹ Admittedly, Tocqueville finds difficulty in defining the kind of despotism that he thinks could be brought about by democracy. He describes this form of despotism in the following way,

"I see an innumerable crowd of like and equal men who revolve on themselves without repose, procuring the small and vulgar pleasures with which they fill their souls. Each of them, withdrawn and apart, is like a stranger to the destiny of all the others: his children and his particular friends form the whole human species for him; as for dwelling with his fellow citizens, he is beside them, but he does not see them; he touches them and does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone."⁹⁰

The despot is withdrawn and self-serving. His narrow-mindedness and lack of passion characterize him. The despot is primed for this position largely by democracy's equality for all men, which strips them of their free will. In time, the despot will likely tolerate this and even find it beneficial.⁹¹ Tocqueville explains, "Above these an immense tutelary power is elevated, which alone takes charge of assuring their enjoyments and watching over their fate."⁹² The power to which Tocqueville refers further cripples the masses. Further, it is democratically elected; the people paradoxically desire a unique, all-powerful sovereign that is also elected by the people.⁹³ It takes command of the people and seeks to be the sole arbiter of their happiness and security; it "foresees and secures

⁸⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 662.

⁸⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 662.

⁹⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 663.

⁹¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 663.

⁹² Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 663.

⁹³ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 664.

their needs, facilitates their pleasures, conducts their principal affairs.”⁹⁴ Of course, the despot offers no resistance to these efforts, and is likely to be in favor of them. With the lack of free will and the despot’s command, those under the despot are primed to accept the position of “the ruled”.

Democracy creates the despot; it conditions man to be ruled and levels him among his contemporaries. The Superman, developed in this environment, is inherently immune to these leveling forces and the suppression of his will. He is not influenced by the forces that weaken his counterparts, for he is inherently stronger than they are. This allows the Superman to develop unencumbered among the increasingly weakened masses. However, these circumstances are entirely ill suited for the Superman’s command. Once the Superman reaches his full development and derives all possible benefits from a democracy, he must forge his own way. While democracy serves to keep Man in a state of despotism and servitude, the Superman will free him. Tocqueville illuminates the weakening process of man by a sovereign power,

“After taking each individual by turns in its powerful hands and kneading him as it likes, the sovereign extends its arms over society as a whole; it covers its surface with a network of small, complicated, painstaking, uniform rules through which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot clear a way to surpass the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely forces one to act, but it constantly opposes itself to one’s acting; it does not destroy, it prevents things from being born; It does not tyrannize, it hinders, compromises, enervates, extinguishes, dazes and finally reduces each nation to being nothing more than a herd of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd.”⁹⁵

The last sentence is perhaps the most revealing and crucial for understanding both the danger of democracy for man as a whole and its inadequacy for the Superman’s rule. This phenomenon is also strikingly similar to Nietzsche’s description of democracy found in

⁹⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 663.

⁹⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, p. 663.

Beyond Good and Evil and the “industrious herd animal” that it fosters. It demonstrates why a democratic regime is wholly inadequate and disadvantageous for the Superman. Noted above, the sovereign of a democracy will soften wills, which is in stark contrast to the Superman, whose mission is to strengthen them. The sovereign of a democracy will command society with uniform rules, equalizing them further; the Superman will strive to increase the passions inherent in each man, rather than unifying them. The democratic sovereign will finally reduce nations to industrious herd animals, the precise devaluation and devolution that the Superman works and advocates *against*.

The Republic of Plato

Nietzsche’s ultimate project of the development and rise of the Superman can be understood through the conversation between Socrates and Adeimantus in *The Republic of Plato*. What Socrates regards as “tyrant” bears striking similarities to Nietzsche’s Superman. It is necessary to note that Nietzsche’s project is not explicit in the text to avoid correlating the Superman and tyrant literally, for both Nietzsche and Socrates understand each uniquely and in different contexts. Nevertheless, the similarities between the Superman and the tyrant are intriguing, to say the least. Socrates thought the tyrant would be born of a democracy. Plato’s characterization of democracy and the tyrant offer unique insights into the genesis of Nietzsche’s project, and how democracy will play a fundamental role in the Superman’s rise.

Socrates briefly notes that freedom of speech specifically is an inherent characteristic of a democratic regime; he generalizes a democracy as allowing its citizens to “do whatever one wants”.⁹⁶ Man is therefore given the ability to organize his life

⁹⁶ Allan Bloom, trans., *The Republic of Plato*, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 557b.

privately, in accordance with his wishes and without impediment.⁹⁷ While *The Republic* does not endorse democracy as the best regime, Socrates regards democracy as the most “fair”; Socrates understands the most fair to be the most beautiful. He refers to a democratic He compares the democracy to a “many-colored cloak, decorated in all hues, this regime, decorated with all dispositions, would also look fairest, and many perhaps like boys and women looking at many-colored things, would judge this to be the fairest regime.”⁹⁸ The multifaceted nature of a democracy also allows for the observance of other regimes within it. Socrates writes that democracies contain several kinds of regimes in it, and compares democracy to a general store in which a man can choose the regime that pleases him.⁹⁹ This phenomenon is made possible only by the high degree of freedom that democracy allows.

Equality is a fundamental characteristic of democracy. Socrates describes democracy as a regime “without rulers and many-colored, dispensing a certain equality to equals and unequals alike.”¹⁰⁰ Socrates illustrates this equality through democracy’s respect for all men.¹⁰¹ Democracy treats equally the men who are sentenced to death or exile and those who abide by laws and norms. The respect for the subversive in a democracy serves to benefit the Superman. Equal treatment of the condemned ensures that the Superman will not be silenced for his insubordination during his development. Citizens have the privilege and expectation of equal treatment in a democracy.

According to *The Republic*, democracy is the birthplace of tyranny. Socrates states, “Tyranny is probably established out of no other regime than democracy, I

⁹⁷ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 557b.

⁹⁸ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 557c.

⁹⁹ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 557d.

¹⁰⁰ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 558c.

¹⁰¹ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 558c.

suppose the greatest and most savage slavery out of the extreme of freedom.”¹⁰² Tyranny is regarded as the most corrupt and immoral regime, and a disease of democracy, for in a tyranny the ruler exploits citizens for his own benefit. While Plato makes no explicit reference to the Superman in *The Republic*, there are several parallels between the Superman and the “tyrant” that Socrates describes. If one understands the tyrant as Nietzsche’s Superman throughout the dialogue, the text offers significant support for the birth of the Superman in a democracy.

Socrates explicitly states that in a democracy all sorts of human beings come to fruition.¹⁰³ This phenomenon provides the high degree of individuality afforded by democracy, which is necessary for the Superman’s development. Socrates explains further that in a tyranny the most courageous lead and the less courageous follow.¹⁰⁴ This concept substantiates Nietzsche’s claim that the Superman will rule over lesser men. He then explains that the people typically “set up some one man as their special leader” and fosters his growth; “It’s plain, therefore, that when a tyrant grows naturally, he sprouts from a root of leadership and from nowhere else.”¹⁰⁵ In accord with Nietzsche’s conception of the Superman is Socrates’ description that the tyrant inherently equipped to rule and realize his potential in a democracy. The concepts aforementioned offer strong support for the Superman’s birth and development in a democracy. The Superman assumes his role in a democracy naturally and of his own volition. Socrates illustrates this point, “It’s plain that this leader himself doesn’t lie ‘great in his greatness’ on the ground,

¹⁰² Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 564a.

¹⁰³ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 557c.

¹⁰⁴ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 564b.

¹⁰⁵ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 565d.

but, having cast down many others, stands in the chariot of the city.”¹⁰⁶ Like the tyrant Socrates describes, the Superman does not merely serve as an embodiment of power or as a symbolic head of state; the Superman effectively and purposefully rules over the people.

¹⁰⁶ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 566d.

Chapter 2

Freedom

The Superman's development within liberal democracy is intrinsically connected to the concept of freedom for liberal democracy is the only regime that allows him to exercise his individuality and therefore assert his influence. The Superman must develop freely, without the threat of retribution. The concept of freedom is also connected to the masses whose freedom depends on the "survival" of horizons.

Horizons pose a limit on one's perspective; thus one's freedom is limited to the boundaries of his or her horizon. Paradoxically, the limits that a horizon imposes on one's perspective are necessary for freedom. Horizons are fundamental constructs in Nietzsche's project, which dictates that the Superman will form a horizon for those over whom he rules. The function of horizons must be understood before one can understand their importance for the Superman's development and eventual rule.

Nietzsche discusses horizons in *The Use and Abuse of History*. He states, "A living thing can only be healthy, strong and productive within a certain horizon."¹⁰⁷ The horizon fosters an unhistorical state of being, which is necessary for man to live "blind to dangers" and "deaf to warnings"¹⁰⁸. Horizons allow man to live happily, and without boredom or dissimulation. If an individual is unable to draw a horizon around oneself, he or she will wither away to an untimely end.¹⁰⁹ Horizons constitute the only condition that provides the "foundation of every sound and real growth"¹¹⁰ and "everything that is

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 8.

truly great and human”¹¹¹. Only within a horizon can man develop fully. Nietzsche explains,

“Cheerfulness, a good conscience, belief in the future, the joyful deed all depend, in the individual as well as the nation, on there being a line that divides the visible and clear from the vague and shadowy; we must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember, and instinctively see when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically.”¹¹²

For this reason, horizons can be understood as “illusions” that are wholeheartedly believed as if true.

Fundamental to the survival of horizons, and therefore man, is the rejection of history. Nietzsche’s treatment of history should not be interpreted in its literal meaning, but rather the pursuit of knowledge and the primacy of reason. Nietzsche boldly asserts that history injures and destroys all living things, be it men, people, or cultures.¹¹³ History serves to annihilate horizons by exposing them as illusions through reason. Man reasons, thinks, reflects, and compares, all of which serves to limit the unhistorical element of horizons. With an excess of reason and awareness, Man becomes increasingly aware of his horizons. By pushing the boundaries of his perspective and embracing the historical, Man approaches and eventually reaches the boundary of his horizon. Once this boundary is surpassed the horizon is broken and the illusion is revealed. Ironically, by destroying his horizons, Man destroys himself. Man brings upon himself his own demise. He bears the ultimate responsibility for his destruction, using history as the fatal instrument.

The shattering of horizons has disastrous implications for Man. As Man increasingly embraces history, he unchains himself from his truths. Paradoxically, this unbinding does not foster his freedom, but robs him of it. “But an excess of history makes

¹¹¹ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 8.

¹¹² Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 8.

¹¹³ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 7.

him flag again, while without the veil of the unhistorical he would never have the courage to begin.”¹¹⁴ History cripples man and weakens his Will to Power. The Will to Power, is the struggle between his drives for supremacy. There is a natural tension within every man between his most powerful instincts and drives, each trying to win over the other. This is the driving force of all life. History robs man of the safety and assurance felt within a horizon. He lacks the courage of his convictions because he loses any notion of absolute truth. Once history has eliminated horizons, man will retreat into himself and wither away. Nietzsche characterizes the man without horizons as one overly concerned with facts, not prone to emotional outbursts, and one who understands how to seek his own advantage.¹¹⁵ These men are embodied in the “last man”, a concept that will be elaborated upon later in this text.

The Superman requires certain conditions in order to survive, and it is clear that he requires an ahistorical framework in order to create and maintain a horizon. While the Superman must construct a horizon for the masses, the Superman himself lacks horizons. Nietzsche states, “Freedom from any kind of conviction is part of the strength of his will.”¹¹⁶ The Superman is an exception to Nietzsche’s principle that all individuals are only strong within a horizon; he does not require horizons and *is*, in fact, a horizon himself. This exception enables the Superman to thrive in a democracy, in which he lacks horizons. A horizon is a set of assumptions about and a conception of absolute truth, and the Superman will embody both during his rule. Nietzsche’s antagonism to Hegel is perhaps shown most profoundly through his total rejection of the historical process. The

¹¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 8

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Use and Abuse of History*, p. 64

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 963.

Superman requires this rejection for his survival. Once the Superman embodies a horizon for the masses, any conception of a liberal democratic institution would be entirely unknown to the people. By amassing a following that obeys him with unwavering loyalty, the Superman will usher in the abandonment of liberal democracy. The people will view him as the ultimate authority, and he will come to rule by his own power and spirit. No democratic institution will create or legitimize his authority. The Superman will provide a “truth” and a new perspective to the masses, a horizon, in which the people will thrive. Thus, Nietzsche’s project is feasible only if the Superman is able to construct a horizon.

Politics as a Vocation

The Superman’s development and rise to power in a democracy seems somewhat paradoxical; from a regime characterized by the rule of the people, an undemocratic leader will develop within its confines and eventually “rule” over them. The Superman is not elected by the people in any capacity, which begs the question, from where does the Superman’s authority derive? Certainly, the Superman is exceptional and unique in his ability to construct a horizon and amass a following. Max Weber offers an answer in *Politics as a Vocation* by introducing the concept of charismatic authority.

Weber identifies three types of political legitimacy. Traditional legitimacy is “sanctified by a validity that extends back into the mists of time and is perpetuated by habit”.¹¹⁷ It is characterized by tradition and custom, and exercised by patriarchs.¹¹⁸ By contrast, legal authority is contingent upon the perceived validity of legal statutes and a

¹¹⁷ Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), p. 34.

¹¹⁸ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 34.

“person’s willingness to carry out statutory duties obediently”.¹¹⁹ A democratic executive possesses legal authority as a “servant of the state”¹²⁰. Both types of political legitimacy are wholly inadequate for the Superman and for the project Nietzsche advocates. The Superman is an entirely new type of leader, making traditional legitimacy rooted in prior rule unfeasible. Legal authority is also wholly inadequate given that it derives from the people.

The Superman possesses charismatic authority, the kind in which Weber is most interested. Weber classifies this subtype as the “authority of the extraordinary, personal gift of grace or charisma, that is, the wholly personal devotion to, and a personal trust in, the revelations, heroism, or other leadership qualities of an individual.”¹²¹ Submission to a charismatic leader is fundamentally illogical; loyalties are a product of individuals’ faith in the ruler rather than in statutes. One’s allegiance to a charismatic leader offers no apparent benefits to his adherents. In many cases, one’s devotion to a charismatic leader is disadvantageous. The Superman’s charismatic authority is necessary for his rise in a democracy, for his ideals are subversive to a democratic regime. Certainly, his following is a product of his person, for he advocates a hierarchical order and ideals that are inherently undemocratic. Weber’s explanation of charismatic authority is the key to resolving the apparent irony of the Superman’s rise to power in liberal democracy. The Superman’s charismatic authority is the necessary factor in his ability to create a horizon.

Weber’s lecture is especially useful in its capacity to “operationalize” the Superman and his leadership qualities that, when discussed elsewhere, are largely abstract. Weber discusses the politician at length, and the characteristics that make him

¹¹⁹ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 34.

¹²⁰ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 34.

¹²¹ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 34.

an effective leader. The politician derives from his position a sense of power, that because he is raised above the masses he has influence over the people, and “holds in his hands a strand of some important historical process.”¹²² This man is one who possesses the right to “grasp the spokes of the wheel of history.”¹²³ Weber identifies three characteristics that are crucial for a politician: passion, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of proportion.¹²⁴

Weber defines passion for the purpose of the politician as the “commitment to the matter in hand” or a “passionate dedication to a ‘cause,’ to the God or demon that presides over it.”¹²⁵ He is careful to distinguish between the aforementioned concept of passion and the popularly noted “sterile excitement”¹²⁶ that passion is commonly understood to entail. A leader is not characterized by this reckless and impulsive behavior, a passion devoid of responsibility and uninformed by a purpose. Weber states,

“For mere passion, however sincerely felt, is not enough itself. It cannot make a politician of anyone, unless service to a ‘cause’ also means that a sense of responsibility toward that cause is made the decisive guiding light of action. And for that (and this is the crucial psychological characteristic of the politician) a sense of proportion is required, the ability to allow realities to impinge on you while maintaining inner calm and composure.”¹²⁷

Each component, passion, responsibility, and a sense of proportion are all necessary but not sufficient on their own for leadership. Passion alone cannot lead, for without a sense of purpose there can be no progress. A sense of responsibility grounds the leader and provides a cause. However, responsibility alone is wholly insufficient for proper leadership, especially that of the Superman’s. Passion not only represents dedication to a

¹²² Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 76.

¹²³ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 76.

¹²⁴ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 76.

¹²⁵ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 76.

¹²⁶ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 76.

¹²⁷ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

cause, but also manifests the Will to Power, which Nietzsche identifies as the driving force of all life.

Weber identifies an important characteristic to be an effective ruler, that of distance between the leader and the people. He states, “The ‘absence of distance,’ pure and simple, is one of the deadly sins of every politician.”¹²⁸ For the Superman, this distance could be a key component in his ability to construct a horizon. Without a level of transcendence and distance, a horizon would not be possible. The Superman must be elevated and separated from the people in order to lead them. Weber describes the leader as someone within whom a “unity between hot passion and a cool sense of proportion”¹²⁹ is forged. Clearly shown in Nietzsche’s texts, the Superman embodies the passion necessary for leadership. He is described as exceptional, passionate, and driven. What is less clear, albeit valid, is his “cool sense of proportion”. Nevertheless, his ability to construct a horizon is a manifestation of his focus and purpose. His ability to overcome himself is further reflective of levelheaded qualities. The Superman is not characterized by “sterile excitement” alone, for that would offer no direction for the people. Instead, the text largely substantiates Weber’s claim that the leader must be both passionate and purposeful.

Weber then adds that politics is “made with the mind, not with other parts of the body or the soul”.¹³⁰ Although, this responsibility is mitigated and sustained by passion, “If politics is to be an authentic human activity and not just a frivolous intellectual game, commitment to it must be born of passion and be nourished by it.”¹³¹ The passionate

¹²⁸ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

¹²⁹ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

¹³⁰ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

¹³¹ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

component speaks to the Superman's charisma, from which he maintains and derives his authority. While responsibility and a sense of proportion ensure that the Superman leads with a purpose, it is likely that passion draws his following and solidifies loyalty to him. The Superman's passion makes him exceptional and differentiates him from the bureaucratic politicians who partake in "frivolous intellectual games". Weber's politician is also exceptional by his "power instinct"¹³², which certainly characterizes the Superman and is reminiscent of the "will to power". Weber ends his lecture with several references that allude to the Superman. He notes that certain individuals are unequal to the rest, and have a natural inclination for leadership. Certain individuals are inclined to face head on the "challenge of the world"¹³³. This same leader is also a "hero in a very literal sense"¹³⁴. The last remark of his lecture is especially profound when applied to the Superman,

"The only man who has a 'vocation' for politics is one who is certain that his spirit will not be broken if the world, when looked at from his point of view, proves too stupid or base to accept what he wishes to offer it, and who, when faced with all that obduracy, can still say 'Nevertheless!' despite everything."¹³⁵

If nothing else, the Superman's purpose is to save obtuse individuals from the permanent loss of their Will to Power. He accomplishes this by constructing a horizon, made possible by his passion and purpose. Weber's *Politics as a Vocation*, while not an explicit response to Nietzsche, was likely drafted with Nietzsche's project in mind. The Superman's source of authority and legitimacy is "operationalized" and explained solely in this work, making it an invaluable and illuminating source for a study of Nietzsche's Superman as a leader.

¹³² Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

¹³³ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 93.

¹³⁴ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 93.

¹³⁵ Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 93.

Death of God

The death of God makes possible the Superman and also makes him necessary, and is a fundamental construct in Nietzsche's project. The necessity of the horizon of the Superman is due to the death of God. In Zarathustra's Prologue, Zarathustra proclaims, "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, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth."¹³⁶ Reflective of Nietzsche's attitude toward the death of God, Zarathustra expresses the death of God with contempt. Contrary to popular belief, Nietzsche does not revel in the death of God, but rather fears that God's death will reduce Man. Explained through Zarathustra, Nietzsche highlights Man's shift from the belief in God to belief only in the tangible. Because of the death of God, Man now comprehends and invests only in that which he can see. He abides by the confines of his earthly senses and does not devote himself to anything outside of their reach. Through the death of God, Man lost the source from which he derived all value. As such, Man turns toward himself in the search for value on earth.

Nietzsche continues to show the dire consequences of the death of God by way of the madman in *The Gay Science*. The madman runs into the marketplace in a frenzy shouting, "I seek God!", and his frantic proclamations are met with laughter, confusion, and disdain among the crowd.¹³⁷ In a panic, the madman proclaims, "Whither is God... I shall tell you. We have killed him you and I. All of us are his murderers."¹³⁸ Nietzsche uses dramatic language in this passage to reflect the severity of the death of God and its detriment to Man, which sincerely troubles Nietzsche. Man has eradicated the horizon of

¹³⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* p. 13.

¹³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 125.

¹³⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 125.

God through his excess of history, which leaves man without a standard for morality. The madman continues,

“Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun... Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?”¹³⁹

The madman, who is uniquely aware of this crisis, possibly represents Nietzsche himself. Not only is Man without direction or purpose, but he is also keenly unaware of it. When Man finally realizes the godless world he created, chaos will ensue. Man, who is presently complacent, will adopt the madman’s perspective. Nietzsche is unique in his ability to foresee the degradation of man, and the story of the madman successfully illustrates his panic and hopelessness.

The madman’s panicked tirade introduces the nihilistic era that man has created by killing “what was holiest and most powerful”¹⁴⁰. Without God, and the concept of God, man has removed any standard by which to judge morality. Man derived a source of meaning from God, without which he cannot prosper. Man survives without the horizon God offers, but he does not thrive. In order to thrive, man must have horizons that give him the happiness and freedom that he requires. Morality is no longer a constant, but has rather become a matter of individual preference. With the death of God comes the loss of all value in the modern world, Nietzsche’s most profound problem.

Nietzsche inextricably links the death of God with nihilism in *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but his explicit remarks in each text are isolated to only a handful of aphorisms. In Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, he discusses the link in more detail,

¹³⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 125.

¹⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 125.

and immediately states that nihilism is rooted in the Christian-moral problem¹⁴¹. He is quick to clarify that nihilism is not a product of “social distress or physiological degeneration or, worse, corruption,”¹⁴² but rather the “end of moral interpretation of the world”¹⁴³. Nietzsche defines nihilism as “the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and desirability”¹⁴⁴. Ultimately, nihilism will lead to the reevaluation of values when “the highest values devalue themselves”¹⁴⁵

As previously noted, the death of God removes the standard by which morality is judged. Nietzsche identifies four advantages of Christian morality prior to the death of God,

“It granted man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away. It served the advocates of God insofar as it conceded to the world, in spite of suffering and evil, the character of perfection including ‘freedom’: evil appeared full of meaning. It posited that man had a knowledge of absolute values and this adequate knowledge precisely regarding what is most important. It prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking sides against life; from despairing of knowledge: it was a means of preservation.”¹⁴⁶

Without “God” as a horizon, Man is morally aimless and without an authority to provide direction. Man seeks authority in his own conscience, in reason, in the herd, and in history.¹⁴⁷ Through the Superman, the loss of morality leads to the reevaluation of all values. The reevaluation is explicitly defined,

“To revalue values, what would that mean? All the spontaneous new, future, stronger movements must be there; but they still appear under false names and valuations and have not yet become conscious of themselves. A courageous becoming-conscious and affirmation of what has been achieved a liberation from

¹⁴¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 7.

¹⁴² Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 7.

¹⁴³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 20.

the slovenly routine of old valuations that dishonor us in the best and strongest things we have achieved.”¹⁴⁸

The revaluation aims to remove the former constructs of morality that only weaken Man’s Will to Power. The revaluation is made possible by the death of God. The revaluation makes way for the Superman to provide a horizon for the masses.

The Superman will overcome morality, which weakens and constricts man, and promote freedom. Nietzsche defines freedom as “the will to assume responsibility for oneself. That one maintains the distance that separates us.”¹⁴⁹ Nietzsche alludes to a hierarchical system in this definition of freedom by stratification among people. One is free when one has the ability to exercise one’s Will to Power freely and overcome both oneself and others. Nietzsche continues to define freedom, “That one becomes more indifferent to difficulties, hardships, privation, even to life itself... Freedom means that the manly instincts which delight in war and victory dominate over other instincts, for example, over those of ‘pleasure.’”¹⁵⁰ Man becomes more free when he abides by his instincts, even at the expense of his perceived happiness or well being. Man’s freedom is measured by the resistance that he overcomes.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1007.

¹⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 38.

¹⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 38.

¹⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 38.

Chapter 3

Last Man and Superman

Nietzsche's fears for the future of mankind are embodied in the "last man" and can only be dispelled by the Superman. Introduced in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the last man represents the final stage of mankind's evolution, after which there will be no growth or progress. Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to the last man in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which could mislead readers by suggesting that the problem of the last man is not as severe as described in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. On the contrary, the last man is a manifestation of the conditions that Nietzsche advocates against. The last man is the fundamental reason for Nietzsche's primary project, which is the development of the Superman. In order to understand the Superman's importance, one must first identify the circumstances that will promote the last man's development and understand the conditions that will favor the Superman. Though not explicitly cited in *Beyond Good and Evil*, specific aphorisms implicitly refer to both the last man and the Superman. By gleaning as much information as possible from these aphorisms, one can begin to understand that the last man is the foundation of Nietzsche's critique of democracy and the degradation of the human spirit and will, and the Superman is Man's only hope for salvation.

Identifying the explicit references to the last man is necessary before any inferences can be made regarding the last man's characteristics in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The last man first appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in Zarathustra's prologue. Zarathustra addresses the people and reveals that the last man is the most contemptible being. He explains that the last man has left the regions where it was hard to live, for

“one needs warmth”¹⁵². A key characteristic of the last man is his aversion to struggle. The last man does not accrue wealth or become poor, for both require too much exertion. He has a regard for health, but not pleasure. The last man’s concern for health can be understood as the intention of self-preservation, which is not to be confused with the Will to Power. The key difference between the will to self-preservation and the Will to Power will be discussed further in the following paragraph. Zarathustra regards the generation of last men as a herd with no shepherd. The reference to a herd or flock calls to mind the “herd animal” that Nietzsche notes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a phenomenon that will also be discussed in further detail below. The crowd also repeats several times, “We have found happiness” and its members blink absentmindedly at Zarathustra.¹⁵³ This statement suggests that the last man’s primary goal is the attainment of happiness rather than any power or purpose. Nietzsche’s portrayal of the last man in the prologue, albeit short, is most revealing. The last man is the antithesis of mankind’s intellectual progress and passion. Clearly, Nietzsche regards the mediocre and unburdened life of the last man to be the most despicable.

In order to understand the last man, one must first identify what Nietzsche regards as the defining characteristics of the strong and passionate man who has not been degraded or weakened himself. By examining organic beings that thrive, one can glean the characteristics of those that do not. For Nietzsche, the Will to Power is the fundamental and foundational quality of all human beings. The degradation of this Will to Power culminates in the last man. Nietzsche explains the Will to Power as a living thing that “seeks above all to discharge its strength-life itself is will to power; self-

¹⁵² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 17.

¹⁵³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 18.

preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*.”¹⁵⁴ Nietzsche purposefully highlights the difference between the Will to Power and the instinct of self-preservation, explaining that the mere effort the last man makes to protect his life is distinct from and should not be confused with the possession of the Will to Power.

Nietzsche also reveals the Will to Power through Zarathustra. He first defines the Will to Power as the “unexhausted procreative will of life”¹⁵⁵. Zarathustra reveals the significance of the Will to Power,

“Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life but, thus I teach you, will to power. There is much that life esteems more highly than life itself; but out of the esteeming itself speaks the will to power.”¹⁵⁶

Through Zarathustra, Nietzsche boldly claims that the Will to Power is more fundamental for humans than the will to life itself. Nietzsche reveals, “Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master.”¹⁵⁷ That even the slave possesses the Will to Power is an indication of the universality of the Will to Power in each living being, not only those considered “powerful”. Of course, Nietzsche does not limit himself in reference of the literal “slave”, but rather applies this doctrine to all men, given that the Will to Power is the universal life force. He refers to the slave to illustrate this principle, that even an individual defined by servitude still possesses and exercises the Will to Power. Therefore, the force of the Will to Power does not exclude individuals who would not be considered “powerful”. He continues, “That the weaker should serve the stronger, to that it is persuaded by its own

¹⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 115.

¹⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 114.

will, which would be master over what is weaker still.”¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche alludes to the supremacy of drives, that even in serving, one’s Will to Power is very much at play by certain desires or instincts overpowering others. The tension between drives is explained, albeit briefly, “Thus a drive as master, its opposite weakened, refined, as the impulse that provides the stimulus for the activity of the chief drive.”¹⁵⁹ The Will to Power is exercised by drives competing for dominance, a subconscious event. This will is uninformed by reason or morality and exercises itself as a basic life force. Even in the individual who seems most powerless, the drives’ struggle for supremacy within him is ubiquitous. While the people can deem him powerless, the Will to Power still exists in his servitude.

Nietzsche draws an important link between the Will to Power and the Superman, again through Zarathustra. Nietzsche explains, “Life itself confided this secret to me: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘*I am that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: but all this is one, and one secret’.”¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche’s language in this revelation is no accident; as the Will to Power manifests in life *overcoming* itself, he likens the Will to Power to the “overman”, or Superman. That he uses the same word, “over”, both in the “overman” and that the purpose of life is “overcoming”, shows that the Superman is the ultimate form of Man. His existence fulfills the purpose of life itself. He overcomes himself, becoming the “overman”. He is the embodiment of the Will to Power. He further alludes to the Superman, “Whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but

¹⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 115.

¹⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 966.

¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 115.

this is creative.”¹⁶¹ The Superman, who brings with him the revaluation of all values by way of the death of God, does so by manifesting the Will to Power. Nietzsche confirms the strength of the Superman’s Will to Power and draws a connection between the Will to Power and morality, “Freedom from any kind of conviction is part of the strength of his will.”¹⁶² He continues,

“The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant “man shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully, but are controlled.”¹⁶³

Despite his “abundance of contrary drives and impulses within himself,”¹⁶⁴ the Superman’s supreme Will to Power makes him master of the earth.

Values and the Will to Power are connected by way of morality, for “moralities are the expression of locally limited orders of rank in his multifarious world of drives.”¹⁶⁵ The Superman exhibits a unique level of transcendence, both over himself and over morality. In Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols*, he states, “My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he take his stand *beyond* good and evil and leave the illusion of moral judgment *beneath* himself.”¹⁶⁶ Certainly Nietzsche does not mean to advocate nihilism by demanding that the Superman look beyond good and evil. On the contrary, the Superman must break the mistaken conceptions of what modern man considers both good and evil, thus overcoming nihilism. Nietzsche explains this phenomenon in the aptly named, “Improvers of Mankind”,

“Morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena, more precisely, a misinterpretation. Moral judgments, like religious ones, belong to a stage of

¹⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 116.

¹⁶² Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 963.

¹⁶³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 966.

¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 966.

¹⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 966.

¹⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 1.

ignorance at which the very concept of the real and the distinction between what is real and imaginary, are still lacking: thus ‘truth,’ at this state, designates all sorts of things which we today call ‘imaginings.’ Moral judgments are therefore never to be taken literally: so understood, they always contain mere absurdity.”¹⁶⁷

Modern morality must be transcended, for it only serves to weaken and corrupt man, all the while claiming to improve him. Nietzsche compares this effort to the “taming of a beast”¹⁶⁸, which he regards as “almost like a joke to our ears”¹⁶⁹. Through the modern doctrines of morality, “They are weakened, they are made less harmful, and through the depressive effect of fear, through pain, through wounds, and through hunger they become sickly beasts. It is no different with the tamed man whom the priest has ‘improved’.”¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche highlights our flawed conception of what is “good” by likening the debased beast to the pious man, who was made weak by morality. It is the crucial task of the Superman to transcend this morality and stop the enervation of man.

The text offers significant parallels to the weakening of man by the “improvers” of society. Nietzsche writes that modern men are “very tender, very easily hurt, and offering as well as receiving consideration a hundred-fold.”¹⁷¹ The moderns want at all costs “to avoid bumping into a stone.”¹⁷² The aversion to struggle is a key characteristic of the last man, further elaborated upon in *Beyond Good and Evil*. The last man is then tied to the Will to Power. Nietzsche writes, “The decrease in instincts which are hostile and around mistrust, and that is all our ‘progress’ amounts to, general decrease in *vitality*: it requires a hundred times more trouble and caution to make so conditional and late an

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 1.

¹⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 2.

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 2.

¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 2.

¹⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 37.

¹⁷² Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 2.

existence prevail.”¹⁷³ Morality corrupts the Will to Power by undermining Man’s instincts, and again dubs this weakening “progress”. Virtue is described as an illness.¹⁷⁴

This degradation of the Will to Power is explained quite clearly and purposefully in Nietzsche’s *The Antichrist*,

“I call an animal, a species, or an individual corrupt when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it prefers, what is disadvantageous for it. A history of ‘lofty sentiments,’ of the ‘ideals of mankind’ - and it is possible that I shall have to write it- would almost explain too *why* man is so corrupt. Life itself is to my mind the instinct for growth, for durability, for an accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. It is my contention that all the supreme values of mankind *lack* this will that the values which are symptomatic of decline, *nihilistic* values, are lording it under the holiest names.”¹⁷⁵

Nietzsche identifies a fundamental component of his philosophy, that morality weakens the Will to Power, the driving force of life itself. Morality does not simply misguide Man; it ruins him. This very corruption leads to the last man, and only the Superman can remedy such depravity by overriding morality and thereby saving the Will to Power.

Aphorism 259 suggests a connection between the Will to Power and the last man. Particularly, Nietzsche connects the Will to Power with modern Europeans. He states that Europeans everywhere are “raving... about coming conditions of society in which ‘the exploitative aspect’ will be removed, which sounds to me as if they promised to invent a way of life that would dispense with all organic functions.”¹⁷⁶ What the people render as exploitative could be understood as adversity. Of course, Nietzsche places “exploitative aspect” in quotations, which differentiates popular opinion from his own. His opinion is one that embraces both struggle and exploitation, and sees both as manifestations of the Will to Power. Nietzsche reveals several interesting implications in this aphorism. First,

¹⁷³ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 37.

¹⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 37.

¹⁷⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), 6.

¹⁷⁶ Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 259.

Nietzsche draws a link between Europeans and the last man. The set of conditions that the Europeans look forward to is most likely a reference to the immanent weakening and mediocritization of man by way of democracy. These are the very conditions that will create the last man. Second, Nietzsche reveals that by denying the Will to Power, the Europeans thereby “dispense with all organic functions”. The last man could be understood as an artificial version of what man was designed to be. Nietzsche also reveals that the purpose of “exploitation” is to characterize the “essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life.”¹⁷⁷ The last man can be understood as the individual who refrains from injury, violence, and exploitation. The last man represents the end of the Will to Power.

Nietzsche’s concept of the “free spirits” and the falsely named free spirits, or levelers, sheds light on the last man. Nietzsche emphasizes throughout *Beyond Good and Evil* the value of struggle and turmoil in propelling man toward a higher, stronger race. He explains the free spirits, “We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart...that everything evil, terrible, everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species ‘man’ as much as its opposite does.”¹⁷⁸ The free spirits serve to combat the levelers of society in both Europe and in America and their pursuit of a life void of struggle. During a discussion of the free spirits, the levelers can be interpreted as the facilitators of last men. The levelers have a desire for the “universal green-pasture happiness of the herd, with security, lack of danger, comfort, and an easier life for everyone”.¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche proclaims that this new type of man presents a stark contrast to the free spirits by their aversion to struggle. While the

¹⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 259.

¹⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 44

¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 44

free spirits use struggle to propel themselves forward, the last men will cower from danger.

The last man believes in equality of rights, which perpetuates their place in society as “herd animals”. Nietzsche refers to the equality of men as the “greatest of all lies” that only serves to level them.¹⁸⁰ Further, he explicitly states, “Equal rights is an essential feature of decline.”¹⁸¹ The concept of a herd animal characterizes the last man, for the herd animal concerns himself more with compliance and equality than with his own instincts, drives, or passions. The systematic denial of instinct, which is the driving force of life, characterizes the last man. The herd animal is described as “a smaller, almost ridiculous type... something eager to please, sickly, and mediocre has been bred, the European of today”.¹⁸² Nietzsche makes clear throughout the text that the modern European increasingly embodies the last man because the modern European is becoming a herd animal. For the modern European “there is more flattering of modest merits today than ever before: it gives the age a veneer of boundless fairness.”¹⁸³ The glorification of mediocrity only serves to further degrade and level man.

This phenomenon begs the question, what perpetuates the last man in Europe? What characterizes Europe in particular that degrades mankind? In modern Europe,

“The herd man gives the appearance of being the only permissible kind of man, and glorifies his attributes, which make him tame, easy to get along with, and useful to the herd. As if they were the truly human virtues: namely, public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation... and pity.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 464.

¹⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 37.

¹⁸² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 62.

¹⁸³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 783.

¹⁸⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 199.

A defining characteristic of the last man is the prioritization of the group over the individual. The virtues that Nietzsche cites above benefit the herd far more than the individual and thus represent a degradation of the Will to Power. However, while the herd mentality makes man more agreeable, Nietzsche explicitly warns against its implementation, “The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions.”¹⁸⁵ The leader to whom Nietzsche refers, the Superman, must avoid the proclivities of the herd. By doing so, an order of rank is established, and a distance forged between the herd and the Superman that will allow him to lead. By noting the superiority of the Superman’s instincts over that of the peoples, Nietzsche offers an implicit endorsement of the order of rank, or a kind of aristocracy. An explicit endorsement is found in *Twilight of the Idols*, “The cleavage between man and man, status and status, the plurality of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out, what I call the *pathos of distance*, that is characteristic of every strong age.”¹⁸⁶ He continues, “Aristocracy represents the belief in an elite humanity and higher caste.”¹⁸⁷ The importance of aristocracy for the Superman derives from his ability to transcend the masses. Specifically, “He needs the opposition of the masses, of the ‘leveled,’ a feeling of distance from them! He stands on them, he lives off them. This higher form of aristocracy is that of the future.”¹⁸⁸ That the people are stratified is reflective of the Superman’s manifested Will to Power, something that can only come to fruition in an aristocracy. For his rule, only the aristocracy will allow the Superman to exercise his Will to Power and transcend the masses.

¹⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 287.

¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 37.

¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 752.

¹⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 866.

The herd animal mentality is particularly applicable in Europe due to the integration of races and origins. The new generation of hybrids is a key characteristic of the last man. Nietzsche explains, “Such human beings of late cultures and refracted lights will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end.”¹⁸⁹ The reference to the “war they are” is a clear indication of the absence of the Will to Power. It is also another indication of the new generation’s aversion to struggle or turmoil. Nietzsche confirms this principle when he regards the mixing of classes, and therefore race, as the paralysis of the will. This paralysis occurs when races or classes that have historically been separated are crossed “suddenly and decisively”¹⁹⁰. In the new generation that characterizes much of Europe due to prolific interbreeding the last men have inherited diverse standards and values. These last men are characterized by skepticism and everything within them is unrest. The mixture of virtues prohibits any single virtue from becoming strong or centered.¹⁹¹ More important than the survival of virtues is the survival of the will. Nietzsche explains that “what becomes sickest and degenerates most in such hybrids is the will: they no longer know independence of decisions and the intrepid sense of pleasure in willing.”¹⁹² The democratic mingling of classes is particularly noteworthy because it causes instincts to “run back everywhere”¹⁹³ and create an inner chaos. The mixing between the races will produce the generation of last men who will lose their Will to Power. By way of homogenization, individuals’ instincts and drives are tempered. Drives do not struggle between themselves with the same intensity, and thus the Will to Power is decreased.

¹⁸⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 200.

¹⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 208.

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 208.

¹⁹² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 208.

¹⁹³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 224.

Key to the integration of races is the institution of democracy that integrates citizens in Europe. Aphorism 242 of “Peoples and Fatherlands” contains several indirect references to the last man. Nietzsche explains that Europeans are becoming homogenized and “they become more and more detached from the conditions under which races originate that are tied to some climate or class; they become increasingly independent of any determinate milieu that would like to inscribe itself...in body and soul.”¹⁹⁴ The homogenization of Europe has weakening effects, for it causes humans to conform to each other rather than embrace their inherent differences. In an effort to conform, the Will to Power is suppressed. Nietzsche also explains that the democratic revolution will inevitably lead to the leveling and mediocritization of man “to a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal.”¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche refers to the democratic movement as a form of both political decay and the decay of man to the extent that it lowers his Will to Power.

It is clear that the last man will result from democratic conditions because the very conditions of democracy promote homogenization among citizens. To a significant extent, democracy encourages the herd-animal mentality, which is a defining characteristic of the last man. The Will to Power cannot be manifested in the citizens of a democracy, for democracy is inherently subversive to the Will to Power. Nietzsche goes so far to say that democracy prepares mankind for slavery, a clear reference to the last man. However, twice in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche explicitly states that in very rare cases, democracy will birth an exceptional man, or the Superman.

¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

The last man is a necessary component in understanding Nietzsche's project of the development of the Superman. The last man represents the end of progress and the devolution of mankind. Once the generation of the last man is realized there can be no hope for the Superman and no salvation for society. Nietzsche's primary purpose is the development of the Superman; the identification of the conditions that will promote the last man is critical in preventing his manifestation. While the last man is not explicitly identified in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and only briefly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a critical analysis shows countless implicit warnings about the last man in the text.

Nietzsche demonstrates the urgency of his project through Zarathustra's proclamation in the prologue. Zarathustra tells the people that the time has come for man to "set himself a goal" and "plant a seed of the highest hope" before the soil becomes degenerated.¹⁹⁶ In a clear reference to the Superman, Zarathustra then reveals that once the soil is poor and domesticated, no tall tree could ever hope to grow there. Zarathustra foreshadows the last man when he tells the people that a time is coming when man will be unable to "shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir"¹⁹⁷. This remark links the last man to the Superman.

Zarathustra warns the people that the generation of the last man is immanent unless the Superman is created, and that he must be created while they still possess the conditions and means necessary to do so. Specifically, the people must still retain their Will to Power. While the Will to Power is still exercised, there remains hope for the Superman's development. Zarathustra makes this principle perfectly known when he states, "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I

¹⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 17.

¹⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 17.

say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.”¹⁹⁸ Zarathustra’s plea is one of urgency. He warns the people of the coming of the last man when he tells them that “a time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the last man.”¹⁹⁹ While Zarathustra’s warning is severe, it is not hopeless. While he explains to the people that they still possess the qualities necessary to develop the Superman, he cautions that once the last man comes to fruition, all hope will be lost for their salvation by way of the Superman. Once the last man is realized, he will lose a sense of awareness and be unable to accept the Superman as a horizon. Man is presently weakened, but he is not weakened to the point of the total loss of his Will to Power.

Nietzsche introduces the Superman in Zarathustra’s prologue. Zarathustra boldly regards the Superman as the meaning of the earth.²⁰⁰ He then explains that man is a rope tied between the beast and the Superman, and that the Superman will serve to *overcome* man. This statement also verifies that mankind itself is not hopeless until it reaches the last man. While man remains in the middle of this metaphorical rope, so long as he does not reach the end of the last man, he has hope of salvation by way of the Superman. Man is as close to the beast as he is to the Superman, which is also worth noting. The development of the Superman, Nietzsche’s primary project, is somewhat ambiguous in the text. The Superman is explicitly referred to only a few times outside of Zarathustra’s prologue, and never in *Beyond Good and Evil*. However, like the last man, the importance of the Superman cannot be overestimated.

¹⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 17.

¹⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 17.

²⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche appears to make reference to the Superman in *The Will to Power* as a great man, “a man whom nature has constructed and invented in the grand style”²⁰¹. He makes several noteworthy characterizations of the “great man”, which reveals a great deal about the Superman. The Superman “has the ability to extend his will across the great stretches of his life and to despise and reject everything petty about him” and “there is a long logic in all of his activity.”²⁰² The Superman is easily misunderstood given his stark contrast to the masses. He is “colder, harder, less hesitating, and without fear of “opinion”; he lacks the virtues that accompany respect and ‘respectability,’ and altogether everything that is part of the ‘virtue of the herd’.”²⁰³ The Superman is the antithesis of the “herd animal” discussed in *Beyond Good and Evil*. He uses the masses as a tool, and “he is always intent on making something out of them.”²⁰⁴ The Superman referred to in this passage bears particular similarities to the tyrant that Plato describes, who uses the public to fulfill his private desires. Plato describes the tyrant as a man who “is able to get the better in a big way,” that his private advantage is unjust.²⁰⁵ What Plato describes as an unjust and selfish pursuit of self-interest at the people’s expense, Nietzsche would regard as the Superman simply using the public as an instrument.

As previously noted, Nietzsche states that in very rare cases democracy will allow for the birth of exceptional men, “But while the democratization of Europe leads to the production of a type that is prepared for *slavery* in the subtlest sense, in single, exceptional cases, the *strong* human being will have to turn out stronger and richer than

²⁰¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 962.

²⁰² Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 962.

²⁰³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 962.

²⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 962.

²⁰⁵ Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 557b.

perhaps ever before.”²⁰⁶ Perhaps democracy will allow for the Superman to develop because of the degree to which democracy permits individualism. Nietzsche reiterates this sentiment in *The Will to Power*, “The same conditions that hasten the evolution of the herd animal also hasten the evolution of the leader animal.”²⁰⁷ The Superman must be able to develop unencumbered by restrictions, and democracy is the only regime that would afford him the conditions necessary to do so. Nietzsche reiterates this concept in *Twilight of the Idols*,

“Great men, like great ages, are explosives in which a tremendous force is stored up; their precondition is always, historically and physiologically, that for a long time much has been gathered, stored up, saved up, and conserved for them that there has been no explosion for a long time. Once the tension in the mass has become too great, then the most accidental stimulus suffices to summon into the world the ‘genius,’ the ‘deed,’ the great destiny... Great men are necessary, the age in which they appear is accidental; that they almost always become masters over their age is only because they are stronger... The great human being is a finale; the great age.”²⁰⁸

The Superman must also live in a hierarchical society that would allow him exercise his Will to Power and lead the masses of lesser man. Nietzsche explains “every advancement of the type man has so far been the work of an aristocratic society... a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other.”²⁰⁹ An order of rank, such as aristocracy, allows for the self-overcoming of man and his overall enhancement by way of the desire of the soul to develop higher states.

As previously established, democracy will lead to the mediocritization of man and could create the populace that the Superman is to lead. However, democracy is by nature the rule of the people; the Superman will not adhere to the inclinations of the people

²⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242.

²⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 956.

²⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” 44.

²⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 201.

during his rule, but rather his own honor and values. Democracy could allow for the creation of the Superman insofar as allowing his development, but once the Superman constructs a horizon for the people, democracy will dissolve as the people enthusiastically and voluntarily follow him. Each person fully exercising their Will to Power will result in a hierarchical society, in which the opinions of the majority are not invested. Specifically, the Superman must implement an aristocracy with an order of rank. Interestingly, the *instinct* for rank is indicative of a being that possesses high rank.²¹⁰

Nietzsche draws a critical connection between aristocracy and the Superman. Aristocracy must accept the sacrifice of untold individuals who, for the sake of the aristocracy's survival, reduce themselves to instruments or slaves. These individuals do not exist for society's benefit, but rather to serve as the foundation or "scaffolding" on which the Superman will raise himself to a higher state of being.²¹¹ Nietzsche refers to this phenomenon as the will to the denial of life. The Superman requires certain social and political conditions in order to thrive. The systematic denial of the lesser beings' wills to power is a requirement for the Superman's elevation in society to the position of leader. This passage is clear indication that the Superman requires dependents in order to rule. However, it raises an interesting question and possibility; if the people systematically deny their Will to Power in order to constitute the scaffolding, upon which the Superman will stand, will these individuals become last men? Of course, Nietzsche is not advocating any system that expedites the devolution of man, but he clearly requires a certain level of degradation for the Superman to thrive. Perhaps this level of self-denial is

²¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 212.

²¹¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 258.

required insofar as it does not reach a certain threshold, because the threshold that would end man's progress entirely by creating the generation of last men should never be crossed.

Nietzsche discusses master and slave moralities, which serve to illuminate the Superman's place within society. The noble type of man determines values in his judgment of what harms him. He creates values by decreeing that whatever is harmful to him is harmful in itself.²¹² This passage is a reference to the Superman, which is clear when Nietzsche states that the noble human being honors himself as the powerful one, and the one who has power over himself. The ability to overcome oneself is a key characteristic of the Superman. Interestingly, the Superman is depicted as ruling not with an iron fist or without compassion, as long as compassionate acts derive from a sense of power and duty rather than pity. The Superman is characterized in this aphorism as a man who knows "how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness."²¹³ The Superman must also have a fundamental hostility toward selflessness and a slight disdain toward a "warm heart". This principle is substantiated elsewhere in *Beyond Good and Evil*, particularly with the free spirits who use all danger and everything terrible for their own improvement. Further, the Superman will understand how to rule honorably because it is within his own realm of invention or creation. The creation of values is a right reserved to the proper masters, and in this case the Superman. The ordinary man presents a stark contrast to the Superman in that he waits for an evaluation of his values and submits to it.

²¹² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260.

²¹³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260.

The realization of the last man is a crucial concept for the overall project of the development of the Superman. Imperative in promoting Nietzsche's project is gleaning the implicit references to both throughout the text, and discerning the conditions that will favor the Superman's development. The last man, introduced in Zarathustra's prologue, represents the devolution of man. Once the generation of the last man is realized, there can be no hope for the development of the Superman or for humankind. The last man lacks the Will to Power. In order to prevent the last man from coming to fruition, it is vital to identify the conditions that denigrate his Will to Power. Specifically, democracy and thereby the interbreeding of races will cause man's virtues to become unbalanced, will create within him a need for peace and happiness, and will foster an aversion to struggle. The Superman, also introduced in Zarathustra's prologue, will constitute a horizon and create meaning and value by his rule. The Superman is the only hope of salvation for mankind. The Superman requires certain political and social conditions in order to thrive. A hierarchical society is necessary for the proper rule of the Superman, but worth noting is democracy's potential benefit for the Superman. While the ultimate rule of the Superman must occur within a political order of rank, such as an aristocracy, a democracy allows the freedom and individuality necessary for the Superman to develop. By a critical analysis of Nietzsche's implicit references juxtaposed with his explicit indications, one can posit a more comprehensive picture of both the Superman and the last man, respectively.

Conclusion

Liberal democracy offers the Superman conditions sufficient for his development, although inadequate for his leadership. Democracy provides the Superman with the freedom required for him to develop, and grants him the highest degree of individuality of any regime. While Man as a whole is weakened and leveled within this regime, the Superman is immune to such influences. Given the inevitability of the egalitarian revolution, the Superman is made possible by his ability to develop in a democracy and Nietzsche's project is placed into our modern world. Given Nietzsche's seemingly endless critique of democracy, one finds uniform disdain for democracy only upon the first reading of his work. Upon further analysis and comprehension, one finds that Nietzsche regards democracy as a regime supportive and nurturing enough that his project can be accomplished.

Once the Superman is fully developed, he must abolish the democratic equality that further weakens Man and his Will to Power. The death of God makes necessary his rise, for the death of God brings with it the loss of a standard of morality. God served as an anchor and a standard for the very individuals who revealed his horizon. By an excess of history, they removed the highest authoritative judge of morality. Morality is now defined by false concepts of what is "good and evil", which only weakens Man. The Superman exists above such judgment, thus enabling him to provide a horizon for the people. Instead of holding morality in a higher regard than the Will to Power, the Superman transcends common notions of morality and encourages Man's Will to Power.

When Man does exercise his Will to Power, a hierarchical society will ensue, thus rendering liberal democracy entirely inadequate.

One could argue that Nietzsche's greatest fear of being misunderstood has already been realized. Given the complexities of his philosophy, it is all too easy to take advantage of ambiguities and distort them to one's advantage. In fact, this is largely the case with the Nazis. The Nazi's frequently referred to the *ubermensch* as an icon for a higher, stronger, better "Aryan" race. Of course, they likely believed the *ubermensch* to be a dictator who, due to his superiority, could use his strength to oppress the weaker or inferior men. The Nazis used his philosophy about breeding and race to support pan-Germanism and substantiate their anti-Semitic efforts, despite Nietzsche's explicit and vehement condemnation of both. In letters to his sister, Elisabeth, Nietzsche expresses great disdain for being associated with anti-Semitic parties. The Nazi's also likely misconstrued Nietzsche's master and slave moralities to force millions of people into servitude. The opportunities for misuse of his philosophy are endless. The Nazi's, and Adolf Hitler in particular, selectively "cherry-picked" Nietzsche's philosophy with disastrous consequences. Although Nietzsche cannot be blamed for the events that followed Hitler's political rise, the Nazi party serves as a prime example of the implications of misunderstanding Nietzsche's philosophy. Perhaps Nietzsche knew these implications, and from them derived much fear and panic over how his work would be understood, or more importantly *misunderstood*.

While his work is difficult to understand and often ambiguous, contrary to popular belief, it is incredibly coherent. A close analysis reveals a more tempered version of Nietzsche's philosophy than is popularized. While he does truly "philosophize with a

hammer,”²¹⁴ his work is not the product of the vengeful or disorganized madman he is often portrayed to be. His principles, like his resolve, are steadfast and strong. His demands of the reader and for Man are extreme. Nevertheless, he presents an incredibly cohesive project that can exist alongside other great minds, such as Tocqueville.

Nietzsche’s philosophy makes a profound impact on both a societal and personal level. It urges one to examine our liberal democratic regime, and to decide whether Nietzsche’s Superman is necessary, and if not, how long will it be before he is? It can cause one to look inward, and recognize the choice to be made between happiness within horizons or poorness of spirit within a wealth of knowledge. It creates endless questions and considerations, for there is always more to learn from Nietzsche. He states in *Twilight of the Idols*’ ‘Maxims and Arrows’, “I want, once and for all, *not* to know many things. Wisdom sets limits to knowledge too.” Perhaps if Nietzsche were still alive, while he would appreciate a proper understanding of his philosophy, he would accept the individual who is content with, to a certain degree, not knowing.

²¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*.

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