

NIETZSCHE'S OVERMAN: A CRITICAL-ETHICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Studies in classical Greek world view and references thereto have remained a scholarly culture that often introduce and connect the present, in any age, to the remote past, in terms of theme development for contextual and critical discourse. Nietzsche delved reflectively into Greek antiquity in his theoretical explications of the uebermensch (overman/superman). Nietzsche's projections on the Apollonian-Dionysian theory eventually produce the Greek aesthetic phenomenon that explained ancient Greek civilization. The theory borders on management of values in their proportions which metamorphosed in a fusion of principles that gave birth to intensive productions in the positive areas of life. Nietzsche's goal is futuristic. The uebermensch remains a philosophical inquiry into value-requirements for future higher anthropologization model. Man has to break the barriers of the present in the search for a higher form of existence. New frontiers must have to be uncovered. The engine responsible for this feat is the Will to Power – the openness to life affirmation in all its raw presentations. The Will to Power is the existential tendency to advanced Nietzschean value-creation, and the progression there-from on the path to the objective ideal. The uebermensch is the symbolization of the ultimate Will to Power. The study is partly a critical examination of the uebermensch. It is again an attempt to provide an insight into Nietzsche's thought in the midst of the optimistic appreciation of the scientific, industrial and technological rise in 19th century Europe. As a methodological elaboration of the constructivist critical sense development, the study applied this principle essentially in the assessment of any such synthesization of models and ideals for the future in the quest for human development.

Key words: Uebermensch (Superman), Apollonian-Dionysian, Aesthetic, Nihilism, Metaphysics

Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche is often regarded as a complex and controversial thinker in philosophical circles. In the strict sense, Nietzsche was more of a classical philologist than a philosopher following his studies in 'classics, religion and German literature' (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 378; Christian, 2012, p. 492). Though not seen, from the beginning of his debut as a thinker, as an instant success, (Christian, 2012, pp. 492 – 493), he has grown to be one of the most influential modern critical thinkers. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, his deep insight has endeared him to generations of theologians, philosophers, psychologists, poets, novelists and playwrights,

(*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, p. 936). Although Nietzsche's influence on scholars has been huge, not all have warmed up to him for the same reasons. Traditionally, Nietzsche is reputed to have generated antipathies: attracting and repelling scholars at the same time, depending on ideological inclinations and affiliations (Lawhead, p. 416). Among scholars, his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, was badly received, (Cooper, 2003, p. 828). In a 21st century suffused in diverse scientific and technological feats, how does Nietzsche fare? What can he offer? Why the garnering of significance as a thinker? Can his existentialist mode of thought proffer a paradigm shift for an era in search of meaning? Does Nietzsche actually have a message? In this work, effort would be made to highlight relevant aspects of Nietzsche's ideas with a view to appraising them for relevance to the contemporary society; but first, a peep into his background.

Born 15th October, 1844; died 25th August, 1900; Nietzsche was raised in a Christian family: having lost his father in 1849 before his 5th birth day, he eventually grew up in a household consisting solely of women (Copleston, 2003, p. 390; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, p. 936; Lawhead, p. 416; Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 378). He is blessed with a rarity of natural intellectual prowess besides the privilege of receiving an excellent education (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, p. 936; Magee, p. 172). He was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy by the University of Basel half-way through his advanced studies (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2003, p. 936; Cooper, 2003, p. 828). There is no doubt that besides his natural endowments, at this point in time, other forces worked in his favor as well. Nietzsche studied Schopenhauer and got hooked onto his ideas intellectually, (Magee, p. 172); emotively, he fell for the music of Wagner, (Magee, p. 172). He was plagued by poor health for a good portion of his life time, (Velasquez, 1994, p. 496; Lawhead, p. 416; Magee, 172; Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 379). This brief insight into Nietzsche's background is done in order to underscore the impact of the circumstances and realities of the time on his development and activities especially the trajectory of his thought.

As a thinker and writer, Nietzsche's method is haphazard. He is regrettably averse to consistent and systematic reflection on issues that capture his attention. It can be said that his methodology is largely undefined. He presents some of his ideas in Heraclitus-like aphorisms, (Christian, 2012, pp. 492 – 493): dense, compact and punchy or at least deeply insightful. In another rendering, it has been said that he writes by way of 'aphorisms or brief, pithy statements', (Lawhead, p. 417); also his style has been described as, 'sketchy, irritating and slippery', (Lawhead, p. 416); his works are presented in 'broken-up forms' as in 'biblical verses or numbered paragraphs', (Magee, p. 179). Part of his methodology is his radical critical orientation. Sometimes, he shows the capacity for fusion or synthesis of ideas or thought affiliations as in his synthesis of the values represented by the Greek gods – Apollo and Dionysius, (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381). Through such synthesis, new developments emerge with deep insights into the human condition. Part of Nietzsche's inconsistency can be deciphered in his penchant for ironies.

In Nietzsche, ironies are consistently decipherable pattern. Some of these become more

manifest with later critical reflections on Nietzsche. Nietzsche may not have chosen all of the time to directly create ironies; nonetheless, they form part and parcel of his identity as a philosopher. The first irony has to do with the era in which Nietzsche circulated as a philosopher. The 19th century was for Europe an optimistic epochal rise and triumphs in science and technology which breakthroughs and achievements crystallized in greater mechanization and industrial power, yet Nietzsche seemed oblivious of these high scale achievements: he rather prophesied doom for the West, (Lawhead, p. 416). Nietzsche felt the Western scientific and technological achievements were not seated on sure foundation and were bound to collapse. The West, for him, was faced with decadence and nihilism, (Lawhead, p. 416; Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 378). This has to do with nothingness as regards values on which Western civilization is seated. The second irony relates to his natality and nurture: Nietzsche was of pious Christian parentage and was exposed to such an environment in the early part of his upbringing, (Christian, 2012, p. 491). This experience notwithstanding, Nietzsche grew up to show signs of vitriolic critique of Christianity: Nietzsche is unsurpassed in his arsenic critique of conventional ethical values, (Velasquez, 1994, p. 496). The third irony is demonstrably a reaction against values of his immediate childhood environment – physical, psychological and social: Nietzsche grew up amidst caring women after the loss of his father earlier on in his development. His feminine-prone childhood environment notwithstanding, Nietzsche was unimpressed by his childhood experience (Christian, 2012, p. 491), and championed an intellectual revolution against femininity in his more mature years of unfolding critical ideas (Russell, 2000, p. 730). The fourth concerns his relationship with Wagner, whose musical prowess seemed to have impressed Nietzsche deeply. Wagner later fell within his acerbic anti-model critique: Nietzsche published anti-Wagner polemics, (Magee, p. 172). There is no doubt that this ironic dimension of Nietzsche played a concretizing role in his subsequent development of the theory of the Superman or Overman: the overman or uebermensch stands in sharp contrast to feminine unique qualities.

Apollonian-Dionysian Theory

The Apollonian-Dionysian Theory was an attempt at synthesis of the qualities inherent in the Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysius. Nietzsche was a curious scholar of Greek antiquity and classical mythology. From a critical interpretation of the roles and characterizations of the two Greek gods: Apollo and Dionysius, Nietzsche proffered insight into the trajectory of the Western civilization of the future, woven around the theory of the Overman/Superman (Christian, 2012, p. 492). In the *Birth of Tragedy*, published in 1872, Nietzsche portrayed the Greek Tragedy 'out of the ritualized choral dance of the Dionysian mystery cult', (Christian, 2012, p. 492).

Dionysius is symbolism for larger-than-life existence. Referred to as the 'god of wine, fertility and drama' (English Dictionary: Wordnet (2006), it is the overflow of energy in cosmic motion. It is strength, power and raw or ruthless dispositions. Dionysius is imagery for lack of restraint (Copleston, 2003, p. 397; Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381); the

loss of individuality in the cosmic rhythm of the primordial. The Dionysian phenomenon compares with Bacchalism: the symbol of the cosmic stream of life (Copleston, 2003, p. 397) Bacchal festivities are replete with extreme demonstrations of its adherents such as can be said to encapsulate the best of Dionysian values. Adherents of Dionysius go into dancing-gyrations in their mystic ritualisms towards oneness with the cosmic, (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381). Dionysius totalizes the human capacity for extremism. In the human soul, Dionysius interprets as 'the negative and destructive dark powers of the soul', (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381), thus could be associated with evil, ruthlessness, wickedness and lacking in measures.

Apollo operates on the other side of the polarity in comparison with Dionysius. As the symbol of light, measure and restraint, he represents the principle of individuation, (Copleston, 2003, p. 397; Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381). Apollo is variously associated with fine art, beauty, poetry, medicine/healing, higher literary developments such as law and philosophy, (*The Columbia English Dictionary* (2022); *HarperCollins Dictionary* (2005); *Thematic Dictionary* (2008)). Where Dionysius represents darkness, Apollo stands for light; where Dionysius symbolizes extremism, Apollo represents moderation; where Dionysius is coterminous with irrationality, Apollo is coterminous with reason. From dispersion and loss of individuality occasioned by cosmic unity from mystic ritualism, musical or substance intoxication, Apollo recovers and restores man in his individuality as person. Restoration of personality implies the return of reason and appropriation of the rational principle as the guiding force in human activity. Energy is generated here as well, for it takes more energy understandably to reason properly than it would to act irrationally. Nietzsche argues forcefully that it demands more energy to operate on Apollonian principles than it would to do differently, a point that is easily missed in scholarly Apollonian-Dionysian grand narratives (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, p. 507). Apollo is the principle of creativity and order, (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 381); his modality of operation is the realization of the need for rational infusion and control, systematization and taming of the wild and weird, and making sense out of the chaotic. In the human soul, Apollo interprets as simplicity, goodness, moderation influences, the capacity for aesthetic taste and admiration; a representation of all that add up to positive values under the spectrum of human intelligibility.

In the Greek Apollonian-Dionysian tragic play, Apollo conquered Dionysius, (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 383). The conquest of Dionysius by Apollo in Greek tragedy hermeneutically relates to the overcoming of chaos by order; the intervention of the rational principle in the Dionysian world of operation. This conquest introduced reason into Dionysian activities. Reason here is supposed to moderate Dionysian instinct and energy. The theory seeks the closure of radical dichotomy between the Dionysian and the Apollonian and the proportionate fusion of the two. This dichotomy could have meant the maintenance of erstwhile extreme polarities. The conquest saw to the possibility of rational interventionism with its outstanding moderation influence. The result is something other than what could obtain either way in the existential dichotomized

modes. This new emergence is what Nietzsche tags the Greek aesthetic phenomenon. What is the Greek aesthetic phenomenon? This simply refers to the beauty inherent in ancient Greek civilization at its height. Call it the principle that informed ancient Greek civilization. The Greek aesthetic phenomenon made possible the emergence of the Greek genius. The genius of the Greeks is demonstrated in the achievement of uncommon feats: sculptural, architectural and intellectual; and in a sense, poesis. Poesis, the process of creation; production or formation, (*Wiktionary; Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), relates to the Greek concept for productivity and creativity: literary, artistic and aesthetic. Man instrumentalizes this synthesis to serve his foremost utilitarian ends. The successful aversion of the negatives from the extremes in their respective dichotomies finally translates to the highest possible positives their synthesis would be capable of generating – this being the principle in which Greek civilization was foundationally rooted in. Nietzsche recommends that the West trace their roots back to the legacy of the Greek aesthetic phenomenon as remediation to his perceived value mis-trajectory of Western civilization.

The Theory of the Superman/Overman

Nietzsche is given to superlatives. This elicits interest when one considers that in another ideological somersault, Nietzsche was able to build an astonishing synthesis of the Apollonian-Dionysian value-postulates into a theory of the Greek aesthetic phenomenon. This moderating portrait notwithstanding, when it came to developing his theory of the Overman, Nietzsche was decidedly Dionysian. Nietzsche decides for extremisms; the type epitomized in Dionysian value-representations. Nietzsche believes that the Overman should transcend conventional morality. He should not be subjected to any restraint. Nietzsche approves all that reason condemns as opposed to the elevation of man. The Overman has to forcefully appropriate any values he considers fit to allow him free rein in his activities. Life to him is nothing other than power – the tendency to overcome. Life is this consummate drive to power. 'The Will to Power' is a theme that Nietzsche takes interest in developing. It is also the capacity and willingness to take on challenges of all kinds when necessary for the realization of the man of his dream (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 856). The characterization of the Will to Power in the Overman notwithstanding, the Will to Power speaks to man in his ordinary mode of being as well. The Will to Power is the will to survive and the determination to surpass. The Will to Power is the Will to Overpower; the Will to conquer; the natural affinity to war. In reference to the Overman, it is the subjugation of all human tendencies to the master ethics (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 852).

Nietzsche's Ethics and the Theory of the Superman/Overman

Nietzsche advocated for a new ethics. His ethics is such as would create the milieu in which the Superman would find it congenial to flourish. Decidedly, Nietzschean ethics is anti-Christian. His was a fierce attack on the Judeo-Christian tradition, (Magee, p. 172). In this new ethics, erstwhile values are to be re-evaluated. Nietzsche stated that 'There are no moral facts', (Velasquez, 1994, p. 498). To this extent, Nietzsche is decidedly

Dionysian. Conventional ethics responsible for European civilization advocated for mercy, kindness, care for the less privileged, love of all peoples, brotherhood, appreciation of the dignity of the human person, human value ethics and fair or just consideration, accommodation of people irrespective of state, relationship with the supernatural Being said to be All-Powerful, All-Knowing and capable of reward and punishment of humans by His measures, here and hereafter. Such ethics would only regard as evil the absence of the referred values in human affairs. Nietzsche's attack on conventional morality was far reaching and radical in his declaration that 'God is dead'. In the absence of a God that is Supreme, Nietzsche would have the Greek aesthetic phenomenon. Master morality, that is, the morality of the Overman, would break down any known moral boundaries; and would not need to be subjected to checks. His trademark would be cruelty; wickedness; sufferability of hardship and pain; pitilessness of the herd; the command of tremendous energy; always in motion for new conquests; pushing beyond conventional circumference of behavior acceptance to new frontiers where all his energies, capacities and programs have free rein and execution; this, irrespective of the plight of the herd. Tyranny would be the trademark of the Overman (Russell, 2000, p. 730). The somersault in the ideological construction of values in which the Overman would operate is undoubtedly characteristically a Nietzschean irony at its peak.

The Non-Dionysian in Nietzsche

The non-Dionysian in Nietzsche only appears to be so. Quite a number of factors can be referred to in this regard; for instance, Nietzsche's non-proposal of hedonism as a model, exposure to hardship and propensity to painstaking labor, squaring up to life in all its demands and circumstances, (Magee, p. 174), demanding a toll from others, the placing of positive values on suffering and the positive affirmation of life. His existential perspectives on life are legendarily Spartan. His stoic disposition undergirds his larger than life approach to human existence. For Nietzsche, life has no meaning except that proffered it by man (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, p. 511). Fundamentally, for Nietzsche, man is at the center, and determines meaning for his existence. In doing this, Nietzsche raises the bar of human operation; he has to demand more of himself (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, p. 910). The non-Dionysian in Nietzsche systematizes into the extremisms in the Dionysian Overman. This would need further critical considerations.

Apollonian Principle in Nietzsche

Nietzsche's irony again played out in seeking finally to cling to Apollonian values once again in spite of his earlier Dionysian preferences. Can Nietzsche's intellectual progression be staged? Was there a period of more youthful idealism perhaps, during which he subscribed without hesitation to Dionysian principles? Was there a more mature period during which he allowed that Apollonian principles be re-thought for re-appropriation? It has been claimed that in his later years and more mature intellectual

reflections, Nietzsche re-proposed Socrates as model for the west meaning that he dusted off the Apollonian values from the dustbin of forgotten ideological relics for some sort of infusion into the programs of the Overman, (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 388). The Overman is definitely symbolism for power at its roughest; but could it be that Nietzsche envisages at the same time, the more powerful influence of the human intellect as a principle of rational organization whereby he again decidedly would propose the hidden over-man-ship of the Socratic type of values? 'The only thing that all men want is power, and whatever is wanted is wanted for the sake of power. If something is wanted more than something else, it must represent more power', (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, p. 511); that which can be wanted more than something else is the power of the intellect: reason or rationality, (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, p. 511). The implication of the above logic in its proper context is that reason is more powerful than unreason or the rational more than the irrational; that Socrates can never be overlooked and that no matter what, the West needs to re-introduce Socrates (and Plato by implication) into its grand programs for development, (Stumpf & Feiser, 2003, p. 388). In this, there appears to be the re-enactment of the Apollonian-Dionysian Greek tragedy.

It has been pointed out that the human side of Nietzsche's existentialist choices speaks differently in favor of Apollonianism. According to *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Nietzsche's heroes were not merely people of tremendous drive and energy. They were rather people of intellect: people of 'surpassing intelligence' (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972, 511). Nietzsche would rather be attracted to men of powerful intellect rather than the opposite. This means in effect the bold restoration of the architects of Western intellectual tradition ably represented by Socrates as depicted in the choices of his existential human relationships. The theory of the Overman can only be fully grasped when we appreciate that The Apollonian-Dionysian theory struggled for simultaneous continuity of the elements therein even as Nietzsche, for whatever reason, intended to do away with Apollo in deference of Dionysius at some point. Successful conquest of geographical territories or the conquest of men by anti-human Dionysian means could not win Nietzsche's admiration in real life relationships, but the conquests that are positively fundamental to the rational human person and the values that endure did win his appreciation. Perhaps what Nietzsche is trying to communicate is that the war that is necessary is the war over self, (Lawhead, p. 427); the ability of the individual to subject his energies, wishes and drives to rational control as the foremost principle of order, harmony and fulfillment. Meaningful external and more expansive conquests take on positive valuation from this fundamental feat.

Critical Synthesis of Nietzsche's Ideas

It is a challenge to criticize Nietzsche, not for want of materials. In Nietzsche, there is plethora of materials to chew on. The challenge is in terms of striking balance given his array of syncretic reflections on issues of interest. Pure ideologically based critical assessment would seek to pigeon-hole Nietzsche and make critical assessment of his ideas cheap. It would rather not achieve much to go all over to Nietzsche's ideological

subscription; this would seek to amplify his acerbicism on the existing or conventional order. All these challenges would be taken cognizance of in the endeavor to attempt a critical discourse of Nietzsche's ideas for the contemporary era.

The first consideration would be Nietzsche's methodology characterized by inconsistency and the non-systematic approach to insightful reflections. Because Nietzsche's conscious digressions defined for him a pattern, irony has become for him a consistent methodology. Ironies would fit as intellectual somersaults. It would as well fit as human behavior un-expectations that veered from intended course. Irony punctuated the course of Nietzsche's intellectual development, charting a zigzag terrain in the profound perception he sometimes has on given issues of philosophical interest. This being the case, a synthesis of Nietzsche's ideas garnered from different sources would appear undecided as to whether Nietzsche is *fundamentally* Dionysian or Apollonian or even Apollonian-Dionysian in terms of reason having course to intervene in Dionysian-like programs of action. Nietzsche seems to be capable of basking in being tossed here and there in his reflections, and again, in giving full rein to the consideration of any theme that captures his interest at the moment. This approach of Nietzsche's though letting the scholar into the full workings of his mind, failed in logical neatness, sustaining analytical development and existentialist systematization of his ideas. In the face of all these challenges, one may risk positive response as regards Nietzsche's subscription fundamentally to Dionysian principles at least from the theoretical standpoint.

What of the non-Dionysian in Nietzsche? These can be pointed to in their multiple facets: painstakingness and the squaring up to challenges and circumstances; strong affirmation of life and stoicism; demanding of a toll of the self and others in the push to excel and the non-endorsement of hedonistic existence. These appear to be non-Dionysian if considered from the Greek original perspective. From Nietzsche's theories however, especially of what he referred to as 'master morality', these elements constitute the features of master morality theorization. Nietzsche implies for master morality, not only that life be affirmed radically but that it be strongly lived. The master morality, which fits in well with the Overman, not only is averse to conventional morality (Velasquez, 1994, pp. 498 – 499), but is quite antithetical to any conceivable feminine qualities. It thus assigns premium to elements of hardship in the superlative. If the Overman is decidedly Dionysian in its theoretical explications, and the negation of the conventional defines its ethics, then the superlative recommendation of elements of hardship is what is left of its ethical constitution.

Nietzsche's polyvalence was such that values were jostling for expression. There is no doubt that besides the Dionysian elements which characterized Nietzsche's theoretical portrayal of the Overman, Apollonian features have their place as well. The master ethics of the Overman could be read with critical insight, by certain schools of thought as preparing the society for chaos. That chaos would be nothing save the full enthronement of such moral principles. Nietzsche could have remained quite horrific if he stopped at

the Dionysian theoretical explications for the Overman. Later in the development of his intellectual process, Nietzsche saw the need to re-introduce Apollo, less emphasized after the theoretical emergence of the Greek aesthetic phenomenon (Stumpf & Feiser, p. 388). It is obvious from the above reference that even though Nietzsche tended to do away with Apollonianism in his Dionysian theory of the Overman, he never quite fully succeeded. Apollo was ever close, at the superficial subconscious gateway, awaiting opportunity for re-emergence. Socratic wisdom has real relation to the powers of the intellect properly directed or channeled; it can be rejected or abandoned as Nietzsche tried to achieve in the effort to affirm Dionysius to the exclusion of Apollo, in the theory of the Overman; but it can never be extinguished fundamentally and its resurfacing revivifies all that characterize it at all times. That which can be wanted more than anything else is the Greek metaphor in Socratic wisdom.

Critical Insights into Nietzsche's Metaphysical Nihilism

Nihilism is the reduction to nothingness. Metaphysics refers to the rational quest for truth that transcends the material world or the world as it appears. In other words, metaphysics presupposes profound and transcending objective truth. Metaphysics roots for the essentialist anchor. Nietzsche cuts down 'the in-thing' in metaphysics. Truth disappears into nowhere. This is logically plausible in Nietzsche's quintessential world since that world denies God. In a world of vacuous theism, one cannot but think of nihilism. 'Vacuous theism' so referred since God once was until Nietzsche evacuated Him from the world scene. The values that trace to God's existence ought to disappear too. This is the disappearance of cosmic order, (Velasquez, 1994, p. 259); and, anti-realism at its best, (Cooper, 2003, p. 831). Logically therefore, there cannot be truth out there.

If Nietzsche's thesis stands, then philosophy has obvious problems. Philosophical thematization on truth or the objective becomes unsustainable. Metaphysical nihilism makes impossible any tenable epistemology. The implication is that objectivity is not to be differentiated from subjectivity since philosophy amounts to 'unconscious memoir' of the thinker, (Lawhead, p. 421); an untenable postulation. Man hovers intellectually but as regards truth he does not perch. The continuum of 'value-nomadism' defines human existence. Truth was thus in the old order mere psychological impression. The concrete, the objective, the in-thing, reality, truth are all concepts that ought not to be, thus cannot be used to any benefit. In Nietzsche, it appears that sophism attained the highest possible sophistication. The critique of Nietzsche's nihilistic theorization has to be contextualized within sophism – a tradition that makes for intellectual appeal, yet denying the truth of the matter. First, the concept of nihilism: is there no intangible value really? This can hardly ever be sustained metaphysically, existentially and epistemologically. Even if Nietzsche does away with God, it cannot be so with 'rationality'. The fact that 'reason' exists and Nietzsche is testimony to this, is conceptually antithetical to the annihilation of a God-factor. Yet, reason is both metaphysical and existential truth. Nietzsche's option for irrationality as seen in the 'Will to Power', does not seem to garner any merits. The 'Will to Power' is anti-rational blind force that can only see and walk the route to power. This is

obviously Schopenhaurian irrationalism: motives are nothing but 'variants of one basic drive, the 'will to power' (Velasquez, 1994, p. 259). At this point, the ludicrous in Nietzsche's theorization becomes clearer: it at best dovetails into a contradiction. Nietzsche who exercises rationality at its height settles for irrationalism. How can the rational define the irrational as the real? In this context, the rational translates unarguably to the real but then assuming Nietzsche is permitted the benefit of the doubt, if the 'irrational' qualifies for his 'real', then that becomes his 'reality', an objective metaphysical truth – objective because scientific, in that, it appeals to reason. However, the path is unfortunate. Second, for Nietzsche, truth is a function of experiments (Lawhed, p. 421). Since there is no objective truth out there, experimentation fills in for truth. We are left with trial and error. The point is, every experimentation is a search for an objective anchor. Experimentation interpretationally implies search: the scientific search for an objective truth. Speculation about the end of scientific experiments ends when the result. If then the experiment confirms the postulation, the inference is that truth may have been reached – the confirmation of the notion of objectivity out there. The confirmation of Nietzsche's sophism remains unquestionable in the refusal of the metaphysical notions he wants obliterated, to so remain. These continue to resurface with further interrogation beyond the sophistic realm. Third, by undermining metaphysics, Nietzsche seeks to undermine philosophy. Is there objectivity? Is there only subjectivity? Can subjectivity be differentiated from objectivity? If there is no objectivity, then philosophic claims run into problems. If there is no objectivity, there is no merit philosophizing: this becomes more so of any science. Science, the alternative term for philosophy in this context, is an end-prone process. There is always the pursuit of an objective. It is always the quest for the truth. Settling for functionalism whereby truth becomes that which may be used for momentarily immediate utility does little to solve any problem. Such has not been able to extricate itself from the sophism of Nietzsche. Socrates fought against this. If truth cannot be, then every shade of opinion becomes truth! This is why metaphysical nihilism overcomes the possibility of conceptualization. Because metaphysical nihilism cannot be conceived philosophy cannot-not exist, and the values which it searches are postulates of the real not necessarily subject to the vagaries of mere psychological impressions. It has to be underscored that the Overman is made to emerge from these Nietzschean constructs that border on nihilism, irrationalism, absence of objective truth, no existing values for appropriation except that any may do: a perspectivist position on truth. It is in this understanding that we proceed to do a contemporary discourse on Nietzsche.

Nietzsche and contemporary discourse

Contemporary discourse on Nietzsche is to be focused on two themes: the curious concept that 'God is dead'; and a hermeneutical apprehension of the concept of the Overman. As regards the first, Nietzsche opined that God is dead (Stumpf & Feiser, 2003, p. 381). What does it mean? There are a number of ways to look at this. First, it is the absence of cosmic order, (Velasquez, 1994, p. 259). It means that nothing holds that used to be with regard to theistic referentialism. This Nietzschean perspective has a place in the theoretical portrait of the Overman. Cruelty, wickedness, ruthlessness and the

conscious inhumanity to the people at the fringes of the society which the Overman should possess as qualities can only have made sense in a society in which the concept of God is non-existent or not taken seriously. Second, the proposal is curious and may appeal to a camp. The implication is that notwithstanding what Nietzsche thinks; some may decide to warm up to it. This begins to garner some import if one understands that some ideologies got hooked onto this as seen in the existentialist theorizations of Sartre (Velasquez, 1994, p. 260). Nietzsche is said to be the forerunner of atheistic existentialism in modern Western thought. Nietzsche's at least is seen as a departure from traditional Western philosophical orientation, (Christian, 2012, p. 492). Thirdly, the concept, 'God is dead' may mean that God is less vivacious in the hearts of men and women of the contemporary era or indeed, that God is absent in their hearts. In that case, the qualities that inform the moral principles of the Overman may begin to be pronounced in their lives. The issue really is not the demise of Deity but the want of conventional measures of standards of ethical principles. In this case, the concept is merely symbolic expression for expected value-vacuties, (Lawhead, p. 422; Velasquez, 1994, p. 496). Fourthly, some scholars are of the opinion that Nietzsche's theory that God is dead is in no way symbolic: it is literally true (Magee, p. 172). Nietzsche's precursor in this is Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's blind will was all that was left metaphysically in his atheistic views. Nietzsche was a pronounced Schopenhauerian who basked in the atheistic conceptualizations of his philosopher-model. It is only in this literal acquiescence in the death of God that the metaphysical nihilism of values stays the West on the face. The source of Western values is gone; therefore, the civilization sits on nothing – the case for nihilism. It is also in this case that man has to fill-in for the vacuum – revaluating all values and becoming the determinant of all things.

The second theme in need of development in contemporary Nietzschean discourse is an attempt at a hermeneutical apprehension of the Overman. Who is the Overman? The Overman should not be seen in terms of the too obvious Dionysian bent in its theorization, but also typologically, as the concretization of the 'Will to Power'. In this understanding, it becomes necessary to delineate what the Overman is not. The Overman is not a designation for any historical personality, (Lawhead, p. 427). Any attempt whether in contemporary times or at any other time, to personalize the Overman in particular individuals whether in politics or elsewhere would be met with disappointment. The Overman was not repository in the people that Nietzsche admired, for instance Wagner. No one in the past human history of conquests squared up to the Overman, and it seems no one ever would. Nietzsche sometimes writes of the Overman as the epitomization of raw energy and good humanistic dispositions (Lawhead, p. 427). This notwithstanding, the tilt to anti-human virtues is unmistakable. The Overman is a concept and so will it ever remain. It is at best a good study in classical mythology and the values that such study is capable of representing for addressing the existential values of higher anthropolization efforts – the emergence of higher men of the future. It exists in human thought; and may continue to appear and re-appear therein, in its idealizations, modifications or full comprehension as an alternative consideration on the path to the

complete realization of the potentialities available to men and the harnessing of these potentialities for development that is averse to conventional ethics. This is at least what drives Nietzsche in his construction of the theory of the Overman.

Conclusion: This work seeks to examine the theorizations of Nietzsche on the Overman. The Overman was a result of the Apollonian-Dionysian value-synthesis in Greek antiquity. It seems that the thesis is Dionysius and the culture it represents; the antithesis remains Apollo and the perspectives on the course of human existence while the synthesis is the right proportionalization of value-synthesis from the two worlds. The conquest of Dionysius by Apollo is a function of the triumph of reason and its directional role in the harnessing of values for development. This theory provides basis for the grand narrative of ancient Greek civilization. It was founded in the Nietzschean thought patterns, on what was referred to as the Greek aesthetic phenomenon. It was the use of philosophy at its peak, to chart the course of human development that ought to have been unsurpassed, especially in the absence of theistic value-referentialism.

The work portrayed Nietzsche as responding to life's challenges with strong affirmation with respect particularly to the unfolding realities of human existence. The disposition of apparent innocuousness to painstakingness in its degrees and the personal demands of tons of sacrifices on the job at hand are deemed to be Nietzsche's answers to the hard realities of human existence. Nietzsche shares this methodologically existentialist insight with the Overman. Although Nietzsche recommends the Greek model to the rest of the West, it was with radical critical sense that went against conventional morality. Finally, Nietzsche saw sense in re-directing the trajectory of Western development towards the traditional mode characterized by the rational dimension earlier championed by Socrates. If there is any sense in Nietzsche's theorization on the Overman, it has to be in terms of his critique of extremisms; the reminder that modern man has to re-examine his value-heritage with a view to allowing the course of development derive from them and the impossibility of the conscious attempt at successful conceptualization of metaphysical nihilism. The values that fell under Nietzsche's sledgehammer could have been served positively in a post-Nietzschean radical recovery of their humanizing elements. Finally, the Nietzsche-phenomenon points to the need for thorough-going analytic critique of futuristic higher anthropologization-models and their value-postulates in their critical synthesis of available value-propositions.

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