"THE PINNACLE OF LIFE'S JUBILATION": AN EXPLORATION OF THE VITALITY FOR HUMAN GREATNESS IN THE POETRY OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Sarah Spinner

Considered one of the most formidable and enigmatic philosophers of all time, Friedrich Nietzsche captivates his readers by weaving charismatic aphorisms of logic and emotion. Many claim his enticing presentations are too "dynamite," focused only on the destruction of society. Disdainful of the crumbling state of his homeland, Nietzsche observes the cause of Europe's ruins and devotes himself to combating the pervasive nihilism that degrades the once-great Europe. Contrary to the popular perception of Nietzsche, he understands himself to be a lover of human beings, and understands his aphorisms as articulations of social critique and solution rather than wrecking balls of destruction. He understands the destruction of weak and faulty conventions as a necessity in order for man to create a stronger, bolder, and more sustainable society. Nietzsche values the contest as a means for raising man from chaos and into a society that provokes creation and strives for human greatness. The contest is a communal but adversarial pursuit of truth in accordance with man's true nature. The fulfillment of man's true nature requires the understanding that the natural state of man is chaos and therefore that man's true nature is an amalgamation of passion and reason. Nietzsche understands that poetry is an essential pillar of the contest because it is the language of true human nature and is the provocateur of action. In the absence of the contest, Nietzsche believes that man will slip back into chaos. Therefore, society must honor voracious struggle in the contest. Interpreting his dynamic and puzzling presentations is among the most perplexing of feats, but this thesis attempts to perform exegesis on several Nietzsche's aphorisms in order to gain a better understanding of the proper means of attaining human greatness.

Sarah Spinner, of Batavia, Ohio, is a 2013 graduate of the Ashbrook Scholar Program having majored in Political Science.

The Origin of Poetry

It is important to note right away that Nietzsche does not utilize language that is commonly used to describe the human predicament. He manipulates language in order to appeal to man's whole nature and therefore terms and devices take on a new meaning. It is important to understand the way Nietzsche perceives poetry in order to understand the manner and reason he uses it.

In Friedrich Nietzsche's aphorism "On the Origin of Poetry," he illustrates the naturalness of poetry as a utility of man to explore the world around him.[1] The section is an argument wherein Nietzsche argues against the idea that poetry necessarily refutes utilitarianism. Drawing from ancient tradition, Nietzsche explains the original purpose of poetry was an attempt to make

[1] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Ed. and tran. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). 138-140.

meaning out of chaos. In order to create meaning, men participate in contests wherein they fight each other in order to achieve victory. Poetry is used in these contests to persuade other men through an appeal to their whole, full nature.

Nietzsche begins the passage by outlining his opponents' reasoning. He calls his opponents, "Those who love the fantastic side of man and at the same time champion the notion of instinctive morality."[2] The description illustrates a Christian-esque perspective, one that believes both the fantastic, beautiful aspects of man, while maintaining a strictly constructed moral code, which Nietzsche refers to as "instinctive morality." The coupling of these two aspects can only be prompted by the belief that human reason is not the vehicle from which to arrive at morality, or the perspective from which they would consider the height of humanity. To them, utilitarianism inhibits the spirit of man, because inherently—as seen through the phenomenon of poetry—man knows there is something *more,* something more than the utilitarianism and logical deductions and arguments that lead man from A to B to C and then to whichever end man creates as the "end." The platonic perspective claims that the existence of poetry proves that this is true. Nietzsche explains that those who believe this assert "'the desire to get away from utility for once elevated man and furnished the inspiration for morality and art,'"[3] as if to claim that morality and art are proof that God exists, that there is *more* to what *is.*

Nietzsche, however, asserts that poetry is utility in a different form. He differentiates himself from utilitarianism by stating, "[Utilitarians] are so rarely right that it is really pitiful," but agrees with their ideology on the use of poetry, or perhaps rather sides with them as he maintains a utilitarian perspective of poetry.[4] He explains, "In those ancient times in which poetry came into existence, the aim was utility, and actually a very great utility."[5] According to Nietzsche's argument, the ancients used poetry to impress the gods and therefore to benefit themselves. Nietzsche describes the science of poetry in ancient times as something meticulous and intentional as he explains, "When one lets rhythm permeate speech—the rhythmic force that reorders all the atoms of a sentence, bids one choose one's words with care, and gives one's thoughts a new color, making them darker, stranger, and more remote."[6] Good poetry is purposeful, and therefore it is itself a vehicle to fulfill a purpose, a utility. Nietzsche expands upon the utility of rhythmic poetry in ancient times, stating,

> Rhythm was meant to impress the gods more deeply with a human petition, for it was noticed that men remember a verse much better than ordinary speech. It was also believed that a rhythmic tick-tock was audible over greater distances; a rhythmical prayer was supposed to get closer to the ears of the gods.[7]

Poetry, thus, was a utility for a better life. The purpose of life was to impress the gods so that they would be more benevolent to you, and poetic prayers were the vehicle to accomplish the goal.

According to Nietzsche, Poetry is a utility because it compels. "Rhythm is compulsion," Nietzsche states, "Not only our feet follow the beat but the soul does too—probably, one surmised, the soul of the gods as well!"[8] Thus, rhythmic poetry was a

[2] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 138.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 139.

utility in ancient times because it was used as a "magic snare" to affect the gods, but it is an inherent utility because it is wholly persuasive. Rhythm engages the body and the mind. Because the soul and the body move to rhythmic ticking, and when it is coupled with argumentation, poetry becomes a holistic device for persuasion; not only does poetry then impact a person's intellect, it impacts their entire being, their soul, body, and mind simultaneously.

The holistic affect of poetry is exemplified in the Pythagorean conception of music. Their conception of music as a tranquilizer "…appears as a philosophical doctrine and an artifice in education…"[9] Nietzsche, however, purports that "long before philosophers" society recognized and utilized the quelling effect of music in a more organic, less indoctrinated manner. In those societies "music was credited with the power of discharging emotion, of purifying the soul, of easing the *ferocia anima* (ferocity of the mind)—precisely by means of rhythm."[10] It was understood that music could effect change of emotion, and therefore behavior. Nietzsche explains, "When the proper tension and harmony of the soul had been lost, one had to *dance*, following the singer's beat," and therefore the listener became a slave to the beat, a puppet of the composer.[11] Nietzsche cites the successes of Terpander, Empedocles, and Damon in using music to effect change in emotion, to bend the will of man, that is, his reason and his passion. Such effect ranges in degree from the redirection of a singular man's pining heart to a suppression of an entire riot. Nietzsche also cites the examples of attempts to quell the rabidity of the gods, by cults that engaged in orgies to "push the exuberance and giddiness of the emotions to the ultimate extreme, making those who were in a rage entirely mad…" in order that they may be calmer as a result.[12] Through referencing the orgiastic cult, Nietzsche likens rhythm to sex, making the case that "[Melody] is a tranquilizer, not because it is tranquil itself but because its aftereffects make one tranquil."[13] Thus, rhythm is a utility because it rouses the emotion in order to bring about the conductor's desired result.

The utilization of rhythm is not exclusive to the orgiastic cults or Pythagorean culture; its utility can be observed also in the political and religious realms of ancient times. "Every action provides an occasion for song…the magical song and the spell seem to be the primeval form of poetry."[14] Because humans rely on the right order of the spirit, the spirit often needs assistance in getting to the "correct" alignment.

Nietzsche uses the Oracle at Delphi as an example of the compelling characteristic of rhythm. It was understood that Apollo, the god of light, intelligence, music, and prophesy, delighted in the rhythm of verse, and persuaded by beautiful verse, would be compelled to deliver his prophesy. Religious understandings such as the utility of verse at the Oracle of Delphi are grounded in facts of human nature; it was understood that rhythm evokes emotion. Therefore, it is only natural to assume that the "god of music" would be even more provoked by beautiful rhythm than the average person.

The uses of poetry are vast, as it is seen in ancient times that,

> It enabled one to do anything—to advance some work magically; to force a god to appear, to be near, and to listen; to mold the future in accordance with one's will; to cleanse one's own soul from some excess…

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 139-140.

> and not only one's soul but also that of the most evil demon.[15]

In short, rhythm was the means for *living*. It is because of the innate submission of man to rhythm that Nietzsche purports that, "Such a fundamental feeling cannot be erased forever."[16] Therefore, Nietzsche asserts that poetry will always have a hold on man's emotions, it will always be able to move him. It is natural to be moved by the aesthetically appealing. Man perceives something in poetry that provokes man to consider, which in turn creates susceptibility for poetry to seep into the mind of man. Poetry meets man on such a fundamental level that it moves man even though man may not be fully conscious of its effects. Man is naturally vulnerable to poetry's manipulation.

Man's natural tendency to move in response to the rhythm of poetry is not only observed in history; it can be observed in the invocation of poetry by modern philosophers and in the inclination of man to believe more fully when an assertion is delivered in an aesthetically appealing form. The effectively persuasive nature of poetry is learned in modern marketing practices and the art of rhetoric; it is evident in both presidential speeches and commercial jingles. It is not only poetic form in itself that carries a persuasive element, but the effect is so deeply connected to man that even the invocation of poetry contributes to the credibility to the idea. It is interesting, however, that Nietzsche asserts, "and yet it is more dangerous for a truth when a poet agrees than when he contradicts it. For as Homer says: 'Many lies tell the poets.'"[17] It is evident that he is deliberate in ending his piece ironically, as he criticizes the invocation of poetry by invoking a poet himself. The ending of Nietzsche's discussion on the natural utility of poetry suggests that poetry does not always denote falsity, but rather that it is a natural vehicle to convey all truths. He emphasizes the need for caution when reading an idea in verse in order to decipher actualities from falsities. Nietzsche believes that poets are valets of various moralities, as he comments upon in previous sections of *The Gay Science*, and therefore they often create fictions that men believe to be realties because they are described in an aesthetically appealing way. Poetry is the weapon of all warring ideologies, because it is effective. Because poetry is useful.

Poetry, therefore, is not a proof that utilitarianism is not a valid philosophy. It is not proof of instinctive morality or that man desires to raise himself from the turmoil of earthly existence to something *more.* Poetry is not attached to an ideology, only to man. Poetry is man's utility to be employed in making any type of argument. Poetry is the natural form man uses to make meaning out of chaos.

Education in the Arena

Greatness is tough. It requires hard work and devotion. One cannot "arrive' at greatness; it is only achieved through great courage and constant struggle. Man does not simply ride the wave of history and eventually become "great." Rather, achieving greatness is a lifelong pursuit that requires man to realize his true nature and continually strengthen and edify that nature. In fact, the very moment that man claims he has "arrived" at greatness is his undoing. Once final victory is proclaimed, man descends into the abyss of chaos, and must begin the climb again.

Friedrich Nietzsche describes the natural state of man as brutish chaos ruled only by the desire to annihilate. Greatness, therefore, is attained through the direction of man's true nature to cultivate creation rather

[15] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 140.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

than to enact destruction. Nietzsche explains that men must wrestle with one another in a contest in order to achieve greatness, as the "contest" he describes is a forum for the pursuit of truth.

The contest is the relationship between two or more opposing people or ideas that have met on an equal playing field in order to fight for victory and edify themselves along the way. To establish the "equal playing field" necessary for the contest, all opponents must recognize each other and respect one another; this allows the contest to persist. If a contender does not recognize his opponent, he will not respect him and he will instead be adamant about seeking annihilation rather than victory. There is no victory in annihilation because there is no recognition of glory and honor in annihilation; annihilation is concerned only with annihilation. Victory implies struggle and order. Without struggle, there is no victory.

Without the contest, life would be defined only by chaos. Chaos is the absence of meaning, and can be especially horrifying and violent. Poetry created the contest because it aimed to create meaning for the wonders that surround it—of the nature of the gods, what creates the seasons, why tragedies occur, etc. The language of poetry speaks to the core of man's being and beckons him to ask these questions himself, and attempt to answer them. Poetry—one's attempt to make sense of what is around him—is what lifts man out of meaningless chaos and creates meaning for life. Poetry means "to create" and "to make for oneself." Poetry speaks to man in his wholeness, it coalesces all of his facets—his reasoning, his passion, and his other aspects through language that strikes the chord within. Poetry also opens itself up to interpretation through such language, and interpretation requires thought and action; it demands that one wrestle with ideas. Man must wrestle with poetry because poetry speaks to man's exceptional wholeness, recognizing that each facet of man is inextricably linked and dependent on one another.

If man's exceptional wholeness is mechanically divided into a collection of faculties, the contest will fall, and therefore man's pursuit of greatness will plummet. If man's wholeness is cut in half and his nature is separated into the categories of "Reason" and "Passion," then man will cease to embody his true nature and act out of that. Eventually, man will ignore a part of his nature and human society will be destroyed.

Thus, poetry is essential to society. Without poetry, man will regress to a state of chaos. In such a state, annihilation is the only end of humans. Annihilation is not a contest. Annihilation cannot be a contest because it seeks neither victory nor knowledge. Rather, annihilation is focused on the truculent domination of an opponent.

Honor, glory, and knowledge distinguish victory from the lust to annihilate because honor, glory, and knowledge give meaning towards man's aggression and direct man's nature so that it is not terrifying, but understood and accepted. When man is terrified of his nature, he shrinks from it and becomes less than he is capable of being. When man shrinks from the grandness of man he separates man in a way that his small, scared mind can comprehend. As the weak man develops his kingdom of comfort, he makes men smaller and more manageable. He dismantles man and reconstructs him in a way that makes man docile, and therefore safer; one might believe this "docility" makes men greater, but it does not. When man shrinks from his nature, he becomes small and crippled and can no longer create, but instead develops an environment that is safe and comfortable. When comfort and survival become man's only goal, he loses his manliness, his ambition, and becomes content and apathetic. He looks at struggle and turns his head. The

weak man understands that struggle is difficult and risky, and though he might see the possible goods produced by struggle, he turns his head because he has chosen to sacrifice greatness for survival. Eventually the weak man shrinks away so far from his nature that he does not even perceive the goods of struggle, and instead views the very thought of struggle as his adversary; such a man then wraps himself in his warm blanket of safety and contentment to calm and protect himself.

When man looks at his nature and accepts and understands it, he becomes emboldened and strong. Only when man embodies his completeness can he push forward the limitations of his capabilities. This type of man views struggle as opportunity—as vitality. Eventually, he seeks out struggle because he constantly yearns for edification and victory. He yearns for edification and victory both because he understands that it is only through continuous strengthening, toning, and refining that he can continue to be victorious. The contest is a forum where man can fulfill his full manliness and make man greater, both individually and collectively.

The Contest

The vitality of struggle for human life is presented in Nietzsche's posthumously published essay entitled, "Homer's Contest." Nietzsche illustrates the vitality of the contest by describing the necessity of the "contest," in human affairs. He begins his discussion by describing the spectacular nature of human beings, taking care to explain the modern misconception of "humanity."[18] According to Nietzsche, there is no distinction or separation between nature and man; human greatness does not require man to ignore his innermost nature. Instead, the strengthening of man's nature makes him greater. Nietzsche explains this idea when he purports,

> "Natural" qualities and those called truly "human" are inseparably grown together. Man, in his highest and noblest capacities, is wholly nature and embodies its uncanny dual character.[19]

Man's nature is a malleable work in progress, a living thing capable of continuous change and growth, not constant and meaningless chaos that is different and adverse to "humanity." Men do not need to distance themselves from their nature in order to become better, to transcend their murky nature and progress to some transcendental end. Instead, they need to become emboldened in their whole nature because man is most noble when he is "wholly natural and embodies its uncanny dual character."[20] In order to be fully man, one must embody the whole nature of man, his more amiable characteristics with his more terrifying ones; Man must be emboldened in his passion as well as his reason.

The nobility of embodying the dual character of nature is "uncanny," because society is so determined to depart from nature that man's true nature has become mysterious and strange. Nevertheless, it is important that man embrace both characteristics and not shy away from his passion-

[18] As explained earlier, Nietzsche use of language that is differs from commonly use. For example, Nietzsche condemns notions of "humaneness," but does not condemn the notion that man be "good" to one another. In fact, Nietzsche himself would claim to love man; he would rather argue that modern conceptions of "humaneness" misunderstand the nature and ends of man.

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, "From Homer's Contest," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and tran. Walter Kaufmann, 32-39. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 32.

[20] Ibid.

ate side, though it may be unfamiliar and uneasy to control. Though embracing man in his wholeness may be overwhelming, it is important that he do so because the neglect of any aspect of his being will lead him into an abyss of hatred; into a world devoid of meaning. To defend against a descent into a cruel and terrifying abyss, man should recognize the more terrifying characteristics of his nature and accept them so that he can embody his full nature and use it for something noble. Men should embody their full nature because, "Those of his abilities which are terrifying and considered inhuman may even be the fertile soil out of which all humanity can grow in impulse, deed, and work."[21] What Nietzsche means by this is that if man is able to recognize the more terrifying aspects of his character, then he can channel them productively, and become fully human. He can direct his aggression towards positive creation rather than releasing the aggression in an aimless, petty, unproductive, and harmful manner. Once man embodies his full nature and directs it, then he lifts himself out of a world of chaos without meaning.

The Greeks as a Window to Human Nature

In order to explore the realization of the wholly embodied dual character of nature, Nietzsche references the Greeks, calling them "the most humane of ancient times."[22] Nietzsche uses the Greeks as an example for two reasons. First, modern man perceives the Greeks as "humane," that is, civilized and political human beings who were not cruel and did not annihilate mercilessly. The second reason Nietzsche uses the Greeks as an example is because the Greeks possessed an element of aggression in them, and while they were political, they embodied their full nature, and therefore, their passion. Nietzsche combines these two reasons to display how the Greeks, whom modern man praises, are praised incorrectly and rather should be praised not for their "humaneness" but for their manliness. He proclaims that the Greeks possessed the "tigerish lust to annihilate,"[23] a trait of passion that churns within man and provokes him to fight. Nietzsche explains that, although characterized as animalistic in nature, it is "—a trait that is also very distinct in that grotesquely mirror image of the Hellenes."[24] This description thus illustrates the terrifying and animalistic passion present in the Greeks in order to reinforce an understanding of the undeniable tie between man and nature.

Nietzsche's description of manliness is powerful and illustrative; phrases such as "grotesquely enlarged" and "tigerish lust to annihilate" paint a picture of man portrayed as strong and tough.[25] Through his language, he creates a world that the reader can operate in and try out—he creates a society in which man is strong and tough and the atmosphere is thick with creative destruction.

Nietzsche uses a portrait of the Greeks as an example of the innate aggression that must be directed toward the contest. Nietzsche references Alexander the Great in order to show the "tigerish lust to annihilate," originally stating that Alexander's example is a "grotesquely enlarged mirror image."[26] Nietzsche recognizes the inclination of modern man categorize Alexander as an exemption from the "humanness" of the Greeks is not unfounded. However, he asserts that the presence of aggression in Alexander is actually not an

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

anomaly among the Greeks by comparing Alexander the Great's morbid mistreatment of Batis when he conquers Gaza with the mythological story of Achilles' mistreatment of Hector's corpse.[27] By comparing Alexander and Achilles, Nietzsche explains how the aggression of the Greeks is evident not only through Alexander the Great, but also in Greek myths, which shape the mores of society. Although the mythological story of Achilles is less horrifying, it still shows the history of aggressive passion existing in man; even their stories are thick with aggression. While Alexander's offense may be more terrifying than Achilles, Nietzsche states in reference to Achilles aggression, "even this trait is offensive to us and makes us shudder."[28] Achilles' behavior should make modern man shudder because modern man cannot fully realize the meaning of the aggression present in the story of Achilles and Hector. To modern man, stories are just stories and they are not encapsulations of society's mores. According to Nietzsche, the story of Achilles and Hector should make us shudder because we no longer embody or even understand the true nature of man—the nature that develops the pride present in Achilles and many other, more terrifying traits, such as the animalistic mistreatment of Batis by Alexander. While the story of Achilles may be milder, the same embodiment of manliness is the origin of the "crime," that provoked Alexander to degrade Batis. By comparing Alexander and Achilles, Nietzsche reveals that the aggressive passion of the Greeks should "strike fear into our heats throughout their whole history and mythology, if we approach them with the flabby concept of modern humanity," because we have artificially removed ourselves so far from the true nature of man.[29]

Nietzsche descriptive language lends an insight into his work that further develops his thought. While "flabby" could serve merely as an additional insult hurled at modernity, when examined further, one will see that it actually makes the sentence say more than what is read. When Nietzsche says that modern humanity is "flabby" he creates an image of a loose, weak muscle—an image that falls short of what a muscle *could* look like. Nietzsche illustrates modernity as weak and lazy and therefore falling short of fulfilling man's potential. The description of flabbiness illustrates how humanity is not as toned and strong as it should or could be, and therefore, how their lack of strength causes them to behold the aggression of Alexander and Achilles with the terror that they do.

Man's flabbiness restricts him from looking at his true nature and all of its capacities, and instead he shrinks away from it. However, shrinking away from nature creates an unstable and unsustainable foundation for living. In order to live a life of meaning one must have the strength to look at the capacity of man's true nature—of reigning aggression in the "abyss of hatred"—and put meaning to that chaos.[30] Nietzsche uses the history of man in order to display the underlying abyss of hatred that permeates human relations. He references the laws of war established in Corcyrean revolution—under which "the victor in the fight among the cities executes the entire male citizenry in accordance with the laws of war, and sells all the women and children into slavery" in order to illustrate the closeness of chaos to our society.[31] Although poetry gives meaning to the chaos, if a society is not conscious of its true nature then it will more easily succumb to the "abyss of hatred" again. It is through horrifying allowances of the Hellenes in the Corcyrean

[27] Nietzsche, *"Homer's Contest,"* 33.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

Revolution that Nietzsche is able to explore and uncover the truth of human hatred.

The Greeks attempted to "rein in" their aggression through laws and mores, but when the law required that the Greeks take aggressive action, the floodgates of their fury opened up and their rage flooded out. Greek laws were exemplary because they possessed an understanding of the true human nature and managed it in a way that allowed man to be fully human. Nietzsche explains how the laws allowed for men to be fully human when he writes, "The Greeks considered it an earnest necessity to let their hatred flow forth fully; in such moments crowded and swollen feeling relieved itself: the tiger leaped out, voluptuous cruelty in his terrible eyes."[32] The Corcyrean Revolution reveals that the laws of the Greeks recognized the true nature of man and gave meaning to the chaos, but could still not diffuse the terrifying brutality of man's aggression fully. The tendency to succumb to chaos is ever-present and the attempt to direct or mitigate chaos completely is futile. Thus, there will be instances of great violence and uncreative destruction, where men allow their aggression to overtake them. Through the example of the Corcyrean Revolution, Nietzsche reveals how the destructive capabilities of man can be harmful if there is no aim to uncover truth and fight for an idea; without an aim, such violence is excessive, and therefore superfluous, it is a waste of man's capacity. The example does, however, show that the "most humane men of all" acknowledged and sometimes succumbed to their animalistic nature to annihilate, even though they attempted to be more "humane," that is, more political and restrained.

Nietzsche explains that tigerish passion is always lurking within man, ready and waiting to rip through its chains and devour its prey with a bold desire. Nietzsche's illustration of the lustful and beastly tiger leaping from the core of the Greeks is offensive to modernity's notions of "progress" and "humanity." Because modern man has dismantled manliness and asserted that only certain parts of man be strengthened while others are weakened, Nietzsche purports that in all reality, the dual quality of our character is symbiotic, growing equally. Man's reason and passion grow together and sharpen each other through experience and training. Therefore, modernity's notion that it has created the power to subordinate man's passion to his reason is in fact a very dangerous illusion. While man may not be consciously strengthening his passion and reason together, he is definitely not weakening his passion. Eventually, man's dormant passion will erupt, and overtake him—while he will not be strong enough to regain himself.

Returning to Nietzsche use of the Greeks as an exhibition of the true nature of man, Nietzsche references the arts of the Greeks. Much like the importance of stories and tradition in society, Nietzsche understands that art has a two-pronged importance for society. In society, art is both a portrayal of the human experience and has a profound impact on the human experience and on society, as it helps shape public opinion; art exhibits the nature of a society; therefore, Nietzsche questions, "Why must the Greek sculptor give form again and again to war and combat in innumerable repetitions…?"[33] He explains the art in detail, describing the terrifying scenes of men in combat that portray "Distended human bodies, their sinews tense with hatred or with the arrogance of triumph; writhing bodies, wounded; dying bodies, expiring."[34] The rapaciousness that the art portrays is indicative

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

of the nature of man—the presence of reason and passion—and these two aspects of man have an indistinguishable yet undeniable effect on each other. The Greek art referenced by Nietzsche focuses specifically on the fearlessness and courage of warriors in combat instead of the sorrow and fallout caused by war. Though it was not customary for the Greeks to engage in offensive wars, the combat scenes depicted of their defensive wars did not portray the "necessity" and sorrow of war. Rather, Greek sculptors portrayed the Greeks as strong, fearless, and relentless in all combat.

For instance, the Greek art of defensive wars is much different from the Korean War Memorial in Washington D.C. There, fear is illuminated on the faces of the soldiers, and the beauty of the memorial lies in the effective display of bravery in the midst of their terrifying circumstance. The Greeks depict their necessitous war quite differently. Hellene warriors in the art of the Greco-Persian wars are portrayed as voracious; the sculptor does not paint whatever sorrow may be evident in their faces, but instead focuses on the expression of "voluptuous cruelty in [their] terrible eyes."[35]

Nietzsche wraps up his discussion on the evidence of human aggression present in Greek art by asking, "Why did the whole Greek world exult over the combat scenes of the *Iliad*?"[36] His question explores the relationship between the Greek citizen and war, and opens up a discussion of the Greek nature that serves as the foundation for their courage in struggle. Nietzsche purports that flabby, modern man cannot understand the exaltation of combat when he states, "I fear that we do not understand these in a sufficiently "Greek" manner; indeed, that we should shudder if we were ever to understand them "in Greek."[37] When Nietzsche proclaims that we should "shudder" if we were ever to understand the exaltation of combat "in Greek," he means that modern man's conception of manliness and courage is "flabby," and therefore that modern man is not strong enough to be courageous. To understand combat "in Greek" is to understand Courage. The difference in fortitude between modern man and the Greek is that the Greek's fortitude, if considered as a muscle, is strong; this is because the Greek views annihilation and strife as the natural condition of human beings and therefore strives courageously to make meaning out of the chaos and struggle that he experiences. Greek courage in not reluctant persistence amidst struggle, rather, courage is a way of living in voracious struggle. Modern man's fortitude, however, is "flabby," as it understands struggle as a necessity to maintain peace, which they perceive as the actual natural condition of human beings. Greek courage exalts those who jump at the opportunity to engage in struggle, not those who are reluctant and yield to the necessity of courage.

The Greek conception of courage is repulsive to modern sentiments regarding war. In fact, Nietzsche proclaims that modern man would "shudder" if we were ever to understand combat "in Greek,"[38] because modern man understands struggle as occasional rather than omnipresent. Modern man would shudder in horror if he were to look at the natural condition of man through the eyes of the Greeks. To modern man, the truculent is inhumane, but the Greeks consider anyone who believes otherwise as weak, "flabby," and therefore in*human*.

To understand better the formation and heart of the Greek nature, Nietzsche peels back layers of Greek history, asking, "What lies behind the Homeric world, as the womb of everything Hellenic?"[39] When

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Nietzsche begins to examine Greek history, he realizes the importance of the contest; behind the poetry of Homer lies a terrifying and brutal state ruled by passion alone. However, it is from this brutal state that the Greeks are born—it is the precursor and parent of Greek life. Nietzsche explains this when he states, "The nobler culture takes its first wreath of victory from the altar of the expiation of murder."[40] Thus, the aggression that defined the pre-Homeric world remains present in the nature of the Hellenes—it is in their genes. Nietzsche recognizes that there are two responses to the world of chaos, one by weakness and one of strength. The first option is a mystic approach to life that leans "toward a disgust with existence, toward the conception of this existence as a punishment and penance, toward the belief in the identity of existence and guilt."[41] Nietzsche classifies such an existence—that looks at the brutality of life and self-pityingly asks "*why?*"—with the Orient and India rather than with the Greeks, who approach life through the second option that Nietzsche outlines. The "Oriental" response to the presence of struggle is defensive, and implies the belief that events happen randomly and mercilessly. To those who assume the first response, struggle pressed upon them, exhausted them, and prompting them not to use *the struggle* as fuel, but rather to use *the fear of struggle* as fuel. Nietzsche explains that eventually such a response influences a movement that "contained the idea that a life with such an urge its root was not worth living," and declares that such a response is weak, unmanly, and inhuman.[42]

True Greeks assume the second option in their approach to life; they look at the struggle of life, and ask "What *for*?" Because the Greeks embody their true nature, they perceive the brutality of life and yearn to make meaning of the chaos. The Hellenic inclination to ask not "why?" but rather "what for?" is an offensive response to the presence of struggle and implies a sense of responsibility in the course of one's life, requiring individual fortitude. The Greeks carry their intense passion with them, weaving it together with their more amiable characteristics, intertwining and developing their whole nature continually. The Greeks' recognition of the ever-present passion of man and their desire to create grounds them and inhibits them from floating too far from their true nature. Though the Greeks develop new characteristics with the help of Homer, they continually ground those characteristics and intertwine them with their natural characteristics portrayed in the pre-Homeric world.

Nietzsche uses Hesiod as a reference for an image of the pre-Homeric world. Hesiod's presentations in his work, *Theogony*, reveal the reality of life "no longer led and protected by the hand of Homer."[43] Using Hesiod's work as a window, Nietzsche asserts that the horror of the "pre-Homeric world" by explaining that it is "a life ruled only by the children of Night: strife, lust, deceit, old age, and death."[44] He claims that the gloominess and danger of life before Homer was so terrifying that "Uranos, Cronos, Zeus, and the wars with the Titans would seem like a relief," and explains, "In this brooding atmosphere, combat is salvation; the cruelty of victory is the pinnacle of life's jubilation."[45] Hesiod's depictions of the state of nature reveal the actual, true nature of human beings as brutal, forceful, and passionate.

Because the pre-Homeric world is chaos and is devoid of meaning, only base human passion rules. Therefore, the most aggressive aspect of man, the lust for

[40] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 34.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 35.
[43] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 34.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

annihilation, rules. The pre-Homeric world is dark and terrifying; there, the reign of unyielding cruelty is seemingly without cause. Homer, however, eventually comes along and observes how nihilism permeates the world; in a chaotic world without meaning, there is no purpose—no motivator—nothing to prompt man to create. After witnessing the void, Homer, a true Greek who embodies his nature, attempts to put meaning to the chaos through poetry. Definitionally, the Greek word for poem is "to create." Below are several definitions for Greek variants of "poem":

> ποιεω (poeio): Produce, bring about, effect, cause,; to perform, build, accomplish, execute; to create beget; to compose, write, represent in poetry, to be active; to make for oneself; to hold; reckon; esteem
>
> ποιημα (poema): Work, piece of workmanship; instrument; poem, book
>
> ποιησισ (poesis): A making, creating; poetry, poem[46]

Poetry is an attempt to make meaning out of something; it is in itself a creation an instrument for creation, and begets more creation. Homer therefore uses poetry in order to create meaning for world ruled by aimless and bloodthirsty hate. "Through an artistic deception the colors [of life] seem lighter, milder, warmer; and in this colorful warm light the men appear better and more sympathetic," Nietzsche explains, and illustrates how through the epics Homer is able to lift the purpose of man from the chaotic abyss and create a more meaningful existence. [47]

However, Nietzsche recognizes that Homer recognizes the brutality of life when he states that the poems are "artistic deception." [48] Homer's poetry mitigates nihilism by raising human beings from the abyss of hatred and creates meaning for a life of omnipresent struggle. Homer uses poetry with the understanding that it gives order to chaos and illuminates life less overwhelmingly. In order to sustainably mitigate nihilism and foster creativity, Homer grounds his epics in reality and channels the passion of man rather than declaring it a thing of the past, or a primitive characteristic from which we have transcended.

There is something *more* to life than chaos after Homer's poetry. There is combat, yes, but the reward lies in something other than the annihilation of the enemy and therefore requires less brutality; Homer introduces honor and glory as the proper prizes of combat. The Homeric world recognizes the cruelty of life, the innate passion of man and asks, "What is this *for*?" Through asking this question, he uncovers the importance of creation, and reveals that the victory in the contest brings with it honor, glory, and an exclusive happiness that is derived from the pursuit of truth. Homer's poetry changes the pinnacle of life from annihilation to victory, and the prizes of honor and glory that result from victory. The "contest" raises the sights of man from annihilation because it creates ideas of fame, glory, and honor. Victory is distinct from annihilation. There is "winning" in annihilation because there is absolute destruction, but there is no victory in annihilation. There is no victory in annihilation because there is no pursuit of truth in annihilation. Victory is naturally related to the pursuit of truth , and if it were not for victory, man would never emerge from the abyss of annihilation; honor and glory would be merely fabrications of man, and would therefore be unsustainable. However, the happiness felt after a victory in the pursuit of truth creates something

[46] Langenscheidt's Pocket Greek Dictionary
[47] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 33-34.
[48] Ibid.

lasting, because it creates honor and fame. Victory transforms small creations into events that in turn compel men to create more. Therefore, men must continue to train in order to become stronger, and able to continue striving for victory. Men courageously fight in Homer's world because they yearn for the honor, glory, and knowledge derived from victory; they do not lust for the bloodshed of the contender, which is the prize of the pre-Homeric world. The means of the two worlds are similar, but the two worlds direct their means differently in order to produce different ends. The end of the pre-Homeric world is annihilation; the end to the Homeric world is victory, for which one must continually strive.

The contest requires that all contenders recognize each other, so that they can wrestle with each other in order to create meaning for life. Poetry does this inherently as it is an attempt to create meaning out of its surrounding; poetry offers itself as a suggestion and requires interpretation. It is much different from prose, which often imposes ideology without recognizing opposition. When contenders cease to fight in the contest and begin to ignore opponents and impose ideologies, the contest will die and life will return to the abyss of hatred—where life is ruled by force. The Hellenes understand that both speech and action have a place in the "contest," but both must actively recognize opposition in order to pursue truth effectively. Oftentimes speech ignores opposition and is used only to impose ideologies. *The Republic*, for example, is an exhibition of the contest, as each interlocutor recognizes each other and they deliberate with each other, asserting their thoughts and learning from one another through battle. However, *The Republic* and Plato as a whole are not participants in the contest because it declares itself champion and ceases to recognize any party as a formidable competitor. In order to cultivate the contest, Plato should have been ostracized, or sent elsewhere to argue with other great thinkers so that Athens could continue to participate in the contest. Although one might claim that Socrates' death reestablished the contest, they are incorrect, as his death rather poured the cement over the contest's grave. The bondages of Platonic Philosophy have restricted Man throughout time, by emanating the false idea of dualism and asserting that the products of one's passionate nature are ephemeral while the products of one's reason are forever. The presence of struggle and yearn for victory provoked the true Hellenes to action, but Platonic philosophy binds man and restricts him in order to protect the state.

It is important to remember that Homer did not *create* the desire in man for victory; he merely cultivated it, by calling it out and showering the inclination with encouragement—encouragement in the form of stories to guide slowly man's conception of life to the arena of the contest, to the pleasures of competing and learning from the contest. The pre-Homeric world leaned upon the gathered wisdom of Hesiod's world, it lifted man from the abyss of hatred—from the lust to annihilate—to the contest, from which the modern world slips away. Nietzsche states explicitly that the nature of man is that which Hesiod depicts in his accounts, and that the nature of man will always be stronger than the Homeric elevation of sights. Homer's poetry is useful in that it has guided man to the realization of the arena for competition and has therefore helped man progress; however, this elevated arena is fragile as men hold it up, and if blindly relied on, man will collapse into the abyss of hatred again. Ignoring man's passion and exalting his reason creates false support for the arena; the only way to ensure the health of such a structure is to build supports that ground it in Man's nature, recognizing both his sharp rationality and

voluptuous passion. Recognition of man's true nature and an accurate idea of courage are essential supports for the contest.

Nietzsche recognizes that the supports to ensure the health of the contest have eroded in modernity. He asserts that the "humanity" that modernity exalts is merely a façade, as the arena for the contest has collapsed into the abyss of hatred and modern man is merely ignoring the lurking beasts of passion and avoiding them through installations of false images and ideas. The erosion of the necessary supports occurred through the idea that *progress* necessarily means the progress of human nature- that it is malleable and therefore that it changes. Such ideas have caused man to believe that the supports are archaic constructions that are no longer necessary in such an enlightened world. However, the elimination of certain concepts, deemed archaic by modernity, are essential for the health of the contest, and without them, the contest diminishes.

The erosion of the contest is due in part by a lack of respect for certain Greek "virtues." For example, Nietzsche purports, "Nothing distinguishes the Greek world from ours as much as the coloring, so derived, of individual concepts, for example, Eris and envy…", and as his adages build on one another he appeals to his former arguments —arguments of man's innate aggression, his tendency to compete, the reason such passion restrains itself over time, and why restriction only causes unstoppable terror. [49] He calls upon stories to mold another story, the story of Eris.

Nietzsche explains,

> And not only Aristotle but the whole of Greek antiquity thinks differently from us about hatred and envy, and judges with Hesiod, who in one place calls one Eris as evil—namely the one that leads men into hostile fights of annihilation against one another—while praising another Eris as good—the one that, as jealously, hatred, and envy, spurs men to activity: not to the activity of fights of annihilation but to the activity of fights which are *contests*.[50]

Modern Man regards envy as a vice, and he defends himself from the accusation that he is envious; he perceives envy as a vile, aggressive, inhumane trait. The Greek, however, regards certain aspects of envy as goods. The difference between the Greek and Modern man regarding Envy is an example of an eroded support to the contest.

Nietzsche references Hesiod, who serves to represent the most base and elemental form of humanity, in all its terror of hatred flowing forth, to present the idea that Eris has a dual character. Nietzsche appeals to the authority of Hesiod, who has recorded the most fundamental nature of Man, in order to convey the idea that the aspect of man that allowed him to plunge into the abyss of hatred can also pull him out. Man's neglect of his passion eroded the supports of the contest and allowed man to slip into a brutal state, but the recognition and direction of that passion can once again pull him out of the abyss of hatred and reinstate the contest as an integral instrument of society. Hesiod, who serves as the authority on the human nature in Nietzsche's argument, states that although Eris can lead to hostility, it has an equal ability to spur men to the contest—to an activity focused on learning and bettering oneself rather than destruction of enemies.

The difference between the two types of Eris, aside from the differing degrees of hostility, is that passion dominates the former, whereas the latter is guided by both passion and reason; the good type of

[49] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 35.

[50] Ibid.

Eris fold together passion and reason in the form of the contest. In order to present the source of modernity's erosion, Nietzsche accentuates the differing conceptions of envy by appealing to the relation of the spiritual to the actual and describing the growing divide between what is virtuous, and what is reality. The Homeric gods were super-human, in that they were greater beings possessing the same nature as men; modernity's gods, however, are removed from the voluptuous passion of man. Modernity's gods are reasoning, loving creatures that disdain violence, and that admonish man to transcend—rather, ignore—his nature, his humanity. Modernity's spirituality is like the response Nietzsche labels as Oriental and Indian, and focuses on escaping the brutality of human nature, of this world. Nietzsche again condemns this response when he explains, "The Greek is envious, and he does not consider this quality a blemish but the gift of a beneficent godhead. What a gulf of judgment lies between us and him!"[51]

While it may be asserted that the bad type of Eris is not overwhelmingly present in modernity—that modernity's condition is not one of domineering violence—it is important to recognize that the passion Nietzsche refers to is not only physical; rather, Nietzsche refers to any annihilation prompted by bad Eris. For example, Nietzsche praises the intellectual contest in the same manner that he does the physical contest, if not more, as it seems evident that his discussion of the physical contest is merely a metaphor. The relentless lust for annihilation is present in the intellectual world and those who lust to annihilate are tremendously successful because modernity fails to recognize what is happening. Modernity mistakes the quiet suffocating of opinions for compassion, when such suffocation is just as violent and detrimental as a physical massacre.

However, Nietzsche believes the vitality of the contest is man. Therefore, the contest can be reinstituted once lost and if men learn to embody their full nature, the contest has a likely chance to persist forever, as contest spurs more contest. Nietzsche explains that "The greater and more sublime a Greek is," or, the more determined he is in seeking victory, "the brighter the flame of ambition that flares out of him, consuming everybody who runs on the same course."[52] Meaning, one man's quest to discover and gain victory will inspire more. Nietzsche poetically references several cases where the contest has spurred men to action, asserting, "The most striking of the examples is that even a dead man can still spur a live one to consuming jealously."[53] Appealing to the authority of Aristotle to support his argument, he lists the competition of Xenophon of Colophon and Homer, of Plato and Homer, and of Themistocles and Aristides to convey the impulsive quality of the contest, as it spurs men to compete with contenders that have long passed. The persistent contest fans the flam of man's fiery passion and allows man to be fully human, pouring forth their ideas with the full coalescence of their reason and passion. In order to accentuate the role of envy in the perpetuation of the contest, Nietzsche states,

> We do not understand the full strength of Xenophanes' attack of the national hero of poetry, unless—as again later with Plato—we see that at its root lay an overwhelming craving to assume the place of the overthrown poet and to inherit his fame.[54]

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Nietzsche, *"Homer's Contest,"* 35-36. Although Nietzsche depiction of Xenophanes'

Again, Nietzsche illustrates Envy's integral role in the contest, and if presented with the outlet of the contest, man's envy will be a benefactor rather than detractor. "Every great Hellene hands on the torch of the contest; every great virtue kindles a new greatness," Nietzsche explains, and through this beautiful and poetic sentence, he encapsulates the essence of the Greek: always evaluating, always testing and exploring the discoveries of others; no rocks are left unturned and no truths are final. [55]

The illustrations of Themistocles and Pericles exhibit the consuming power of envy, as its appetite is not satisfied with anything other than action; Envy is a catalyst for creation, without it there is no action, and without actions, there is no creation. The internal gnawing of envy within Themistocles and Pericles is only satisfied through participation in the contest—action and competition. In the contest, Themistocles and Pericles experience the full spectrum of humanness, the full measure of man's reason and passion intertwined. Themistocles' gnawing envy became "…that remarkably unique, purely instinctive genius of his political activity…"[56] The impetus of envy also spurs Pericles to strive voraciously for victory in the contest. Nietzsche references a comment made by a noted opponent of Pericles, claiming that he once stated, "'Even when I throw him down, he denies that he fell and attains his purpose, persuading even those who saw him fall.'"[57] The image of Pericles and his opponent portrays this effect of victory, as Pericles persuades everyone that he is the victor, and his opponent is quick to declare that he is in truth the victor, and only perceived as the loser because of Pericles' artful persuasion. Both Pericles and his opponent desire fame, and will continue to participate in the contest in order to attain that fame. The example of Pericles and his opponent portrays the effect of the contest—the contest creates an equal playing field where, with the right training, any person can compete and succeed. The contest creates more contests because it allows man to develop a taste for fame and the happiness acquired through victory in the pursuit of truth, a taste that man will forever desire. The contest perpetuates itself because it levels the playing field for the contenders—men are prompted to fight each other, train, and fight each other more because they desire victory and are on an equal playing field; it is only the abolition of the contest that kills the contest.

The abolition of the contest can take many forms, but the two primary options are either that the government or a similar authority abolishes the contest, or that the contest is abolished because there comes along a contender so great and victorious that all other contenders are intimidated and cower in his sight. In such instances, the contest is abolished because there is no longer an equal playing field; men fail to properly train because the collective mind decides that there is no degree of training that equips a person to compete with a man so great. This situation is detrimental to the state because, as Nietzsche asserts, "the contest is necessary to preserve the health of the state…"[58] This sentiment was integral to the politics of governing humans in Ancient Greece. "Reflect on the original meaning of *ostracism*, for example, as it is pronounced by the Ephesians when they banish Hermodorus," Nietzsche asks of his readers, opening a discussion of the necessary practices and policies for the survival of the contest.[59]

motives may be inaccurate, he take poetic license in order to use the example to illustrate the idea that certain qualities that modernity deems as "bad" are actually helpful to human life.

[55] Nietzsche, *"Homer's Contest,"* 36.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

By stating there is a difference in pronunciation that requires reflection, Nietzsche implies that the Greeks possessed an altogether different conception of ostracism from modernity. However, Nietzsche frames the discussion of ostracism in a manner that is compelling, and influences his readers to approach the term sympathetically. He purports that the original conception of ostracism is not an exile to the wilderness, conducted by reigning authorities as a merciful alternative to execution. Instead, he explains that the original meaning of ostracism was a practice of stimulating the people and empowering each to fulfill their own potential. Although ostracism in our modern language comes packed with connotations of archaic mercilessness, it is for Nietzsche indeed a positive action that stimulates man's ability to continue fulfilling his potential and expanding the horizon of that potentiality. Nietzsche quotes the Ephesians declaration, "Among us no one shall be best; but if someone is, then let him be elsewhere and among others" and adds,

> Why should no one be the best? Because then the contest would come to an end and the eternal source of life for the Hellenic state would be endangered…Originally this curious institution is not a safety valve but a means of stimulation: the individual who towers above the rest is eliminated so that the contest of forces may reawaken…"[60]

While ostracism might not be exactly a gift to the ostracized, it is not punishment either, as ostracism allows an untouchable champion to find a formidable competitor and fulfill his potential, whereas remaining in a state of untouchable victory without any formidable competitors would only stunt his growth. Such a person would experience constant fame but would not actually better himself. An unrivaled warrior stunts his own growth and the growth of the entire state; effectively, such a person kills the contest. Because the contest is essential to the health of the state, the state in turn suffers. It is therefore necessary that the contest is protected and men do not become intimidated and squander their potential.

The existence of "the best" inhibits courage in the herd of humanity—collectively, society becomes less active and eventually mindless creatures content to be led by whoever asserts their will upon them. In a world without contest, the most powerful becomes king, possessing the uncriticized capability to exercise his authority any way he desires. The contest is essential because it provokes man to train, to believe that they possess the capability to rival the best, and therefore to alter the direction of life. The capability, however, is realized only through training and strengthening, where the exercise of one's critical thinking is involved. The contest compels participants—everyone—to think critically, to always evaluate, question, "*go under*." The contest prevents the rule of one, the intimidation of one ruler that quells the ambition of man and replaces that passion with a blanket of contentedness over the masses. Without the contest, Man's horizon is no more; therefore,

> The individual who towers above the rest is eliminated so that the contest of forces may reawaken—an idea that is hostile to the "exclusiveness" of genius in the modern sense and presupposes that in the natural order of things there are always several geniuses who spur each other to

[60] Ibid.

> action, even as they hold each other within the limits of measure.[61]

Nietzsche criticizes modernity's conception of the exclusivity of genius, that is, the exclusivity of truth and intelligence. Society's conception that certain men have an authority of truth dampens the contest because it eliminates the idea that each man has the capacity for pursuing truth that is sharpened through the contest. Without the idea of exclusivity, all men are spurred to action to compete with one another for what they believe to be true.

The Last Man

The contest continually fulfills man's potential and expands it through the acquisition of knowledge. Without the contest, men regress into animals, and eventually, they become "the last man."[62] The Last Men are beings that have shrunk away from their nature completely, and have become nothing more than cattle. They care only about survival and nothing else. Nietzsche explains, "Education, they call it; it distinguishes them from the goatherds."[63] The Last Man's education kills all wonder in the world and declares all things to be known or capable of being known. The Last Man may still ask questions, but he would never devote his life to exploring a question, he merely muses for entertainment; he does not wrestle with questions of life and creation. The Last Man's only goal in life is to live, but they are confused. The Last Man's conception of living in not living at all, it is merely existing. The Last Man discusses questions of grandeur over dinner with friends and then "blinks," changing the subject to the newest health fad or the right amount of sleep for longevity in life. [64] They do not wrestle; they do not truly care. It is not necessarily "promising" that these men have such discussions over dinner, it is rather dangerous, as it creates the illusion that they do actually mull over the heavy questions of life; while, in all reality, they are not. The illusion is dangerous because it fuels their pride; the Last Men uses their education, which has allowed them to mention these questions in passing, as fuel to inflame their pride. Nevertheless, they only fool themselves; the Last Man's most innate desire is to be healthy, to live long. They cannot perceive the chaos of life and in themselves, and therefore they cannot pursue truth and create. The Last man does not actually posses any education; they do not have anything for which to praise themselves.

While the time of the Last Man has not yet come, an absolute elimination of the contest will surely birth the Last Man. The contest creates a goal for man to strive toward, and without goals, man will become cattle, aimlessly wandering and satisfying their animalistic desire. In Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra approaches a group of people after he has descended from the mountain where he had meditated on man for several years. When Zarathustra observes the apathy of the crowd, he exclaims:

> The time has come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing

[61] Nietzsche, *"Homer's Contest,"* 36-37.

[62] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* , in *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and Tran. Walter Kaufmann, 103-439. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). 129.

[63] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 128.

[64] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 129.

> beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir![65]

Zarathustra's explanation, rich with metaphor, illustrates the power of a goal. His explanation serves as a final warning, an admonition. He explains that there is only a little time left before there will no longer be any chance for man to create.

Courage is the element that pulls the string of the bow taut, and without a correct conception of courage, the string of the bow will slack and the arrow of man will not be able to launch itself into the unknown to explore. Without courage, man will eventually forget his former ability. The Last Man is content in his world, instead of finding happiness in pushing his horizons and knowing, he revels in the comfort of the familiar.

The Last Man, however, is still man, and therefore he can still feel the base parts of his manly origins bubbling up from below his perfect artificially structured soul. Man appeases these bubbling urges only enough for them to subsist. He is moderate and base, fulfilling his desire in manners he deems entertaining but safe enough to protect his longevity. He does not partake in any actions that "require too much exertion."[66] He understands that "'formerly the world was mad,'" and can feel that fact deep within himself, but cares little to explore why and what happened and what the nature of human beings are in his day.[67] When he feels the effects of the remnants of a former age, he merely blinks. Exploring requires too much exertion; the Last Man therefore perceives that it is better for him just to continue existing.

The Last Man does not create anything because he has lost the chaos of his soul, the Last Man has essentially killed his passionate, creative side, and therefore part of his self because he has "invented happiness," happiness made from health, moderation, caution, and hedonism.[68] The Last Man does not create because he has no chaos within him; There is no chaos because there is no confusion, no unknown. Nietzsche explains that chaos, man's innate and intertwined passion and reason, is necessary for the contest, for creation. Zarathustra explains, "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star."[69] It is when man loses the chaos within himself and tries to mute and shrink away from parts of his nature that he loses manliness.

Once man is mechanically separated into two parts, passion and reason, Man is able to "see" the terror of Man's passionate side. Society therefore begins to observe man's passion as adverse to society, they begin to restrict man's passionate side and raise his reason above his passion. In short, the Last Man is a product of a former age, an age that disordered man to an artificial being that can exist only in an unnatural state; an age that claimed that they were ordering man's soul, but what they really did was rip man apart and turn him into something artificial and unsustainable.

The Last Man loves ease and shies away from difficulty. The Last Man loves survival above all else, and therefore cares not for man; he does not passionately devote himself to war, to idea, not even to the pursuit of knowledge. Eventually, he ceases to see even the occasional necessity of struggle. Therefore, the contest does not exist in the world of the Last Man, as no one cares for each other enough to engage in the contest and risk one's longevity. Zarathustra explains that the contest does not exist because:

[65] Ibid.
[66] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 130.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 129.
[69] Ibid.

> One is clever and knows everything that has ever happened: so there is no end of derision. One still quarrels, but one is soon reconciled—else it might spoil the digestion.[70]

The Last Man fears the stress involved with doing something difficult, they cannot endure the stress of exploring the unknown. The Last Man cares more for his survival than living out his full manliness, and therefore manliness shrinks. The Last Man understands the slow devolution as the steady evolution of man over time as he continues to absorb the "knowledge" that comes to him.

The Avenue of Escape

The contest must be protected in order to fulfill and expand man's collective and individual potential. It must exist to provoke men to pursue victory and truth and live fully. Because the contest forces man to train and evaluate, each contender walks away from the contest with new knowledge that they then use to strengthen themselves. Nietzsche explains, "Every talent must unfold itself in fighting," because each gem starts out as only a rock, which is made beautiful only through an intensive refining process: through abrasion and buffing.[71] The defeated walk away from the contest with a new knowledge that they then evaluate and discuss, and mold into a new perspective; for the champions, in almost all cases, the contest reveals their weaknesses, which they can then strengthen, and they develop a taste for victory that they will forever crave.

It is through discourse and debate that Man develops substantive ideas. Because the perpetuation of the contest relies on participation (and vice versa), no person becomes *too old* for the contest. Nietzsche states, "…And just as [Hellenic] youths were educated through contest, their educators were also engaged in contests with each other."[72] Nietzsche poetically describes the contention between the educators of the youths in order to convey the idea that the contest is perpetual, and therefore that the Hellenes were always individually in internal wars, which necessarily overflowed into an external war with each other.[73]

In a contest-centric society, even masters of their field are at war with themselves and one another, because the contest makes one better, and makes the art itself better. Nietzsche describes the relationship of Pindar and Simonides, who were side by side the greatest musical artists of their time. They were involved in a rigorous contest with one another because of their *mistrust* and their *jealousy*.[74] Their mistrust was rooted in jealousy and the idea that they both were each other's competition. Of course, much of Nietzsche portrayal of the relationship between Pindar and Simonides is speculation, however, the portrayal still strikes a chord in the reader; it is easy to imagine two musical masters, ambitious as they almost surely are, standing side by side brewing in the quiet hatred that accompanies jealousy.

Nietzsche also references the sophists, those who teach their wisdom through drama and rhetoric, and he claims that they too are always in contest with one another,

> In the spirit of the contest, the sophist, the advanced teacher of antiquity, meets another sophist; even the most universal type of instruction, through the drama, was meted out to the people only in the form of a tremen-

[70] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 130.
[71] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 37.
[72] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 37.
[73] Nietzsche praises this idea, and in *Preparatory Human Beings,* he encourages his readers to, "Live at war with your peers and yourselves!"
[74] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 37.

> dous wrestling among the great musical and dramatic artists.[75]

Just as educators are in constant ideological battle, the sophists are in competition as well, the tension lying in the contest of who is correct and who is effective, in short—who is the best. Such competition "unfolds itself in fighting," both internally and externally; war sharpens all competitors.[76] It is easy for the reader to imagine these two images, because it is natural. One can easily recall being in a quiet but tense competition with someone, perhaps even a friend, over who is smarter, or faster, or stronger. While Pindar and Simonides can stand side by side, they are in fact in a tremendous war with one another. The spiritedness of competition is natural, and it is that very feeling that Nietzsche tries to evoke within the reader through the portrayal of Pindar and Simonides and the battling sophists. "How wonderful!" Nietzsche exclaims, "Even the artist hates the artist."[77] It is by jealously that the world is benefitted with the masterfulness of great artists. Without envy, there is no contest and therefore fulfillment of human nature; envy prompts the refining process of the contest through internal perplexing that overflows in external interlocution.

While modern man perceives the inner and outer struggle of the artist as weakness, the Greek sees the artist "only as engaged in a personal fight," meaning, the Greek perceives that all art is struggle.[78] According to Nietzsche and the Greeks, there is no art without struggle, as art is the interpretation and sorting out of a struggle. Like poetry, art is an attempt to make sense of the world. Nietzsche explains, "Precisely where modern man senses the weakness of a work of art, the Hellene seeks the source of its greatest strength."[79] In the moment where modern man starts to feel the uneasy recognition of struggle, the Hellene, or the greatest of men, engages himself in the struggle he perceives in the work of art. In the absence of struggle, "art" is merely decoration.

Nietzsche then returns to a further discussion of the role of Plato's artfully created dialogues in the contest, asserting,

> What, for example, is of special artistic significance in Plato's dialogues is for the most part the result of a contest with the art of the orators, the sophists, and the dramatists of his time, invented for the purpose of enabling him to say in the end: 'Look, I too can do what my great rivals can do; indeed, I can do it better than they….'[80]

What Nietzsche conveys through this passage is that art is struggle, and therefore the special artistic significance of Plato's dialogues is the struggle born from envy, or, Plato's innate desire to defeat his competitors, which allows him to proclaim,

> 'No Protagoras has invented myths as beautiful as mine; no dramatist such a vivid and captivating whole as my *Symposion*; no orator has written orations like those in my *Gorgias*—and now I repudiate all this entirely and condemn all imitative art. Only the contest made me a poet, a sophist, and orator.'[81]

Nietzsche purports through this portrayal of Plato's motive that Plato's dialogues are in fact champions of the contest and only

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

through that are they derivations from the pursuit of truth, as the contest is a forum for the pursuit of truth. While we choose to believe that such writings are honest pursuits of philosophy, Nietzsche points out that they are equally, if not more so, fueled by want of fame, that creeping remnant of the lust for annihilation from a former age. Nietzsche asserts that Plato's *myths* are *invented* in order to win the contest; therefore describing the efforts of philosophy as mere stories concocted by zealous masters of rhetoric, sophistry, and drama—in short, Nietzsche implies that Plato combines his persuasion with his pursuit in order to rally an audience.

The process Plato used to acquire fame is the process used by all contenders in the contest. However, Plato sought to destroy the contest in order to consecrate his fame, a feat that was most difficult but most successful. In Nietzsche's portrait of society, Plato stands as a golden idol under which all members of society bow down and therefore are stunted, as the weighty intimidation of the golden idol weighs on their backs beckoning all contenders to surrender. Plato's philosophy has only survived because he administered the first blow in the annihilation of the contest. He participated gloriously, but once he achieved his position of power he repudiated the contest and condemned all future attempts to debate him. He excelled in the contest and then threw the institution away, thus solidifying the potential for man along with his fame.

After turning the perception of philosophy on its head, Nietzsche proclaims, "What a problem opens up before us when we inquire into the relationship of the contest to the conception of the work of art!"[82] Nietzsche's portrait of the world is one where the truth that we base our lives upon is created through the will to power; it is created through the contest, therefore it is created by the arts of persuasion combined with the pursuit of truth and creation, and often a fight between wills. The "problem" that Nietzsche explains, therefore, is multi-faceted; put simply, the problem is that there is an incongruence between the artist's motives and popular reception of the work of art. There is a problem with the conception of the work of art because, as in the case of Plato specifically, Plato has achieved a level of excellence in society by persuading his readers that it is a pure philosophical pursuit untainted by the arts of persuasion. Although the dialogues do not connect all of the dots to arrive at an objective Truth, they point toward a capacity to know all things, and therefore ideologies following Platonism have connected the dots, and with the help of Plato's fame, have declared that they have made what is unknown, known.

Because of Plato's phenomenal victory in the contest, society began to perceive the contest as obsolete and became particularly disdainful of it. Society's misconception of Plato's work of art as a sincere attempt of and champion in discovering truth is dangerous because his work is actually a guise and the work is in fact a product of the contest. Therefore, it is dangerous for society to remove Plato's derivations from the contest and use them as pillars on which society props itself up. The façade that we have the tools to know everything, or that we do know everything, inhibits man from realizing his true, limitless potential. The elevation of artistry is difficult because it causes society to lean on false support, ultimately resulting in the plummeting of society into the depths of the pre-Homeric world.

The problem that "opens up before us" is also due in part to our ignorance of reality; While the contest, or man's desire to be victorious, may not be the ideal origin of broad perceptions of truth, it is significantly better than the alternative—brute force and

[82] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 38.

the annihilation of all competitors.[83] Nietzsche's use of "however" shifts the discussion about the origins of truth to the exaltation of the contest over any other means. The "however" stands as a conciliatory statement, almost saying, *I know this is not ideal, but this is reality, and we must see the beauty and benefit in it in order to use it well.* The alternative to the arts of deception in the contest is the "pre-Homeric" world of "terrifying savagery of hatred and lust to annihilate."[84] The contest grounds Man in nature and without it, man becomes detached from reality and descends into savagery. When man places himself above the contest, he will therefore fall below.

The abolition of the contest is not a rare occurrence, as it is often granted as an additional prize for a particularly impressive champion. Nietzsche describes this method of abolishing the contest when he explains,

> This phenomenon unfortunately appears quite frequently when a great personality is suddenly removed from the contest by an extraordinarily brilliant deed and becomes *hors de concours* in his own judgment as in that of his fellow citizens.[85]

When a contender comes along, who champions the contest with certainty and surprising grandiosity, society often elongates their fame as an additional prize. However, there is a price attached to elongated fame, as it is difficult to endure without continual contest. The difficulty to endure elongated fame without further contest stems from the function of the contest, as it is an outlet for Man's passion. Man cannot endure fame, because he is only able to feel the happiness of victory for a certain amount of time before he must return to the contest.[86] Fame is difficult to endure, and, as Nietzsche asserts, the result of attempting to endure fame is,

> …Almost without exception a terrifying one; and if one usually infers from this that the Greek was incapable of enduring fame and happiness, one should say more precisely that he was unable to endure fame without any further contest, or the happiness at the end of the contest.[87]

Nietzsche does not believe in a nirvana-state of happiness that can be definitively attained. Instead, through the illustration of Miltiades, Nietzsche displays how happiness is in fact the result of overcoming of a struggle, the feeling of happiness is fleeting, as struggle is ever-present.

However, the false conception that man can attain happiness fuels the bad habit of attempting to raise man above the contest and idolize him by declaring that one has won the contest forever. Nietzsche disdains this idea and vehemently defends the contest, claiming that without it, man will descend into a world ruled by a deceivingly disguised forcefulness. Nietzsche uses the example of Miltiades to portray the effect of living without contest, explaining,

> Placed on a solitary peak and elevated far above every fellow fighter by his incomparable success at Marathon, he feels a base, vengeful craving awaken inside of him against a Parian citizen with whom he has long had a feud.[88]

[83] Ibid.
[84] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 33.
[85] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 38.
[86] Obviously, Nietzsche does not believe in a state of nirvana.
[87] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 38.
[88] Ibid.

The language of Nietzsche's description creates a dynamic illustration that places the reader in the position of Miltiades so that the reader can understand better the passion that consumes one removed from the contest. When Miltiades is on a pedestal above the contest, he is deprived of an outlet for his passion; therefore, his passion is no longer tempered by the contest and it begins to overtake him.

Nietzsche explains that after Miltiades' victorious happiness expired, Miltiades began to feel "a base, vengeful craving."[89] He lashed out on the Parian citizen, who is implied to be an inferior contender, over a "feud," a term that signifies a petty disagreement, not one eliciting the violence Miltiades enacts. Miltiades actions represent the danger of losing the contest as his actions begins to resembled the pre-Homeric "lust for annihilation," as he "…misuses fame, state property, civic honor—and dishonors himself" in order to annihilate the Parian citizen.[90] The means he employs are imprudent and unfair, because he does not meet the Parian citizen on an equal playing field, but rather misuses his fame in order to take advantage of the Parian. Such behavior inflicts "An ignominious death," on Miltiades, which "sets its seal on his brilliant heroic career and darkens it for all posterity."[91]

The illustration of Miltiades depicts the danger of eroding or losing the pillars of the contest, which ground Man in his nature and help temper his nature in a way that promotes growth; the implication indicates that the transcendence of convention Nietzsche advocates for is not heathenism. Though progress comes though destruction, it does not come through annihilation. Destruction is related to struggle between parties, and annihilation is related to the cruel imposition of one's beliefs over another's. Right destruction is the result of a learning process and therefore spurs creation in its place, whereas annihilation is the result of hubris and is wholly uncreative. Thus, hubris erodes the supports of the contest; it is the catalyst for the deterioration of a healthy society.

When a man is raised above the contest, he is placed on a peak, above the wonders and in at a height where all is "figured out" and there is no longer any need for wonder. Nietzsche uses the examples of Miltiades to portray the detriment of losing wonder, or "the gods," explaining:

> After the battle of Marathon the envy of the heavenly powers seized him. And this divine envy is inflamed when it beholds a human being without a rival, unopposed, on a solitary peak of fame.[92]

Once man achieves a position on the peak of the gods, man begins to believe that there are no gods, and that they no longer need gods. While this realization has the potential to be freeing, allowing man to realize fully his limitless capacity for greatness, it is very volatile. Without gods, there are no longer predetermined goals to strive for; rather, man must set his own goals. It is often the case, however, that man squanders his newfound limitless potential, collapsing under the weight of possibility he must navigate. Nietzsche describes the gods as actual beings, asserting, "Only the gods are beside [Miltiades] now—and therefore they are against him. They seduce him to a deed of *hybris*, and under it he collapses."[93]

Nietzsche's discussion of the nature of gods is a rhetorical tool that illustrates the weight of responsibility accompanying an exclamation that there are no gods and that

[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

therefore everything is knowable. The image of the gods seizing Miltiades and seducing him to a hubris under which he folds accurately conveys the essence of a godless society, as men assume a position of authority that crushes them so forcefully that it could easily be perceived as a ruthlessly jealous entity crushing man's ability to sail to new horizons. Nietzsche's use of metaphor in this instance portrays the danger of abolishing the contest and of declaring that man has conquered all problems. Just as horizons are markers for the limits of the Earth and of man's eyesight, "horizons," when speaking of mans' potential are the limits of man's capabilities. Man always strives to fulfill his potential if a horizon is presented.

Poetry creates new horizons because it appeals to man's true and exceptional nature, and does not try to cut man into small and manageable pieces. Prose imposes itself on the reader and divides man into part passion and part reason. Once dualism is accepted, the enticing and beautiful wonders become hard and cold facts, crushing Man's potential and shrinking his horizons. Eventually, Man will begin to believe that all he could possible wonder about is concretely figured out. Under such circumstances, man eventually stops thinking and is ruled only by base, instant, meaningless desire. If there is final victory for Man, there is nothing left for him but death.

"Let us note well that, just as Miltiades perishes, the noblest Greek cities perish too," Nietzsche declares, explaining that just as the final victory for man leaves nothing to strive for but death, if the city declares final victory, it will begin to be dismantled. Nietzsche explains that when the city arrives "at the temple of Nike from the racecourse," it will perish.[94] This is true for any union of persons—whether it be a city, a state, or a small community. Nietzsche uses the goddess Nike to illustrate the nature of victory and how it cannot be "reached" definitively and therefore that the declaration of final victory will be a city's undoing. The temple of Nike is on top of the Acropolis in Athens, and stands as a monument to the goddess of victory, whose wings signify the fleeting nature of victory, and thus the fact that one must continually train and fight for victory. Though one must climb a large mountain to attain victory and hold it in one's hand, one must continue to climb, and continually strive to attain victory. When the state develops the mindset of final victory, the state will crumble. If it is placed on a pedestal above the contest, the support beams of the contest that keep the state grounded in reality will be chop off from underneath it. Once this happens, society will rapidly plummet into the pre-Homeric world and must restart its journey to greatness again.

Nietzsche uses the examples of Athens and Sparta to illustrate further the danger of the absence of struggle, explaining:

> Athens, who had destroyed the independence of her allies and then severely punished the rebellions of her subjects; Sparta, who expressed her domination over Hellas after the battle of Aegospotami, in yet much harsher and crueler ways, have also, after the example of Miltiades, brought about their own destruction through deeds of *hybris*, as proof that without envy, jealousy, and ambition in the contest, the Hellenic city, like the Hellenic man, degenerates.[95]

Without the contest, used as a manageable device to coalesce passion and reason, and to advance man's horizons, man crumbles.

[94] Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," 39.

[95] Ibid.

Set above all wonder, he is incapable of finding and exploring man's limitless capacity, and instead enjoys the comfort of "knowing" everything. Man's comfort devolves into an apathy that eats away at man's substance, and eventually man becomes a slothful herd of livestock, only focused on comfort and instant gratification; the distance between man and his horizon shrinks. Nietzsche explains that without the contest, the healthy envy that fuels it and the wonder that secures it, "[Man] becomes evil and cruel; he becomes vengeful and godless; in short, he became "pre-Homeric…"[96]

Without wonder and envy, Man regresses to a state before poetry, a time of arbitrary strict structure—to societies forcibly ruled by the strongest. Before poetry, there was no questioning, no fear of risk, and therefore no fight. Poetry prompts participation in the contest because the reader can debate about what exactly the author is trying to say. The format lends itself to debate, to the contest, while also participating in the contest itself. It provokes readers to a type of inquiry that strict, inflexible philosophy does not. Modern philosophy praises itself for the fact that it has uncovered all of the mysterious intricacies of life through logic and science, but such philosophies only produce solutions and behaviors that dissolve man's savage and creative characteristics; such philosophies raise men on artificial pedestals and call it "humanity." Such a format artificially raises itself above the contest, rendering the contest obsolete. Therefore, the author and readers are no longer engaged with their context, and so they lose context. Eventually they develop a sort of elitist hubris and ignore the lustful tiger abiding in their core.

Without the forum of the contest, the tiger brews, ready to flash his teeth at any moment. The contest tames savage man so that it can operate in society and fulfill its potential; the contest does this by providing savage man direction. In reality, the contest is the propeller that helps man push back the horizon. Man's aggression cannot be eliminated, but it can be directed to the contest, which will create a vigorous manliness that is in fact more humane than modernity's mechanization (rather, *actually* humane). In the absence of poetry, men will devour themselves. Without the contest, men will slip into the abyss of hatred.

Dawn of a New Era

In "Preparatory Human Beings," Nietzsche prophesies a new era in which man will leave behind his apathy and once again create, explore, and therefore live a fully human life. In order to usher in such an era, it is necessary to reestablish the contest and reinvigorate society, Nietzsche asserts the need for persons devoted to changing society's perception of nature. A redefinition of nature is essential in encouraging men to embody their full nature so that they can once again create. These persons must be philosophers, in that they create meaning for the chaos of life, but they must be philosophers that embody their full nature. These newly defined philosophers will thus offer hope to the masses, and directs their focus on finding meaning and beauty in what *is.* The philosopher assumes an active role in society; no longer will these men be writing treatises in ivory towers scoffed at by the rest of the world. Rather, they will frame life and provoke men to action. The preparatory men that Nietzsche calls for will reexamine the relationship between nature and humanity; they will inform us that there is, in fact, no separation between the two. When men act in their true nature they are most humane, as any departure from nature is a rejection of all things that are true and such departure results in a flabby conception of humanity. In order for humanity to fulfill once again its excellence, we must return to

[96] Ibid.

our nature. After nature is once again ingrained in the minds of men, there will be a resurgence of great men and great deeds. These new philosophers demanded by Nietzsche will reflect on the nature of life and will shape society's ideas of nature and relationship between meaning and action.

The preparatory men do this to pave the road for the overmen, or a new breed of human beings that will once again create through engaging in war with one another. These men are strong and bold humans who understand struggle as opportunity and view it as their lifeblood. They understand struggle will reinvigorate the heart of man and will mitigate the pervasive nihilism of society. This new society will be robust and passionate, quite the opposite of the complacent and passive society of the Last Man where no brave are left to explore the mystical unknown. There are no brave because the men who are left in the wake of the death of God wonder about nothing and therefore only care about survival. To them, The unknown presents danger; the only answer to the imminent danger presented by nihilism is nihilism itself; the rejection of any leap of faith that may result in error or harm.

Nihilism claims there is no meaning to life and therefore, such a philosophy results in lives that amount to nothing; in such a world there are no causes to fight for or empires to build. Because life is not worth living, the risk of one's longevity is not worth taking. Nihilism result is the aimless wandering of half-developed people; people who reject that there is anything unknown, persons who cower from exploring the undiscovered depths of life and artificially create the illusion that everything is known. These nihilistic "Last Men" value time over meaning and purpose. His happiness is not a process in which he lives to fulfill human excellence and create; rather, it is "invented." It is moderate, but base.

Man's passion cannot be eliminated in this society; rather, it is unleashed to lash out in base and terrifying brutality. When nature and "humanity" or "the good," are separated, men begin to ignore their more passionate side and it therefore erodes their humanity though they do not realize it. Nietzsche maintains the idea that nature can and should be directed to a higher cause and should not therefore partake in base emotion. Because the "Last Man" has "invented happiness," there is no *reason* for which to direct passion towards creation, no reason to explore, discover, and argue because every worthy unknown is discovered and decided, and what *has not* been discovered is not important. Thus, the Last Man hedonistically satisfies their base desires without aim or passion. While the actions of the last man might be pleasurable, but they aren't meaningful; or, if they are meaningful, they are not pleasurable for him. They pursue life with a divorced emotion and reason. Thus, they become complacent and content. They are content with their moderate escapades of baseness and meaninglessness. They are content because they are too fearful to leap into the unknown. It is exactly this pervasive complacency that spurs Nietzsche to beckon a breed of men that will reinvigorate life; men who will redefine purpose and pave the path for men that will strive to fulfill said purpose.

Nietzsche calls out the new breed of "preparatory men" by illustrating the disparity of society in a manner that is distressing and provocative. Despite Nietzsche's dim criticism of society, he has faith in man's capacity to transcend the petty baseness of a nihilist life. Nietzsche declares his faith in man's capacity in aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*, when he poetically describes the dawn of the new era.[97] He illustrates a harrowing interaction between a madman and a

[97] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181.

mob of people in a marketplace early in the morning. The madman Nietzsche describes seeks God and the people in the marketplace laugh at him because they do not believe in such a being. When the mob laughs, the madman declares, "'*We have killed [God]—you and I,'*" and laments,

> How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the Earth from the sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? ...Are we not straying through the infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?[98]

The madman's monologue displays Nietzsche's hope for society. While he mourns the death of wonder, he illustrates this event as "morning," which signifies that he views it as a new beginning for man. However, it is important to note how the madman asks about the necessity of lighting lanterns in this bright new morning—the madman reveals that the mob is unaware that it is indeed morning, and therefore they are unable to "light lanterns."[99] The madman therefore inquires, "Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine composition?" and explains, "Gods, too, decompose" in order to emphasis that, just as all dead bodies do, his corpse will emanate an unpleasant, rotting odor that will permeate society.[100] The madman later declares that the mob is unworthy of their deed because they have not yet attained the caliber of greatness lost by the death of God. He explains that it is because the mob has not yet smelled the decomposition of God's death; they do not know what they have done and therefore they do not know how to respond. Through his description of the madman in the marketplace, Nietzsche illustrates a new grey morning, rich with potential, but with the caveat that society must understand its situation in order to effect the new era.

Nietzsche declares that this new beginning is an opportunity for man to transcend the limits of convention and become greater. Nietzsche's disdain, therefore, is of man's squandering of possibility. Nietzsche continues to fight vehemently for man's realization of his true nature and his limitless capacity for greatness. He provokes men to action and he calls men to arms to defend the life that is essential to the survival of humanity.

Nietzsche rouses such action through language that demands a response; his language provokes the spirit that is required in the hearts of the preparatory men—a spirit that compels the preparatory man to confront society and explore conceptions of truth. Much like the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" emboldened Union troops to fight courageously in the face of death during the Civil War, Nietzsche's proclamations march philosophers into a new "virile, warlike age."[101] The language he uses to convey this message moves the reader rather than reasons in the average systematic manner of contemporary philosophers. He makes arguments, but he folds his arguments into a dynamic language to create a robust and alluring philosophy. He uses poetry to captivate the reader, to appeal to their emotion in conjunction with their reason. He connects life with philosophy, meaning, he connects reason and passion. The philosophy he creates is unlike the contemporary philosophies that are disconnected from emotion. Nietzsche connects the reason and passion

[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

[101] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 283.

because he desires for man to live what they believe and in order to live what they believe, their belief must have life to it, and be grounded in reality rather than purely theoretical.

Nietzsche's battle tune begins, "I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin," provoking mind to envision portraits of mayhem and terror, but also of valor. The first line instills a measure of fear but also one excitement, as war denotes contest and result. However, the term "warlike" leaves room for the unknown. While it provokes images of war, it suggests that this age will still be somewhat different than the war that history is familiar with. While the proper passions are stirred, Nietzsche proceeds to explain that this new warlike age will be one that will "restore honor to courage," signifying that courageousness has lost its honor.[102] The use of "restore" implies that honor is lost, and while the language is poetic simply in its sound, it effectively encourages the reader to question what courage is, and if in fact, Nietzsche's implication is correct. Courage signifies boldness in risk, which signifies of an uncertainty of result, but a faith in the attempt. Because courage is related to risk and boldness, the fact that courage has lost its honor reveals that Nietzsche's audience has lost its respect for risk and boldness. Thus, courage withers and society honors safety, caution, conformity, and tradition—elements that inhibit the progress and fruition of man and restrict full lives.

Therefore, the preparatory men help cultivate a society that will once again honor courage. The courageous will once again be heroes; this is the "heroism" that Nietzsche claims will be prevalent in the coming age. This heroism implies that people will have a passion for life and will live their personal philosophies boldly. Such heroism will mitigate nihilism and relativism in the new age. While Nietzsche may propose that the there is no objective Truth, this passage seems to suggest that there are many truths, and while each possessor of their respective truths may believe that they are in possession of "Truth" it appears to be a more flexible Truth. Their truth is Truthy enough to "wage wars" but flexible enough that it is not a strict construction that limits Man's ability to discover and discuss because not everything is already known

Nietzsche explains that the preparatory human beings, by restoring the contest in human affairs, "shall prepare the way for the [age] yet higher."[103] The task of the preparatory human beings is to restore honor to courage, and practice courage themselves in order to prepare the way for an age that will "carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will *wage wars* for the sake of ideas and their consequences."[104] While the preparatory human beings that Nietzsche calls for are not immediately in the age of war, it is important to note that the age of war is the end of the preparatory human beings. That is, they are *preparing* the way for the age that Nietzsche envisions and longs for. They are not the ones who will war openly, but they are the ones that will plant the seed for the battlefields and war quietly, in order to till the soil for a greater contest. Nietzsche states the role and description of the preparatory men in order to inspire men to become preparatory men. He references romantic virtues of courage, valor and passion, and courage amidst struggle and the unknown. While the preparatory man's job is difficult, it is the most rewarding, without them the "coming age" would never come.

The character of the preparatory man is essential to his role, as it is not conven-

[102] Ibid.

[103] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 228.

[104] Ibid.

tionally glamorous, but is nevertheless sincere and intentional. His is a character of diligence and purpose. He knows who he is, in the midst of an era where the difference between individual and the masses is indistinguishable. Nietzsche understands that these human beings are rare, that because of the herdish tendency of modernity, these human beings "cannot very well leap out of nothing, any more than out of the sand and slime of present-day civilization."[105] The preparatory human beings are strong, and although it is difficult, they distinguish themselves from the slime that is contemporary metropolitanism. They distinguish themselves not by will, power, and destruction, but quietly; they are "human beings who know how to be silent, lonely, resolute, and content and constant in invisible activities."[106] They are lonely because they are few and far between. Because present day civilization is slimy and murky, strong individuals fit to be preparatory men are rare and lonely because of their rarity. Therefore, they must be content to pursue wisdom alone and to pave the way out the slime by drudging quietly.

Though the preparatory men are always working to shift and direct the heart of society, they must live within the established societal constraints. Their introspection has separated them from the superficiality of reality. They are silent, because their cause is not one able to be fought for through speech, but of subtle tilling; they slowly and quietly till the soil of society in order to create an environment that welcomes question, exploration, and confrontation rather than conformity and blind adherence to tradition. Preparatory men are resolute, content, and constant in invisible activities because they are confident in their mission, and devoted to it. They are unwavering; they are purposeful and confident, unable to be swayed by an uneducated and superficial majority. The invisible activities that the preparatory men are engaged in are not unreal, only invisible. The majority does not see their activities because they operate within convention quietly in order to undermine convention. They are constantly learning and evaluating, their activities are not of public oration and war. They understand that they must shift society slowly through the creation of new paths and new meanings. They create new paths in the mind—paths built for the difficult and important job of evaluation and consideration.

For example, the preparatory men no longer believe that the sky is blue because they were taught that the sky was blue when they were young. They believe that the sky is without color, that we only impose a color because it is comfortable, it makes the world small; the preparatory human being is content in a world without a colored sky. They are "bent to seek in all things for what in them must be overcome," because they are determined to self evaluate above all else, to be in constant pursuit of learning why it is they behave as they do, follow certain rules, believe certain truths.[107] They are bent in seeking out what is to be overcome, what is to be transcended- to find the real meaning and purpose rather than the conventional reason. They are determined to define and through that, to deconstruct. They are bent in searching out what is conventional, what is a lie, a myth, and they use that information to prepare the way for overmen.

The preparatory human beings do not destroy all value and leave behind rubble, the ruins of a society built on convention; Instead, they clean up the rubble, leaving what is good and taking away the rest. In order to pave the way for the coming age, the preparatory men evaluate society, and then offer resources that shift society to a more natural state. They pave the way for

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

the "age yet higher," and provide a foundation for that age, using resources not of brick, but of something less permanent, a material that can constantly be questioned, and easily taken down, reshaped, or rebuilt in order to fit the climate of the time. By overcoming themselves, or destroying in them any remnant of convention, they create the ability for man to do the same. They begin to see what in them needs overcoming and begin to overcome these same things in the world, slowly, quietly, subtly.

Humility is essential to overcoming. The preparatory men do not overcome to gain fame through great oration and revolution, but by "cheerfulness."[108] These preparatory men do not till the ground so they can create an enemy out of the society they determined to change out of love. If their plan was such, it would all be in vain—for personal fame rather than the health of all humankind. They are cheerful, because it is in their character to be cheerful, but also because it is effective. If they are cheerful, they appear to live according to convention, but they are not. If they are cheerful, they are inconspicuous. The preparatory man's overcoming is a sort of inner contest and subtle contest with modernity in which the preparatory man questions the foundations of society in a way that erodes modernity and allows for the new era. For example, the preparatory men ask questions that erode the foundation of society by beginning first with a simple, seemingly innocent question, and that question spurs another question, which spurs another, thus one answer becomes four possibilities, and Possibility, or the contest, is resurrected.

Perhaps the greatest virtues of the preparatory human beings are their patience and unpretentiousness. They are unpretentious because they are not those who will wage wars and therefore will not develop the taste for glory that accompanies victory in war. They are inquisitive but not adamant. They are questioning and demanding. They live for themselves and not for society, yet they do not wish to impose their philosophies on others. Their existence attracts attention, and it is from that which possibility emerges. They have "contempt for all great vanities"—they do not make a show of their victories, and do not exploit the failures of the traditions they defeat.[109] They live differently, not loudly; they are not obnoxious in their views, but quiet and respectful. Their judgment is "sharp and free" because they understand the chaos- they understand that not all is reasonable, their judgment is not contingent on who wins and who loses, it is free, and it is sharp, because they are strong.[110]

Their judgment is independent and therefore does not sway with popular opinion—it is rather principled and determined. They create paths outside of convention but also operate within convention; while they have "their own festivals, their own working days, and their own periods of mourning," they are also "ready to obey when that is called for."[111] Nietzsche's illustration almost appears to be a double-life—that the preparatory men live two existences. However, that is not entirely accurate; rather, they live life in one accord but under varying circumstances. The preparatory human beings' holidays and working days arise from their observation, evaluation, and self-reflection; they are independent and free creations. However, the preparatory man is in no way anarchical. There is clearly an adherence to the law or authority, although the motivation may be contrary or different than the desired one. They are freethinking individuals who, from time to time, must submit themselves

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

to authority, but they do not give up their mission when they obey.

Nietzsche explains that the preparatory men are "equally proud, equally serving their own cause in both cases."[112] In this assertion, there are two troubling words: cause and equally. The "cause" that Nietzsche refers to could be the paving of the way for the warlike age yet to come. If this is the case, the act of obeying and creating one's own philosophy both pave the way because the labor is subtle. One still obeys, but also has unconventional practices. This works to alter convention because it bends the framework from the inside. However, the "cause" of the preparatory men could also refer to the *way* that the preparatory men obey. They obey not mindlessly, but for apolitical personal reasons. Preparatory human beings adhere to authority because they are independent and intelligent; they *choose* to, they are not coerced. For example, the preparatory man may not believe in God, but prays at a public function because it would be too loud an action *not* to, but perhaps he also prays in order to self evaluate, to realign himself, perhaps he uses the sacred silence whether or not he actually believes in a god, or the same god as everyone at the function. The preparatory man is not wasteful. Instead, he is ingenious and innovative. He creates, and restructuring is a mode of creation.

To close the "job description" portion of this passage, Nietzsche illustrates the preparatory human begins as "more endangered human beings, more fruitful human beings, happier human beings!" The closing is especially interesting because it clearly defines three characteristics of the preparatory humans that are all interrelated and important for paving the path for the age to come. The preparatory human beings are endangered because their creations are unconventional, and therefore risky. They could lose their life or credibility in furthering their mission, but the risk is also essential to the mission; the risk one takes is a fine line between a flexing obedience and full-on rebellion. The preparatory man's life is one that requires a heavy dosage of vulnerability. The preparatory men are fruitful because unlike the rest of the herdish masses, they create. They are fruitful in that they create whereas no one else does. Finally, they are happy because they are on pursuit of wisdom, philosophy. According to Nietzsche, the preparatory human beings experience happiness as a process, a pursuit, a means and an end; it cannot be "arrived at," rather it is attained through process. The preparatory men are happy because they live for themselves; they have found meaning and beauty in a life that would otherwise be menial and gray.

Nietzsche proclaims, "The secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is—to *live dangerously*!"[113] The language he uses of "harvest" fits with the implication of hard work, almost of tilling the ground quietly, that he uses in the first part of the passage. "To live dangerously" is to risk operating outside of convention, to think differently and anew, and to dream. In the rest of the passage, Nietzsche uses poetry that appeals to the emotion and desire that he has built up until this point. "Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius" he commands, invoking an image of grandeur and risk, as Mt. Vesuvius is beautiful, but possibly explosive.[114] Although beautiful, fear of eruption inhibits people from building cities near Vesuvius, and so Nietzsche commands the preparatory men to do just that: go where people are afraid to go. He issues commandments to the preparatory men: "Send your ships into uncharted seas!"—so that they venture into the unknown and make it

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

known, and "Live at war with your peers and yourselves!"[115] The latter command is contentious because many misunderstand and proclaim it as Nietzsche praising violence, but this is not the case. He instead refers to an intellectual war. To live "at war" with one's peers is to constantly struggle with one another as you both pursue wisdom. To live "at war" is contrary to relativism, which maintains the easy perception of "you believe what you want to believe and I'll believe what I believe." To live "at war" is to constantly question and press into arguments, fight intellectually. To live at war with oneself is to seek in yourself what "is to be overcome," and to destroy the ruins of conventional thought and instead pursue truth.

Nietzsche commands preparatory men to "be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors" in order to more fully illustrate what it is to live at war.[116] To live quietly at war is to be a "robber," to be the challenger, or to be in constant pursuit of undermining the argument. Robbers steal "truth" by secretly undermining what is. To be a conqueror is to win- so robbers undermine and conquerors win the argument. Preparatory men must live at war in order to till the land, before they can harvest a marriage of philosophy and society- the fruits of their labor.

The life of the preparatory man is quiet, but Nietzsche explains that it cannot be contained quietly for long because, "soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer."[117] The shy deer that he explains are necessary, but necessarily cannot persist as he claims that the natural progression of their life will be one that will pull the philosophers into the city. The search for knowledge that they unearth will "want to rule and possess, and you with it!" Nietzsche proclaims, describing fruition of the preparatory man's work. Once the search for knowledge is reintroduced by such men, it will begin to consume, and then to fester with the discontent for modernity. It will want to scream "change" and destroy the old in order to build up what is true, only to tear that down again, and continually rebuild and rebuild and rebuild as the seekers of knowledge see fit. Nietzsche personifies knowledge in order to capture its seductive and consuming nature, and portray it as exciting and mystifying, so unlike the complacency that saturates the last man's world.

Conclusion

Though Nietzsche's observations of society are dismal, he does offer a beacon of hope. Nietzsche reveals that the salvation for human life is man himself. Man need not detach himself from his nature in order to achieve greatness. Greatness is innate to man, but still requires cultivation in order to develop. It is through the contest that the true nature of man comes to fruition. Once men realize the beautiful masterpiece of their true nature, they can embody that nature and through continual exercise, become strong and emboldened participants in the contest. Because the perception of human nature is the cornerstone on which all society is built, men must realize and act out of their multifaceted nature in order to create a society that promotes the pursuit of truth so that man can continue to create meaning for life and strive for human greatness, constantly combating a descent into the chaotic abyss. Men must devote themselves to the pursuit of truth but still be able to revel in wonder and mystery. In order to cultivate greatness men must value life more than survival and have the courage to voyage wholeheartedly into the unknown.

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 228-229.

The obstacle to overcome in cultivating greatness is society's lack of impulse to push horizons forward. The pervasive nihilism and relativism in society kills wonder and restricts the cultivation of greatness, and only promotes apathy and the fear of the unknown and uncomfortable. The illusion that man is continually "progressing," towards the "end of history" frames struggle as an adversary rather than as opportunity; such a conception leads to a concern with longevity over creation. Society perceives nihilism, or the lack of wonder as good, believing that they have reached "the end of history" wherein all worthwhile knowledge is already known; Because there is no longer a need to war over ideas, the very pursuit of truth fades and abandons the public forum—and man ceases to strive for greatness.

In order to reinvigorate society and provoke men to strive for human greatness again, there must be a shift in the conception of history from one that believes history is continuously moving in an upward trajectory to one that perceives the trajectory of history as completely dependent upon the actions of man. While the responsibility of the latter perception is quite heavy, such a shift would greatly improve the state of society; once again man would feel the weight of his actions and catch a glimpse of purpose. Such a shift must take place in education first and foremost, as education is fundamental in the development of habits and beliefs. Therefore, a resurgence of contest and poetry in education is wholly imperative. In order to foster the type of men who will usher in the new age, children must learn to gain knowledge not through passive absorption but through active intention.

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