

Nietzsche's concept of overman essay sample

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The Overman

One of the most controversial ideas introduced by Existentialist Friedrich Nietzsche is the concept of overman. According to Nietzsche, the status of an overman is what men should achieve. However, one cannot achieve this status without forsaking the values instilled upon him by the contemporary religious and ideological structure that continuously poison his way of thinking and his values.

Nietzsche presented his idea of an ideal man— the overman— through his fiction book titled *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1967). In this book, Zarathustra at the age of thirty spent 10 years living in the wilderness and enjoying his independence and seclusion. When Zarathustra decided to leave the mountain to preach his new-found gospel or idea to the mob of people below, he met a number of different types of people like the priests, the pitiful, the magician, the virtuous, the tarantulas, the last man, to name a few (Nietzsche, 1967).

One of the classes of person he met is a saint who devoted all his life and works to God. He was surprised that the man was not informed that God is dead. There, Zarathustra asserts that “ man is something which ought to be overcome” (Rosen & Gillespie, 2000). He also claims that man is tied between the beasts and the overman, and thus the humanity must seek for the coming of the overman by being true to the world and this life and deserting the morals that poisoned man's mind and his values.

In presenting the overman as the creator of value, Nietzsche also rebuked all the established values and morals during his time. The concept of overman

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is something that is higher in standards and in terms of values than the men who subordinated their will and lives to a structure that preaches for the departure of human soul from earth.

In some of his works like the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche identified at least two structures that set the values and moral standards that should not be imbibed by anyway who aspires to be an over man (Allison, 2001). One of which is the religious structure or the Church that preaches Christian values. Christian beliefs advocate for the virtue of meekness and pity. Nietzsche through Zarathustra contends the absence of any virtue in being humble if a person is too feeble to be able of being otherwise.

The doctrinal foundation of Christian faith is against the values by which the overman lives for. Nietzsche summarized the three sins that can be committed against God, which are sex, the desire for power, and selfishness. These things, based on the existentialist moral code of Nietzsche, should not be condemned nor abandoned. This is because all these three, when chased with good intent and a clear conscience, are essential to man's power and life. The overman needs all three for his pursuit of happiness.

On the other hand, state or government is so strong a superstructure in setting substandard morale codes and values. The state is a potent menace to a free and happy life because it seeks to shape populace into a middling, unthinking multitude. Apart from this, the state also advocates for the propagation of the egalitarian principle of democracy that glorifies the meekness of the weak and impedes the growth of the strong-willed and the creative.

Zarathustra

Nietzsche's argument in his fiction novel that God is dead should not be taken literally. One of the central concepts of the book is the pronouncement made by Zarathustra in his sermons that God is dead. This assertion should be taken in its figurative sociological meaning than as a spiritual statement. By saying that God is dead, Zarathustra means that the arrival of the overman signals the end of the obsolete moral code of the Christian faith that became the binding force of all social, political and spiritual lives of people in the medieval age (Nishitani, Parkes & Aihara, 1990). It means that the Christian concept of good and evil already lost its grip on our culture and norms.

Thus, Nietzsche's purpose in presenting Zarathustra as the preacher of new values which must be created by man alone and in introducing his concept of overman who must create values is the main foundation of his philosophy existentialism. Existentialism is that philosophy that postulates that individuals themselves generate the significance and quintessence of their lives (Kaufman, 1989). It means that man must live according to their will as what Nietzsche posited in his book titled *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche et al., 1968).

By Nietzsche's definition, Zarathustra is an overman. The hero in his fiction book embodied what men should do to attain the status of an overman. For ten years, Zarathustra lived alone in the wilderness, away from the mob and safe from the values of the Christian faith and the indoctrination of the state. He did not suffer because he does not believe in suffering. By presenting

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Zarathustra as a paradigm of an overman, Nietzsche means that man must live independently according to his will and not to the values and moral codes of the Church and the state (Emmanuel, 2001). To be an overman, man must create his own values according to his image and not to the image of the society where he lives.

The contemporary overman

Based on Nietzsche's concept of overman, the contemporary model of overman can be Ai Weiwei— the man who designed China's renowned Bird's Nest Stadium. This identification exemplifies Nietzsche's meaning of overman as an artist who must define his life according to the values and principles he sets only for himself. Like his father who was one of China's modern great poets, Ai Weiwei denounced the collectivist-Maoist ideology of his country. Since he could not exist in a society that would never permit him to grow professionally as an artist, he left China to stay in New York.

When he designed his greatest achievement as an artist— the Bird's Nest Stadium, he did not think of the collectivist social structure of his mother country, instead he applied his own artistic talent based on his moral judgment (CBC Arts, 2007). Now the stadium is standing in one of the most favored places in Beijing, proud and strong. For being a man who creates his own values, by the definition set by Nietzsche, Ai Weiwei is an overman.

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