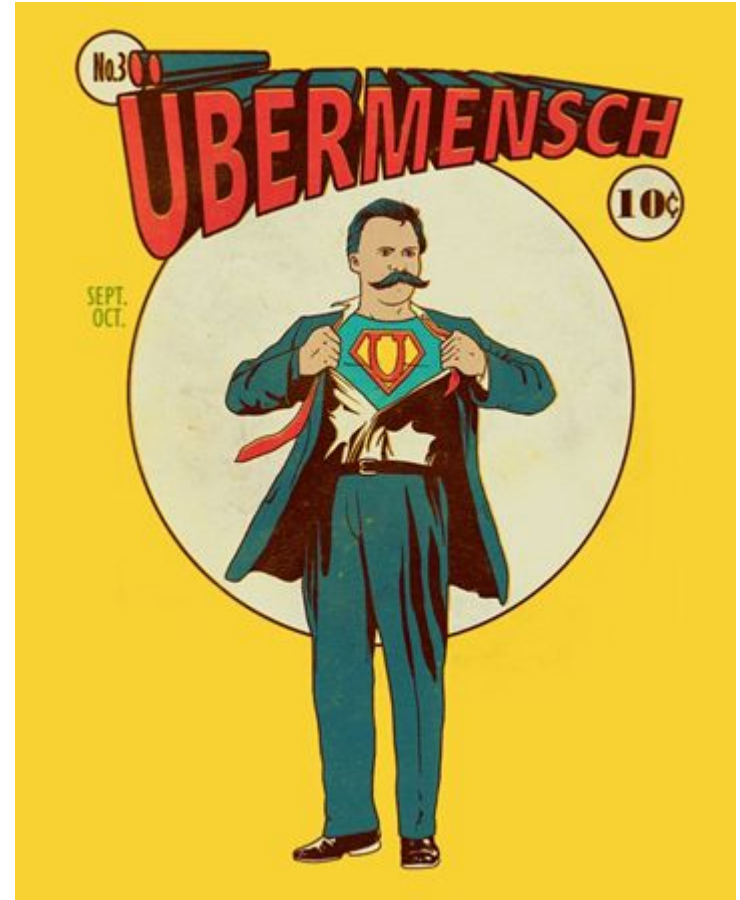


Ch.3: Egoism

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Nietzsche's Übermensch

- German word that means “overman”, sometimes translated as “superman” or “higher man”
- Excels in aspects of human nature that Christian humility sees sinful
- Confidently wills their way of life (“a spirit that is sure of itself”)
- Takes pride in powers and limitations of humanity and personal accomplishments



A Version of Egoism

- Egoism: an ethical theory that treats self-interest as foundation of morality
- Übermensch ideal a version of egoism
 - Determines values of life on their own
 - Asserts own will against external pressure of conventional morality and social norms
 - Nietzsche believes only affirmation of ego is admirable
 - “Being a man is being yourself”
- Eternal recurrence

Nietzsche's Views on Christianity

Observed that Christ becomes the ideal man, “King of Kings”

He critiques, calling Christianity, “the slaves revolt in morality”

- Christian ideals rewards weakness, while punishes strength
 - Thinking for it to be absurd
- Encourages people to suppress their inner ambition and desire for divine transformation
 - Stating that this resonates as people live ordinary lives

Cannot believe, Christianity reverses the natural value of hierarchies

- Calling it a “corrupt conception”, as it overlooks advancements

Contradictions in Nietzsche's Opinions

MLK: Embodies Übermensch traits yet exemplifies the traits Nietzsche condemns

- Takes action / strong willed
- Strays from norms / nonconformity
- Challenges the social structure / does not simply obey societal rules
- Undergoes suffering for non materialistic goals

Conflict:

- MLK possesses humility – the very trait Nietzsche condemns
 - Views morals and “good” as weak and undesirable
- MLK upholds the conventional concept of morals

Contradictions in Nietzsche's Opinions

Takeaway:

- Can't go too extreme
- Can have both humility/adherence to morals and strong will power/ability to challenge conventions
- Balance



Thought Experiment

In a hypothetical world that is the exact same as ours, but it has been proven to a 100% certainty that there is no God(s) and there is no afterlife.

Would you still believe in your morals?

Do you still think there is a reason to “moral” to each other?

Nietzsche presents atheists with an even more pressing challenge, since they share his basic premise—that there is no God. If there is no God, there is no divine law, and thus no sinning against it. What could set a standard for human conduct?

- 3.5 reading

Possible reasons to be moral w/ out a God(s)

It makes me feel good -> selfish

Golden Rule -> culture of helping, means you will be helped, selfish

It's good to help others -> Meaning others may help you latter, selfish

Psychological Egoism - People's actions are always motivated by self interest

Personal Opinion - you can rationalize any action to be selfish, people ultimately do things because they serve themselves in some way, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Even if a person does a “good deed” for selfish reasons, at the end of the day they still did the good deed. The outcome is the same even if it selfish or not.

People have been moral to each other throughout history and pre-historic (hunter gather ect) because it benefited the group. It is biological in humans to be kind to each other.

Selfishness vs. Egoism

Selfishness: someone lacking consideration for others, primarily focused on their own profit, pleasure, or advantage, often to the exclusion of others' needs

Egoism: the belief that one's own self-interest is the true motive or valid goal of all actions, or simply excessive concern with oneself, often seen as thinking you are more important than others.

Key Claim

Selfishness and egoism are not the same. Selfishness is a judgment about behavior, while egoism is a descriptive claim about motivation.

- Selfishness is a judgment we make about actions. When we call someone selfish, we're criticizing them for prioritizing their own interests in a way that ignores or harms others.

Ex. Cutting in line, not donating to charity

- Egoism is a theory about human motivation that claims people always act from self-interest, even when their actions look altruistic.

Ex. A parent caring for their child because they want to, helping a friend because it feels good (can be proven they are doing it to feel good about themselves)

Egoism Versus Altruism

- This distinction goes back to Plato:

“Egoism is powerfully represented in two of Plato’s dramatic dialogues, the Gorgias, where Socrates argues at length with Callicles, and the Republic, where the egoistic point of view is articulated by Thrasymachus.” (Graham)

- In the Gorgias and later in the Republic, Plato presents characters like Callicles and Thrasymachus who argue that people naturally pursue their own advantage.
- Plato treats this as a claim about human motivation, not automatically as endorsement.

Desire vs. Self Interest

- People can desire for things that are bad for them in the long term (addiction, revenge)
- Acting on desire is not the same as acting of one's true self interest
- Egoism cannot be just self interest because some desires are not good long term