Tracing the Formulation of Virtue Ethics: Why Should We Transcend Humanity?

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Abstract

In the history of Western philosophy, following the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, the features that were promoted by that era, such as a superior human intellect as envisioned by Nietzsche, have not been successful. Nietzsche proposed a solution to transcend humanity, so that humans are not weakened by the existence of anything that subordinates them in their pursuit of virtuous actions. Recognizing that virtue ethics are not only performed individually but also by groups, Daigle found some weaknesses in Nietzsche's proposal, namely its inability to be applied to political ethics. Political ethics require a strong foundation to generate virtuous actions together, especially in a democratic state. After conducting a literature review and examining the philosophical struggles of several thinkers, this article shows that Nietzsche's ideas can be developed by combining Amartya Sen's ideas on freedom and virtue. Thus, Nietzsche's goal of creating an "Übermensch" can be achieved and can contribute to the progress of collective living.

Kata Kunci: history of western philosophy, Übermensch, Nietzsche, virtue ethics.

1. Introduction

In her article entitled "Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics—Virtue Politics?", Christine Daigle proposes several developments that could be made to supplement Nietzsche's philosophy. She also considers it necessary to develop Kauffman's authoritative translation of Nietzsche's thoughts. Inspired and provoked by Kauffman's translation of Nietzsche's ethics, Daigle shows that Kauffman's translation could be even better. She believes that Nietzsche's philosophy is not entirely the same as or heavily influenced by Aristotle's views as expressed by Kauffman. According to Daigle, the differences are even striking, despite both writing about human excellence (Daigle, 2006).

Daigle also found that Nietzsche's philosophy on virtue ethics in "Daybreak" and "Beyond Good and Evil" is at the individual level, not the group level. This, according to Daigle, is problematic because what constitutes virtue for one person may differ from another's. Therefore, Daigle concludes that Nietzsche's philosophy is more appropriate to be called virtue ethics than virtue politics. It is in this area that Daigle develops Nietzsche's philosophy by providing some critical criticisms. She believes that Nietzsche's views on virtue ethics and political ethics are contradictory. For her, this needs to be resolved (Daigle, 2006).

The way Daigle's argument corresponds with Nietzsche through Kauffman's translated articles shows how intense and serious the debate is in the history of philosophy. In the history of thought, science was once shackled for hundreds of years in the domination of religion. Theocentric thinking even pressured the weakening of humanity as its ontological consequence. If previously what was the focus of knowledge was the cosmos, then in the Middle Ages, the focus was on God. In addition to the political pressures that occurred at that time, Thomas Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rene Descartes, Blaise Pascal, John Locke, and dozens of other great thinkers around the world also contributed to leading the world of thought to become anthropocentric, humanistic, where everything is based and aimed at human progress. Humans became the center of the universe (Sellars, 2020; Struever, 2016).

Such is the workings of science. Arguments clash to find the idea that comes closest to the truth. Old ideas are not immediately abandoned as Popper proposed with his falsification concept (Popper, 2002), but also developed, especially in the humanities (Gorton, 2006; Kuhn, 1970). The interesting thing about Daigle's evaluation of Nietzsche's philosophy and Kauffman's translation is that Daigle revisits Nietzsche's brilliant idea to create the "übermensch," and only in this way will humans have a better virtue ethics (Daigle, 2006). If in the history of thought humans were already considered noble in the framework of humanism, then why is it not enough to become human to produce virtue ethics? Why does one have to go beyond humans? This article aims

to retrace the intellectual history of Western philosophy in order to discover how the intellectual adventure of finding humans was conducted and why the humanism offered by the Renaissance is not enough to form humans who have virtue ethics as Nietzsche presented (Daigle, 2006). The intellectual journey begins with a brief study of the shift in knowledge from theocentric to anthropocentric. Then, Nietzsche's philosophy on the übermensch is explained, so that it becomes apparent how the weaknesses of the Renaissance are overcome by Nietzsche's philosophy.

The gap in Nietzsche's thinking is then used as a basis to borrow Amartya Sen's thoughts on the possibility of creating a community with a virtuous ethic. Responses to various ideas are then further discussed.

2. The Magnum Opus of Discovering "Humanity" Yet to Be Completed

Starting from the ancient world where discussions about the cosmos were of great importance, the pattern of thinking shifted to theocentric. It is clear that discussions about the origins of everything, such as Thales' idea that everything originates from water, the concepts of Parmenides, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, were all discussed during that era. Everything about the cosmos was always of interest at that time (Russell, 1945).

It was only in the era when the Church worked closely with the state that science finally came to be controlled by theocentric patterns. All scientific findings were expected to conform to the scriptures and the dogma of the Church. The church leadership played a central role in determining whether a scientific finding was appropriate or not, and whether it should be published or not. If in previous centuries the origin of everything was attributed to nature, in this century, everything was attributed to God. The glorification of God's position in knowledge was strengthened. For example, St. Augustine of Hippo's concept that God is not the source of evil. For Hippo, the implication of human beings as rational creatures is that they must have free will, meaning they are capable of doing good or bad actions. From this perspective, humans can become very evil or very good. Augustine of Hippo, with this argument, was eventually able to show why Adam, the perfect creature in the Garden of Eden, could sin. It was the result of his own free will, and God cannot be called the creator of evil (Russell, 1945).

Another relatively iconic thinker of that era was Boethius. For Boethius, God knows everything because He is eternal. Therefore, God knows what humans will do. Avicenna also gave his ideas on this pattern of knowledge. He separated the soul from the body. The pattern is similar. St. Anselm, for example, showed that God could even be accessed through thought alone. This then reinforced the position of religion, where God could be accessed better, and knowledge validated it. Interestingly, philosophy and religion were seen as not being related to each other. Averroes showed this. There were still many other thinkers who emerged in the same pattern. Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and Nikolaus Von Kues were some of the thinkers who played a significant role in shaping the theocentric pattern at that time (Russell, 1945).

In this pattern of knowledge, which is often referred to as the Dark Ages, it is understandable that knowledge would not grow easily. Philosophical discussions could not develop freely. Channels of knowledge had to be validated by the Church. Working with the state, religion ensured that all scientific findings were in line with the Church's dogma. This was politically important to galvanize the state and the Church's dominance over the public. Political stability at that time was crucial because in previous eras, conflicts between the Church and the state had caused a lot of damage to the fabric of the state (Struever, 2016).

The movement produced had a high resonance in world history. The theocentric pattern of knowledge was replaced by an anthropocentric one. Works that demonstrated human superiority were exhibited as a form of resistance against the theocentric assumption that everything is a divine creation. Then, the art movement alongside science moved radically by showing its works that had never been free before. Humans seemed to be rediscovered. Everything revolved around humans. This all became an important sign of how the dominance of the theocentric concept had shackled true knowledge, then torn apart by the current of rejection and replaced by the Renaissance, where humans were made the central focus. This is the backdrop for the subsequent emergence of the era in which the industrial revolution, marked by the thoughts of several figures such as David Hume, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Mill, Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, and William James emerged to bridge the gap of the modern era. The grand project to demonstrate human superiority was ultimately still inherited even until the end of the industrial revolution. Because there are conditions that show how human subordination even takes root in society (Russell, 1945). This is what Nietzsche intended to develop.

3. Transcending Humanity to Become "Human"

Daigle used Nietzsche's philosophy as the main source to demonstrate how Nietzsche's thinking was based on the ideals of liberating humanity from all forms of subordination. Nietzsche was considered by

Kauffman to be strongly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy. According to Daigle, it is necessary to complete this by identifying the type of influence that Aristotelian philosophy had on Nietzsche's ethics and what needs to be added to explain the influence of Aristotelian philosophy on Nietzsche's ethics (Daigle, 2006).

In Daigle's exploration, it was found that Nietzsche's proposed ethics of virtue contradicts his political ethics. The problem arises from the fact that Nietzsche's ethics of virtue are more personal in nature. As a result, the discovery of goodness in each individual will be different. This difference in values about ethics of virtue in each individual is what can lead to conflicts. Daigle sees this as problematic in communal living. For example, someone's values and views on propriety may differ. These differences have the potential to create judgment, friction, and ultimately conflict (Daigle, 2006).

Daigle also gives serious attention to Nietzsche's idea that the weak will perish and others will help them perish. For Daigle, Nietzsche needs to advocate a political system that would be better if it were based on the conditions where the übermensch becomes a citizen. The political system proposed by Daigle is a political pattern that supports the development of every individual within the group. Without it, strong domination over the weak would create serious problems, and that situation would not be an ideal condition for humans to produce more übermensch (Daigle, 2006).

Nietzsche's assertion that the development of the individual self in society is far more important than group development is not surprising. For Nietzsche, communal living, particularly democratic and socialist politics, is a form of political corruption. Naturally, Nietzsche sees that society will have a structure in which weak individuals will do business, while human beings who have become übermensch will be busy developing themselves. Here, Daigle also expresses his disagreement. Daigle sees that Nietzsche's political perspective needs to consider the development of groups as well, especially after übermensch exists in the community. It is difficult for Daigle to imagine how a society composed of competent individuals would not advance as a group. Meanwhile, just one übermensch in a group is already capable of driving group progress (Daigle, 2006).

In summary, Daigle's main criticism of Nietzsche's ethics of virtue is that the contradiction between his ethics of virtue and his political views needs to be reconsidered. Daigle suggests that democracy systems need to be re-examined so that the system that emerges will help the development of all individuals, not just certain individuals. The hope is that there will be more übermensch in society. Daigle sees that the more übermensch in society, the faster progress will be made because such humans are free and capable of realizing a superior version of humans than those proposed by the Renaissance and industrial revolution (Daigle, 2006).

It should be understood that what Nietzsche fought for was a condition of humanity that was free from the shackles or shadows of domination by others, enabling him to possess virtue. Perhaps the condition in which humans claim to be helpless to do good without the guidance of God or other sacred creatures, claiming that they are full of sin and only God as an external party can enable them to become complete humans, is silly. All of this indicates how weak humans are and how they become subordinate to God or anyone or anything that forces them to do good. This is where Nietzsche sees the need for humans to be free from prerequisites that actually weaken them. For him, humans must be responsible for themselves, struggle for themselves, and shape themselves. Humans are capable of doing good without invoking God or other sacred creatures. All of this can only be achieved by realizing that God (as well as other creatures and conditions that are prerequisites for doing good) is dead or has disappeared. Only the individual human remains. Thus, humans become responsible for themselves (Townsend, 2017).

Practically speaking, Nietzsche's project, when understood in this way, shows that his statement "God is dead" is not a meaningless phrase. With that statement, he shows that God must be eliminated, or other conditions must be eliminated, if they hinder humans from being themselves and taking responsibility for themselves. That is why Nietzsche also appears contradictory to democracy or socialism. Because a communal way of life for Nietzsche can become a new threat that hinders individuals from becoming übermensch—even though Nietzsche himself sees that the governance of a state is still important in rejecting anarchy. But what kind of role the state needs to play to encourage individual progress is what Nietzsche focuses on. Meanwhile, group progress is clearly not Nietzsche's goal (as if there is a belief in Nietzsche that it is impossible for there to be individual progress when what is fought for is group progress. For example, in order for the group to progress, individuals who have a faster pace must wait for individuals in the group who have a slower pace—just for the sake of uniformity. All of this is clearly not in favor of humans as free and progressive individuals). Thus, Nietzsche can be considered as building his own ethical system, while also indicating that his brutality, as highlighted by Daigle, is not entirely true. He is a virtue theorist and his output is truly a virtue ethics that fights for independent humans (Berry, 2015; Harris, 2015).

It is clear that the issue of whether what Nietzsche proposed is suitable when applied to a democratic society is another matter. The development of the ideal human is also another matter. Because perhaps Nietzsche did not design his ideas to be applied and flourish in a society with a democratic climate. It may also be that the conception of a community that is suitable for producing übermensch has never been organized and

is waiting to be discovered. This is what causes some thinkers to place Nietzsche as a virtue epistemologist (Alfano, 2013).

4. Transcending Humanity to Become "Human"

After rereading Nietzsche's thoughts, I doubted Daigle's view of Nietzsche's concept of virtue as it contradicts his perspective on politics. However, I believe that their views complement each other. If humans become Übermensch, they will not necessarily become more powerful than other humans, nor will they directly bring about social progress. As known, the factors driving social progress are diverse and highly complex. For example, a great leader may not necessarily be able to promote progress in a country, nor will a less great leader necessarily regress civilization. Progress of a community, especially within the framework of political economy, often ignores ethical virtues in its progress. The majority voice of the people is also considered damaging by Aristotle, as it is not possible to always achieve virtue by relying on the majority voice. That is why we can understand why Nietzsche called democracy or socialism, even as a corruption of organization and a significant degradation of humanity.

While finding a suitable pattern of living together to nurture Nietzsche's idea of the Übermensch, I believe that Nietzsche's ideas can be developed to be better placed in a democratic country. For this purpose, borrowing Amartya Sen's thoughts on values and freedoms in democratic societies needs to be explored. If Nietzsche's idea is to achieve an ideal human being with Übermensch qualities, then Amartya Sen's ideal human is one who is free. Freedom in the sense that there is no coercion and is capable of achieving a particular capability. He becomes a free human being to achieve his social well-being and freedom of behavior (Terjesen, 2004).

Amartya Sen shows that the ideal human being to be created is one who is free to express his opinion. They are free in public reasoning to make collective decisions (social choice). Although collective decisions will ultimately eliminate some ideas from individuals within them, it is mature enough to accept them. The community is also open to opening up other decision opportunities to facilitate what each individual conveys. The process is achieved through discussion, and the prerequisite is that there should be no invasion of the freedom and basic rights of others (Knech, 2014; Terjesen, 2004).

Sen's ideal idea of a free human being provides a new picture that the Übermensch discussed by Nietzsche can actually be realized in a democratic climate that aims to facilitate the development of the capabilities of each individual in it. Amartya Sen's awareness can be borrowed to see what happens. Sen is well aware that it is impossible to create individual freedom when the point of struggle is only on freedom to achieve certain capabilities. This is something that can be controlled internally within oneself. Sen clearly sees that it should be fought together with freedom not to be coerced by others. It appears here that the freedom Sen means includes those two major aspects that need to be achieved simultaneously. This is what we are trying to use to place the Übermensch in a democratic country. The Übermensch cannot only be interpreted as a way to liberate humans and ensure their independence but rather needs to be freed from various influences that force them to do something. This includes forcing them to become Übermensch or not to become Übermensch.

This explanation shows that there is ample room to develop Nietzsche's idea of the Übermensch. The collective effort to become an Übermensch can be carried out in groups - not necessarily individually, as shown by Amartya Sen's concept of creating humans who are free in thought. It is clear that the formation of capable human beings (whether free or Übermensch) is also shaped by the environment, not just personal development as Nietzsche suggested. While it is true that the pace of development varies for each individual, it does not mean that the effort to create an ideal human being should ignore the importance of togetherness. In quoting Nietzsche's statement that "the backward ones will do business, and the forward ones will focus on developing themselves," it can now be interpreted from a different perspective. It may be that doing business is indeed the route one must take to advance oneself into an Übermensch, or that being an Übermensch is the path one must take to do business. Both can even be pursued simultaneously, as personal development can also be achieved while running a business - and vice versa.

Using Amartya Sen's framework, it is clear that the Übermensch can be realized in a democratic climate and can be done together, just as the free human beings envisioned by Sen. I will use two important global cases to demonstrate how significant the development of the Übermensch is for countries with democratic systems. The first case is the Covid-19 pandemic and the second is the relatively long-discussed climate change.

First, the Covid-19 pandemic. There is an awareness that the Covid-19 pandemic must be approached scientifically. Humans have proven for hundreds of years that they have never experienced anything like this before. Even historical records are not complete enough to provide references to what happened during previous pandemics. This is understandable, as history only reveals various select cases, usually narrating the stories of countries or political figures and ignoring the history of ordinary people living their lives (Burke, 1992). At the beginning of the pandemic announced in Indonesia in early 2020, there was a belief that the pandemic would

soon end because science was already very advanced and proven to be able to overcome various diseases. However, what happened afterwards was quite surprising. Now, two years have passed since the pandemic hit. The scientific approach seems to have been suboptimal and not in line with expectations. In Bali, the slow release of vaccines while the number of cases continues to rise has eventually driven the scientifically literate and knowledgeable people to have to resort to their spiritual beliefs as well. I think this is not only happening in Bali but also in various parts of the world. When science cannot answer human questions, then God is the place to ask and place hope.

The religious approach has been highlighted in the media as a means to rebuild hope. Undoubtedly, optimism to live alongside Covid has a correlation with it, which is considered a part of human life that need not be regretted. However, concerns have arisen as vaccine hesitancy and vaccine side effects have increased. Some people even refuse to get vaccinated based on their religious beliefs. This poses serious challenges for governments, especially in developed countries where the number of cases has risen due to their citizens refusing to get vaccinated. Unlike developed countries, where vaccine refusal is based on personal considerations that suggest the pandemic is a mere fabrication driven by corporations and interested parties (Lim & Pan, 2021), the pattern is similar. When science cannot answer questions, religion and other conspiracy theories are used to seek answers.

This phenomenon shows that individual efforts to become "übermensch" or free are actually highly influenced by external factors. This case reveals that external factors are the rigidity of scientific knowledge, government policies, new social contracts, and the existence of the virus itself. "What does not kill you makes you stronger" is a statement that can strengthen Nietzsche's argument that even though external conditions are quite challenging in creating an "übermensch," humans can still overcome their limits and emerge as "übermensch." In other words, even in the midst of a pandemic, humans can still develop virtuous ethics within themselves. However, it will be different if ethical virtues, such as knowledge and habits of maintaining distance and wearing masks in public places, are invaded by others who do not provide relief for humans to express their knowledge. Therefore, the view that "übermensch" is a purely individual-level concept, even without a democratic climate, such as in the chaotic atmosphere during a pandemic, is not appropriate. That is why the call to end the pandemic is always considered to be a global effort. This means that everyone is expected to be at the same level to fight the pandemic. The issue that someone has to be a victim is not directly related to their capability but rather to the collective failure to deal with the pandemic.

The second case is climate change. The scientific consensus shows that climate change is a result of human activities (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). The recommendation is clear: reduce consumption of fossil fuels and animal products. The indicators are also clear and have even been applied to large companies (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). However, this issue often finds itself in the same maze and is frequently deadlocked. Perhaps the first question to be asked is, if this is a serious problem, what is the cause, and who should be held most responsible for this disaster? Answering that question alone is not easy and is full of intrigue. There are issues of objectivity, suspicions of political interests of certain countries, the economic interests of certain companies, and even class interests. It is not surprising that rejection and disbelief continue to occur (Brulle et al., 2020; Jebeile, 2020; Leuschner & Pinto, 2021; McGrath, 2020).

The serious conceptual allegations come from Noam Chomsky, who argues that the chaos caused by economic activities is purely due to the intertwining of corporations with governments. This means that corporatism, which has already infiltrated the economic system and even social order, is what creates the complexity of problems arising from economic activities. Chomsky believes that issues such as climate change can only be addressed by a new social contract, a green new deal. In this social contract, companies are expected to prioritize environmental sustainability over profits, and put human benefits as their secondary priority (Chomsky et al., 2020). However, hasn't this already been recognized and voiced, but has not yielded concrete results?

There are heroes who work independently or in groups to contribute to the issue of climate change. Gretta Thurnberg is one of them. Her ethical virtues have led her to voice what Slavoj Zizek believes should be said by everyone (RT News, 2021). There are also trash heroes who seriously organize beach, mountain, and street cleanups. In addition, there are electric vehicle enthusiasts and cyclists (who are driven by environmental and health awareness). Their ethical virtues have led them to do something for the common good, which is to slow down climate change. They are busy cycling and exercising, eating healthy food, as a manifestation of their ethical virtues. They believe that their actions are no longer determined by binding rules or religious teachings, rewards or punishments. They are guided by their ethical consciousness. Although this may not fully reflect the Übermensch as Nietzsche proposed, it can at least provide an approximation. They leave behind many typical activities of industrial society and choose to live a healthy and active life. They are people who are free from financial difficulties, where their daily needs for life are met by the machines and human resources of production. Self-development is their focus. However, such partial actions do not provide a meaningful

contribution to slowing down climate change. As a result, in their self-development, there comes a point where what they do is just a lifestyle of a certain social class. It is no longer a manifestation of ethical virtue.

The loss of the meaning of ethical virtue, which is then replaced by a lifestyle of a certain social class, is now a problem. What Nietzsche conveyed about the Übermensch, which is focused on self-development as a form of ethical virtue, is not as simple as it seems. In this era, self-development is often carried out not within the framework of ethical virtue development, but merely as a lifestyle. A marker of a certain social class. Until that point, it does not cause significant problems. However, this phenomenon shows that individual changes in response to global issues such as climate change will not yield results without the collective actions of every individual in society. The emergence of a certain social class lifestyle often triggers opposition responses from other social classes. This opposition then triggers conflicts, just as what Gaigle talked about regarding Nietzsche's thoughts on individual ethical virtues.

The two phenomena mentioned above may indicate an important clue that the virtue ethics, as proposed by Nietzsche on an individual level, can overcome problems but can also be expanded into a communal level of virtue ethics. In other words, becoming human together. Amartya Sen's thinking style about the development of capabilities of each person in society, so that they have the capability to achieve and live in freedom, can be implemented. The expected result is the creation of a condition where each individual can create a better democratic climate. This is what Nietzsche observed, and why he did not include democracy as a variable to be considered in the formation of the übermensch. In line with Aristotle, democracy will not bring goodness to individuals when the prerequisites of the democratic society are met, namely an educated and mature society in performing democracy. This is what Amartya Sen intends to bridge with the concept of capability development.

For Sen, capabilities are inherent in each person, and the degree of capability varies from person to person. Capability development is done with the aim of ensuring that all of one's capabilities as a human being are activated. Whether or not they are used, it is a personal matter that can also be created with social influence. This is the gateway to realizing an open space for the übermensch to emerge at the communal level.

5. Discussion

Daigle's interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas as translated by Kauffman has shown how the boundaries between Renaissance, modern, and postmodern thought intersect. The intricacies of Nietzsche's ideas demonstrate how his rejection of cultural and philosophical rationality and singular truth can be used as a way to understand the desire for the elevation of humanity. Nietzsche's focus on morality is clear, as he believes that in order to become a moral human being, one must be accountable for oneself rather than relying solely on social and political cooperation. Therefore, Nietzsche does not believe in the necessity of universal moral values. However, this does not mean that Nietzsche supports anarchy, as he believes that anarchism would lead to harm for individuals.

This article has shown that crowds are not always detrimental to individuals. For example, during times of climate change and pandemics, individual actions can slow down and reduce the effectiveness of the intended outcome. Therefore, the efforts to combine Nietzsche's thoughts on individual level virtue ethics with Amartya Sen's ideas on how ethical virtues can be achieved on a group level have been made. It has been found that the Nietzschean Übermensch can be realized in a crowd that values the differences in each individual's capability and perspective. It respects the individual's freedom without invasion. This is a prerequisite for a democratic society, which was also stated by Aristotle.

6. Conclusion

A retrospective analysis was conducted to examine the intellectual struggle of formulating virtuous human ethics. It was discovered that producing virtuous ethics does not depend on whether humans should be human or surpass humanity, but rather on how humans perceive their humanity. Obstacles that render humans subordinate in practicing virtuous ethics must be eliminated by any means necessary, as this is the only way humans can be deemed worthy of being called human. However, this research simultaneously raises metaphysical questions that attempt to answer further inquiries: what is a human? Does humanity truly exist? Do values exist?

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