

Will to matter

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Nietzsche argues humans are motivated by a need to exercise their will to power, meaning a drive to assert themselves and shape the world. He sees “freedom” of becoming your authentic self as self-mastery and the rejection of herd mentality. Through creating one’s own values and living with their own, personal beliefs, one moves toward the ideal of the Übermensch. But this raises the biggest question: Why can no one become an Übermensch? Nietzsche is one of my favorite philosophers as he redefines the discipline, but I believe he ignores a crucial part of our evolution that will not fade away (regardless of whether he believes in any sort of “human nature” or not—which he clearly does if he thinks we all have this will).

Why do we get so anxious at rejection? In today’s world, we can simply find a new group, a new relationship, or even connect to billions online to feel connected. However, for our ancestors in small clans, this rejection from the herd often meant death as they are banished to be alone. Through thousands of years of evolution, this trigger has stuck with us though, manifesting when we get a harsh text, a bad grade, or anything that reflects an idea of rejection. This comes into conflict with the Übermensch, as Nietzsche’s philosophical solution praises turning away from the herd to embrace your own values, opposite of what our instincts crave.

It is true that there has been a shift in recent years to live more authentically, and people have done so, while still conforming into this “new identity”. Even counterculture is a large movement that has amassed dedicated followers, an idea that started as the rejection of a herd mentality (becoming its own herd). Instead of a will to power, we have a will to matter that keeps us in a certain headspace, even when embracing Nietzsche's ideas.

Humans will fail to become an Übermensch simply because our instinct and evolution prioritizes mattering to some “type” of crowd, not just to ourselves. When you really think about it, isn’t the pursuit of freedom for the past few centuries just a cover to try and be able to matter more? The French Revolution held many important traits such as wanting voting power, fair representation, and to overthrow monarchy, but doesn’t this just allow citizens to feel as if they matter more? Instead of mattering (being significant, making an impact) being consolidated to an aristocracy, it was now accessible to everyday citizens through political changes, hence a revolution. Even the contradicting capitalism and communism both hold the same trait of wanting to matter, capitalism by allowing economic growth (since we see money as a sign of importance) and communism by leveling the playing field, similar to the French Revolution, but economically.

In modern times, humans use the idea of becoming an influencer and even doom scrolling to stay on top of trends to feel as if they matter (doom scrolling is more complex, but it ensures you can discuss popular topics and stay relevant in convos, hence your impact on the conversation

matters). However, we have also made adaptations to better suit us, expressed in my other writing such as favoring numbness over suffering of rejection.

Nietzsche makes strong points, but does not allow the thought of an evolutionary trait we cannot escape. We are too anxious at the idea of rejection due to the past importance it held on our lives. From this, we developed the idea we must matter in a community, whether online, politically, or even religiously. This trait to matter though dictates our lives by determining our actions, movements, and even beliefs. Our will to matter is rooted in human nature. Every move we take, both as individuals and as a society, allows us to matter more, and make an impact.