

With every advance, provided it is not one of purely theoretical interest, in physiology, in sociology, in economics, in any science which illumines any region of man's life our responsibility for the next generation becomes more serious and complex. But these are among the trite commonplaces of ethical thought, and it was scarcely for their sake that Nietzsche has burdened our philosophical vocabulary with a new word. He has a theory of his own which the word is to symbolize. The point is clearly indicated in this famous passage:—

I teach you beyond man. Man is a something that shall be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass him?

All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and are ye going to be the ebb of this great tide and rather revert to the animal than surpass man?

What with man is the ape? A joke or a sore shame. Man shall be the same for beyond-man, a joke or a sore shame.¹

In other words, everything exists for the sake of something higher and better than itself, and its characteristic excellence is constituted by the efficiency with which it subserves this end. To this rule man can be no exception—his value is found in the extent to which he prepares the way and hastens the coming of Superman.

The idea that nature has throughout a purpose—whatever that purpose may be—is curiously incongruous with things that Nietzsche has said elsewhere. Any such admission is bound to bring one into difficulties when he tries to combine it with a thorough-going atheism. And if Nietzsche had not

¹ "Thus spake Zarathustra" (Eng. Transl. by Tille), I. 3.