Three Formulations of Autonomy
Kant, Sade and Nietzsche

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To Thiya, Anayah, and Shivatmika.

May you choose your freedom wisely...

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Note on Abbreviations and Translations Used

The following abbreviations are used throughout the work for citations. The publication details of the translations used in these citations are as follows:

All citations provided to the works of Plato refer to,

— Plato. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Trans. D. S. Hutchinson. Eds. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).

The citations to the works of Plato provide the title of his *Dialogue* followed by the conventional practice of providing the relevant Stephanus Number.

All citations to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* refer to,

Aristotle. 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). The citations provide the title of his *work* followed by the conventional practice of providing the relevant Bekker Number.

GMM – Immanuel Kant. 1996 (1785). "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

CPrR – Immanuel Kant. 1996 (1788). "Critique of Practical Reason" in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

CPR – Immanuel Kant. 1998 (1781/1787). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited and Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

The standard convention of providing the Academy Number of the German Royal Academy of Sciences Edition of Kant's works for each of the citation, while citing the works of Kant, has been followed.

PB – *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. The translation used is, Sade, Marquis De. 1965 (1795). *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings*. Compiled and Translated by Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse, with an Introduction by Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot. (New York: Grover Press).

BGE – Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2001 (1886). *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman. Translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

BT – Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999 (1872/1886). *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. Translated by Ronald Speirs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

GM – Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996 (1887) *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. Translated by Douglas Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

GS – Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1974 (1887). *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Translated, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books).

HaH – Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996 (1878). *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by

Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann, with a new Introduction by Arthur C. Danto. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).

NB – *Friedrich Nietzsche: Writings from the Early Notebooks.* 2009. Edited by Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas. Translated by Ladislaus Löb. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Following the established convention while citing the works of Nietzsche, the aphorism number accompanies the *title* of the work in each citation.

Preface

In the present age, given the dominant and forceful wave of certain tendencies of relativism and constructivism, we are no longer certain about what minimal beliefs we can hold as constituting basic *facts* about us as a species. Notwithstanding such contemporary undercurrents, certain beliefs, nevertheless, retain their universal acceptance either by virtue of their undeniable *objectivity* or by virtue of their pragmatic value in our portrayal of ourselves and the world.

For instance, we would all agree that our belief in our mortal nature is an *objective* belief. That is, the truth of this belief is independent of my epistemic subjectivity and its locus. Irrespective of whether I *would* like to believe in my mortality or not, or how I *feel* about it, and regardless of my varied *interests,* I *do* nevertheless believe that I will — may my soul rest in peace — die one fine, or not so fine, day. In fact, even if all those who know me *believe,* along with me, that I am immortal, I will — to all of our dismay — *die* in the literal sense of the term one day. Our belief in human mortality is thus taken to be undeniable precisely because it is grounded in an *objective fact*.[1] And though it is also a fact that bio-medical sciences have made it possible for us to defer our death, this is merely a matter of *deference* rather than that of *denial* concerning the fact of our mortality. In fact, this deference gathers value precisely against the backdrop of our belief in human mortality. Thus, irrespective of my cultural and historical positioning, the fact of human mortality

is fundamental to the manner in which I construe myself and the world.

But our *belief* that we are creatures with *free-will*, though is a belief that has a near-universal acceptance, cannot draw upon an *objective fact* as does our belief in our mortality. Even though we would all like to believe that it is a *fact* that we make choices and that *in fact* we do *choose*, human freedom is — and so-far has always been — a *postulate*, or in simple terms, a presupposition. Of course, our belief in human freedom or human *autonomy* — that is, the belief that humans have the ability to consciously *determine* their own choices irrespective of external influences — has undeniably been a foundational ontological belief within the landscape of ideas. After all, it is this belief of ours that has enabled us to picture ourselves in the manner in which we do, and has deeply informed the formulations of our socio-political institutions. The very institution of democracy, that we value so dearly today, is fundamentally hinged upon this belief of ours. Democracy necessary assumes that individuals participating in it are capable of choice. And the portrayal of human nature is clearly informed by the postulate of human freedom in ways that run deep in the very shaping of what human *ideals* should be. So clearly, our belief in human freedom has deep pragmatic roots but it is, nevertheless, not an objective *fact* in the manner in which our mortality is. Rather, on a closer scrutiny, it turns out to be a *postulate* of human reason.

Amongst the many services that Immanuel Kant [1724-1804] has done for modern western philosophy, his calling attention to the nature of our belief in human freedom as a postulate of reason, as well his ascertaining of the *necessity* to hold on to such a postulate, surely stand out. Kant sought to show that our belief in human freedom *cannot* be grounded upon any *fact*. In fact, Kant seeks to establish that the indemonstrability of our belief in freedom as resting upon a *fact* is not at all due to some limitation on our part. Rather, as Kant sees it, this inability on our part bespeaks of the fundamental nature of freedom itself and the manner in which it undergirds our very construal of ourselves. It is this unavoidable dependency on our part, upon the notion of freedom for our self-portrayal, that thereby establishes freedom as a necessary postu-

late of reason. In simple terms, Kant seeks to establish that though human freedom is not grounded upon some objective fact, it is, nevertheless, a necessary and a fundamental postulate of reason itself. And it is, by that very token, an unavoidable presupposition that we must invariably accept for our self-portrayal. And though freedom can never be shown to be grounded upon *an objective fact*, its denial would, therefore, necessarily demand a reimagining of our very selves along with a reimagining of the world and the ensuing conception of our interactions therein. Kant holds that our credulity in erroneously holding freedom as grounded in an objective fact is due to our nescience concerning the very notion of *choice*, and what it entails for our notions of "self" and "freedom".

This is not to say that until Kant the notion of *human freedom* was unavailable to our philosophical enterprises. After all, the concept of human freedom has been available to us since Greek antiquity. And as the first two introductory chapters of this book will illustrate — even though through broad strokes — that with the *forging* of the notion of the *self* in the smithy of the philosophers of ancient Greco-Roman world, the notions of human choice and freedom had already come to take shape, and had come to be employed within philosophical discourses.[2] These introductory chapters also provide us the needed backdrop, to understand better and appreciate, the historical emergence of our belief in the primacy of the *self* and the modes in which it informs our notion of freedom.

In a similar manner, that the notion of freedom was available within the philosophical arsenal during the medieval period is evident from the fact that the problem of 'free-will' was a matter of much theological debate; and it is undeniable that the concepts of 'freedom' and 'liberty' were cardinal to the entire project of Enlightenment. However, Kant's contribution lies in the fact that he made us pause and reflect upon the manner in which we invoke and employ the notion of freedom itself. He underscored the fact that in our invocation of the notion of "freedom" as indicative of our ability to make choices, we have largely been inattentive to the haziness surrounding the very notion of *choice* itself. That is, though we employ the term "freedom" in our everyday discourse, we are, truly speaking, unclear with respect to what precisely constitutes a

choice and the manner in which the notion of choice undergirds our notion of freedom. Kant's fundamental claim is that this ignorance on our part has unfortunately led us to misunderstand not only *what it is to choose freely,* but has also led us to misconstrue what constitutes a *genuine choice* in the first place.

Today, when we speak of *freedom* or *autonomy*, it is, by and large, coextensive with what John Stuart Mill famously articulated as, "Social or Civil liberty".[3] Consequently, an inquiry into the notion of freedom today is largely coterminous with an inquiry concerning *liberty* – that is an inquiry that explores the scope, nature and the legitimacy of power exercised over an individual by the society. Thus, the question concerning freedom when understood as *liberty* within political philosophy is, in the words of the 20th century political theorist Isaiah Berlin, an unraveling of the question, "Why should anyone obey anyone else?"[4] But such an inquiry into freedom (understood as *liberty*), if we follow Kant, necessarily assumes that an individual is capable of making free choices in the first place, for if not, then the question of curtailing the choice of the individual does not arise at all. Thus, within the Kantian analysis, the notion of *liberty* necessarily presupposes the notion of *freedom,* where the latter acts as its ground. Kant coins and reserves the term "autonomy" for the invocation of freedom in the latter sense. Consequently, for Kant, a drawing out of the contours of freedom *as* autonomy is cardinal to our talk about freedom *as* liberty, for the former clearly informs the latter. This book is concerned precisely, and exclusively, with the notion of freedom *as* autonomy. And it is better that it be stated right at the beginning — to avoid the unfortunate realization that might arise later — that the notion of freedom as *liberty* is not the thematic concern of this book.

To put the difference between freedom as *autonomy* and *liberty* differently, we could say that today one generally invokes the notion of freedom as indicative of a choice that is not hindered by forces and influences other than those of the one making the choice. It is with this underlying meaning that we go on to invoke the notion of freedom. In fact, this is the fundamental sense in which not only most of us today, but also all those prior to Kant, employed the notion of freedom; and it is precisely in this sense that the domain

of political, moral and social theories invokes it as *liberty*. After all, our ascription of moral worth and responsibility to individuals also fundamentally presuppose that the individual who execute actions are capable of exercising *free* choice. But in order for us to do so, we must, therefore, already be in a position to not merely picture what such a choice looks like but, more importantly, we must also have a *basis* for our belief that such a choice *is possible*. Kant's attempt is to draw our attention to the fact that we do not have — or at the least, we did not have one until Kant provided us with — such a *basis*. For Kant, our invocations of freedom as liberty within our moral/political/social discourses, thereby seem to be simply grounded on the assumption that we are *free* and that the fact of our freedom is simply a matter of *some objective* intuition. Consequently, for Kant, our talk of freedom is fundamentally baseless and without any real significatory power, and by this very token he seeks to underscore our ignorance concerning the nature of our *self*. That is, for Kant, in invoking freedom, we all seem to be talking about something without really knowing what it is that we are talking about, and that we hardly seem to be cognizant of our ignorance in the matter.

However, Kant's contribution does not merely lie in pointing out our shortcomings with respect to our invocations of freedom as *liberty* and as a moral foundation. Rather his contribution lies in his efforts to remedy this shortcoming by providing us with a precise *ontology* of freedom (*autonomy*) that could then act as the foundational basis for our invocation of moral and political freedom (*liberty*). Thus, Kant's inquiry into freedom has a dual dimension. The first consists in the demonstration of the claim that our notion of freedom is a postulate rather than a belief grounded in an objective fact. The second consists of his laying out of what then this freedom — as *autonomy* – entails, especially for our portrayal of our own selves as capable of free choice and as autonomous beings. In his works, specially the *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781/1787], *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [1785] and *Critique of Practical Reason* [1788], Kant lays out his ontology of "freedom" and the ensuing nature of the self, inadvertently inaugurating, what today has come be seen as, the beginning of the end of Modern Philosophy.

An exposition of this attempt of Kant's is what the three

chapters that constitute the section on Kant seek to illustrate in this book.[5] Furthermore, most of us who are unfamiliar with Kant and his highlighting of our ignorance concerning the notion of freedom, still seem to be talking about freedom in a manner that would perhaps make Kant uneasy, were he to hear us. This side-stepping, on our part, of the problem underlined by Kant is possible precisely because we can still operate with the notion of freedom as *liberty,* or with the ascription of moral responsibility, in our political, social and moral discourses by innocently assuming that the understanding of what it is to *be free* is already available to us. This is analogical to the fact that we can work with numbers in our everyday life without any impediment, even though we are, and remain, largely unaware of the mathematician's concerns with respect to the nature of numbers and their metaphysical basis. Thus in a way, this book, apart from other things, is a presentation of Kant's voice for those who, like him, believe in the cardinality of the notion of freedom, and would thus like to hear what Kant has to say regarding its *basis*, irrespective of our agreement or disagreement with him, on the final count. Towards that end, this book is not written exclusively for those who are already entrenched in the philosophy of Kant, Sade or Nietzsche. Though they too may find some points of engagement here, this book is primarily meant for *anyone* who is interested in deciphering what these thinkers had to say about the nature of freedom without demanding a thorough knowledge of their philosophical positions.

But Kant's disclosure of freedom as being a postulate of reason, when accepted as true, also opens up the disconcerting prospect of delineating what it *actually* means to be free. After all, in positioning our belief in human freedom as a postulate, Kant also opens up the undeniable necessity of fleshing out what the postulate of freedom essentially entails. Of course, Kant believes that *his* ontology of *autonomy* is indubitably an accurate account of the nature of our freedom, and he firmly places his faith upon *his* delineation of what freedom *as* autonomy truly means. But any lack of faith in the Kantian delineation clearly opens up the prospect of exploring *afresh* what the postulate of freedom *truly* means. Admittedly,

if our recognition of human freedom is not based upon a known objective fact, as Kant demonstrates, then what precisely is meant by "freedom" *cannot* be conceptually bound by the contours of any known *fact* as well. This, therefore, entails that the Kantian reading of freedom *as* autonomy can itself never be ascertained by any objective fact either. That is, the Kantian delineation of autonomy *could* turn out to be a spurious delineation of what freedom, as a postulate of reason, *really* entails. Thus, what precisely is entailed by our belief in human freedom is open to interpretations. Consequently, post Kant, a discourse on freedom must either assume that the Kantian portrayal of our *autonomy* is more or less accurate, or it must undertake the task of presenting an alternative vision of what autonomy entails. Even a cursory survey of the history of western thought concerning the nature of freedom reveals that the former has largely been the case, even though some have appropriated and worked through the the Kantian delineation beyond apparent recognition.[6]

However, though rare, there have been voices within the history of western thought that, while recognizing the legitimacy of the Kantian formulation of freedom *as* autonomy as such, have nevertheless, explicitly and consciously moved away from the Kantian delineation of autonomy, and have sought to discern alternative contours of what autonomy *truly* entails. In doing so, these voices meticulously present different visions of what precisely we are to understand when we invoke the notion of human autonomy or freedom. This book is also about these alternative delineations of freedom *as* autonomy. They are presented in this book because it appears — and as the book shall, hopefully, make us realize — that most of us in the contemporary post-modern, post-truth world, unwittingly and perhaps inadvertently, position ourselves within these alternative formulations of autonomy *contra* Kant in our invocations of freedom. In other words, in our invocation of the Kantian neologism of *autonomy* we are deeply *un*Kantian.

Among these rare voices are those of Marquis de Sade [1740–1814] and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche [1844–1900]. Sade and Nietzsche present to us two distinct construals of freedom as

autonomy contra Kant's. Sade, a Frenchman who belonged to the French nobility, and though slightly younger than Kant, was writing around the same time as Kant. The fact that Sade features as a central character in this book might itself be a surprise to some given the ignominy that usually enshrouds his name. In part, this book is an attempt to distance his thoughts on freedom from the disrepute that accompanies his name, and present it solely in the light of its philosophical worth. And as this book anticipates, we might, on closer inspection, realize how allied our own invocation of freedom today stands with the Sadean vision of autonomy. Sade's vision of autonomy is presented through the three chapters in this book that constitute the section on Sade. In doing this, I primarily confine myself to Sade's, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* as my primary site of interpretation.

Friedrich Nietzsche — a name that is largely familiar to most — was writing roughly a century later than Kant and Sade. Nietzsche, apart from lending a distinct articulation to the notion of freedom as autonomy, is also important given that he coincidentally(?) enables us to make better sense of Sade's own articulation concerning freedom. On the other hand, the novelty of Nietzsche's voice, contra Kant, appears in better light against the horizon of the Sadean positioning of freedom. In a way, it is *as if*, Nietzsche's voice is a much rehearsed, refined and one that is thoroughly thought-through, but that incidentally participates in the Sadean notes, while nevertheless managing to retain its own originality. The last two chapters of the book present the Nietzschean vision of autonomy.

This book, thus, portrays three *broad* trends of construing the foundational basis of human freedom in the landscape of western thought, and the sketches of human autonomy that ensues from them. It elucidates Kant's construal of autonomy *as obedience*, Sade's construal of autonomy *as transgression*; and explicates Nietzsche's construal of autonomy *as creation*. In doing this, the book does expose the reader to the philosophical underpinnings of these thinkers — specially Kant's — though only to the extent that it enables us to sketch their respective portrayals of autonomy. It does not intend to position itself as an exposition of their philosophical

systems as such. A task of that nature would demand a different orientation than the one adopted here. However, the endnotes to the chapters, apart from usual function of providing supplementary notes, provide an easy set of references to sources that the reader might find helpful to begin their own explorations. To say that I have myself found these brilliant resources worth reading, is to say the least. For those who are unfamiliar with Kant's overall epistemological position, it is recommended that footnotes 11, 12, 13, 15, 20 and 35 provided in Chapter III be read first. These footnotes would equip the reader with the bare minimum to appreciate Kant's arguments provided in the Chapters on Kant.

The three central characters of this book — Kant, Sade, and Nietzsche — though opposed in their respective articulations of autonomy, nevertheless complement each other. In that, the gravity and importance of the Kantian voice rings better precisely when positioned against the alternative voices of Sade and Nietzsche. It is, as if these voices suddenly make us realize the importance of the Kantian position. On the other hand, Sade's and Nietzsche's articulations on the nature of autonomy enable us to see what Kant, perhaps, himself missed in articulating his own position. In precise terms, this is what this book attempts to highlight.

In articulating the positions of these voices on autonomy, this book, remains sensitive to the specificities of these voices in in their own terms and confines itself, largely, to an internal reading of the works of these three thinkers. Towards that end, I have also allowed these thinkers to speak for themselves within my narration (and they appear within single quotes) both as a mode of emphasis, and as a measure of assurance that the interpretation adopted within the narrative coheres with the text being interpreted. This is partly responsible for the shift in the narrative style between the first and the remaining three sections that follow it, and it is particularly noticeable in Chapters 3 and 7. Surely, I am cognizant of the fact that a better job of articulation can be done, and I offer my apologies for the failure to do so myself. Nevertheless, even though the book adopts an internal reading of the texts, it hopes to provide the reader with lenses that would assist her in her introspective gaze at

her own invocations of freedom/autonomy in contemporary times, and possibly enable her to make better sense of how human freedom is itself being pictured today.

I sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this book as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

NOTES

1. What, however, can be a matter of reflective contention is the manner in which each one of us comes to hold this belief in relation to our own respective mortality. Some have argued that though our general belief in human mortality could be grounded in our experience given that we encounter the death of others, our belief in our respective individuated mortality cannot be grounded in any experience *as such*, especially if death is understood — as we usually do — as the cessation of *all* experiences. After all, we do not experience our own death. The 20th century philosopher, Wittgenstein, emphatically proclaims that one's death is not an event that one experiences but is rather the limits of experientiality itself [See, Wittgenstein. 2001 (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* (6.4311). Translated by Pears and McGuinness (Oxon: Routledge Classics)]. Thus, the belief in our own mortality can only come from either an introspective turn or through the invocation of a syllogistic movement of our thought.
2. Both Plato/Socrates (See, *Protagoras,* 352b*ff,* specially from 355b*ff;* Also see, *Republic,* 435c*ff.*) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1149a*ff.*) deal with the notions of the 'self' and 'choice' in relation to human action. Their explorations are generally categorized in philosophy as the 'problem of *akrasia'*. For Plato's texts cited here, the reference is to, Plato. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Trans. D. S. Hutchinson. Eds. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company); while for Aristotle's work, the reference is to, Aristotle. 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Citations to Plato provide the title of his Dialogue followed by the standard Stephanus Number, while for Aristotle the Bekker Number is provided following the title of his works.
3. In fact, Mill consciously seeks to move away from the Kantian question concerning 'freedom' and rather begins the very *Introduction* to his famous essay, 'On Liberty' (1859), by explicitly positioning

it as an exploration of the modes and the conditions under which society can legitimately exercise authority over an individual and curtail one's freedom, *contra* Kant's rather more foundational question concerning the basis for one's assertion of such freedom. Mill's exploration is what provides us with, what is now famously known as, the 'harm principle' or the principle that an exercise of authority over an individual's liberty is only legitimate in order to prevent an individual from bringing harm upon other individuals of the society. See, J. S. Mill. 1859. *On Liberty,* in *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*. 2003 (1962). Edited by Mary Warnock. (UK: Basil Blackwell).

4. Berlin, Isaiah. (2002). *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. Edited by Henry Hardy. (London: Chatto & Windus), p.1.
5. Even though the primary motivation for Kant to provide such an ontology of freedom lies in his ardent desire to secure the legitimacy of our socio-moral-political discourse, the implications of his ontology towards this end is not a concern for this book. The primary goal of this book is to lay out Kant's ontology of freedom rather than its entailments for the notion of liberty as such.
6. Thus, positions in socio-political philosophies that recognize a *General Will*, *People's Will*, *Voice of the society/conscience/nature* (within the writings of almost all the thinkers of the Enlightenment — from both the Moderate as well as the Radical camps); or those that operate against the horizon of the notion of the *Spirit of the Times/Period/Era* (Hegel and the offshoots of his philosophical position), can be interpretatively grounded within the Kantian delineation of autonomy. In fact, Isaiah Berlin, in many of his works, precisely intends to show how these apparently diverse formulations of freedom are but variations of a singular underlying current, though he identifies this current with a form of totalitarian approach and does not explicitly relate them with their Kantian roots.

SECTION I

Introduction — Building the Context

CHAPTER 1

A World Without the Self

> ...now one reads their slogan of "free-society" on all tables and walls.
> Free Society? Yes, yes!
> But surely you know, gentleman, what is required for building that?
> Wooden iron! The well-known wooden iron.
> And it must not even be wooden.
>
> –Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* § 356.

In the beginning, there was no *self*.

Today, identities and human actions are primarily made sense of against the overarching horizon afforded to us by the category of the *self*.[1] We are now in an era where the primacy of the self has become an inviolable belief. And even if we no longer believe in the idea of a substantive self today[2], the notion of the self has become indispensable for our everyday beliefs in one form or the other. Critical values like human rights, liberty, and justice are, after all, crucially hinged upon our shared belief in the primacy of the self. In fact, in the absence of the category of the self, we would be at a loss to make sense of human agency itself. This belief in the primacy of the self is so deeply entrenched in our contemporary discourse, and in our everyday outlook, that it has come to be accepted as a universal truth. However, as asinine as it may sound, voices like Fustel de Coulanges[3] have always sought to show us the historicity of our belief in the primacy of the self. No matter how compellingly inviolable it may appear to us, our belief in the primacy of the self is

merely one of the many ways in which we have come to make sense of our actions, relations and interactions with one another. Our construct of the self and its various invocations and articulations, after all, have a history to it.

If we could travel back in time, we would encounter a similar sense of obviousness in the prehistoric Greco-Roman world with respect to their belief in the primacy of the *family*. It was only against the horizon of the category of the *family* that one's existence and one's actions came to bear meaning. One's world was then structured through the lens of a domestic religion that positioned one's ancestors firmly within the realm of the divine, with the eldest living male member of the family functioning as its "high priest", or the *paterfamilias* as they came to be known in the Roman world. The prehistoric Greco-Roman world took the category of the *family*, rather than that of the *individual*, as its fundamental, and initially, as the sole unit of their *social*[4] world. Actions and interrelations were, therefore, made sense of in terms of the demands and the ensuing norms of the family, which in turn curtailed its membership in terms of a shared lineage. Sustenance, preservation, as well as continuity of one's fragile existence were all seen as matters that were entirely dependent upon one's compliance with the demands posed by the dictates of the family and its domestic religion. Thus, in a literal sense, ensuring the continued existence of the *family hearth*[5] meant not merely prosperity in the here and now, but also an assured place amongst one's divine ancestors in the afterlife. To neglect the *hearth* would be to embitter one's ancestors and deprive the family of their continued care and protection. It was, therefore, deemed best not to tempt them by neglecting the care that was due to it. As the chief caretaker and custodian of the domestic religion, it was the sacred duty of the eldest male member of the family (*paterfamilias*) to ensure both the safety and the purity of the family hearth.[6] It was also his solemn responsibility to *read* the warnings issued, and to understand the directions provided, by his ancestral divinities and to decipher their wishes and demands. It was his sacred and natural right to then chart the course of warranted actions, and to accordingly assign roles to the various members of the family for the appropriate execution of the dictates of the

divine. Thus, he held absolute authority over members of the family as his *word* was seen as embodying the divine order, and it was therefore expected to be met with complete obedience by members of the family. He was the high priest and the political sovereign, so to speak. It was against the backdrop of this overarching category of the *family,* enmeshed within the frames of such a domestic religion, that individual identities and roles were defined and made sense of.

Thus, even though this domestic religion operated through significations that were, by and large, literal rather than symbolic and lacked the imaginative prowess exhibited by religions that emerged later in the course of human history, it nevertheless functioned as an important and a primary source of one's identity — both individual as well as collective.[7]

In tune with the literality of their religious language, the locus of the *underworld* where their ancestors dwelled was literally taken as materially signifying the land underneath. This led to a sense of inviolability of one's land. Property was, thus, sacrosanct in the prehistoric Greco-Roman world. In fact, for the major part of the history of the Peloponnese landscape, the ownership of land did not rest even with the head of the family since it was seen as belonging to the entire family — the ones gone, the ones living, and the ones yet to come — rather than to any specific individual.[8] Property was, thus, construed as a *natural* coextension of the family, and land, therefore, garnered a sacred status.

Seen thus, religion in the early Greco-Roman world was a domestic institution that brought its members together as a cohesive unit providing them both an identity and a sense of security, apart from prospects of immortality, in lieu of their complete and devoted allegiance to the family's ancestral divinities mediated through the figure of the *paterfamilias*. Religion then, by its very nature, was exclusive and not something whose membership could be easily shared. Unlike today, the religious, domestic and the social spheres were all congruent, based on kinship in the early days of the Greco-Roman world, with the scope and the extent of the "social" therefore being limited to the "family" alone. And as is also clear, notwithstanding the probable affection among members of the family, it was the force of *piety* rather than the affective aspect that

tied the members of the family as a unit. Clearly, the West, along with the rest of the world, have since then moved on from such a worldview towards a worldview that is deeply informed by the belief in the primacy of the self.

As the domain of the *social* began its expansive journey in the Greco-Roman world from the prehistoric category of *family* to that of the city-state or the *polis,* it nevertheless retained the underlying essence of the religious structure of the family all along its transmutations. In a significant way, the structure of the family provided the blueprint for all the other subsequent socio-political structures in the Greco-Roman world. When broader identities were forged beyond kinship, they were formed precisely by establishing a common divinity and an altar replete with its own rites, feast and priests. Such common divinities were usually a figure acceptable as a *hero* to the parties in question. Alternatively, forces of nature too came to be anthropomorphized and accepted as gods and goddesses, giving rise to the entire divine pantheon of the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses.[9] Thus, every polis had an altar for the city-god complete with rituals and high priests, who played decisive roles in the matters of the city-state, even when the political came to be segregated from the religious at later stages. In fact, even with the rise of republicanism, and with voting as a means of settling positions, *drawing of lots* was often seen as the best mode of decision-making, precisely because it was believed that this mode allowed the gods to *speak* for themselves. In short, the domains of the oracles and the statesmen were never exclusive within the socio-political sphere in the Greco-Roman world, and the *social* was never completely isolated from *religion*.

In fact, it was precisely the deeply rooted religious foundations of the polis that was ironically responsible for the frequent unrest within the polis, very often rupturing its cohesive fibre. Given that the polis was historically construed along the structure of the family, the hierarchical structure of the domestic sphere along with its engrained "inequality" made its way into the socio-political structure of the polis as well. This inevitably translated into the gradation of the members of the polis along, what we may today label as, a structural plane of inequality. Further, given that the stratification of

roles among the family members in the domestic sphere was taken to be a *natural* structure, the structural delineation of the members of the polis was unproblematically accepted as a natural *given* as well. After all, if inequality is natural, then it must be accepted as an unavoidable layout of the social world as well. One of the outcomes of this socio-political structure was that citizenship of the polis became an exclusive matter with only a few being granted membership to the club of citizens. Women, merchants, labors, slaves, along with all those without a recognized family hearth and acceptable lineage were generally excluded from this club. Initially, it was only the eldest members of the extended family who were deemed as citizens. The club of citizens was, therefore, initially synonymous with the club of *patresfamilias*. What the *paterfamilias* was to the family, the citizen was to the polis. To be a citizen was, therefore, to be a member of an exclusive cult of the polis whose primary function lay in ensuring the safety, prosperity and continued existence of the polis. They were, collectively, its political head. It is they who would prescribe roles and ensure appropriate actions from the members inhabiting the polis and draw out appropriate associations among them. If today, one was transported back in time and found oneself amidst the Greco-Roman world, one would not fail to realize the lack of personal choices and individual preferences within the structures of one's choices. In short, one would immediately notice the conspicuous absence of the *autonomous* self of the modern times. By and large, you *did*, you ate, you associated with, and even dressed, as per the norms of the polis; norms that were seen as catering to the interest of the polis, and thus closely guarded. Violation of the norms was as good as blasphemy for that was indeed to disrespect the demands of the city-gods, expressed through the citizens who were regarded as their ventriloquists. In fact, *patriotism* was the first known form of piety and was indicative of one's pledge to honour and defend the gods of the polis and its way of life. It was in ensuring and safeguarding the interest of the polis where the highest virtue, and therefore honour, lay. It was through this privilege that heroes were born. Of course, to be a citizen was a coveted prize, but then it also meant the shouldering of responsibilities concerning the well-being of the polis. The citizens,

therefore, had to take on the role of exemplars.

In fact, the dissents of the patricians or plebeians in the Greco-Roman world were more of expressions of displeasure of being excluded from the principal political rites of *piety*, and from directly partaking in the highest glory of patriotism, rather than a grand concern for *justice* — as we understand the term today — as such.[10] The cry for citizenship was not so much a cry *against* the inherent inequality within the socio-political structures of the polis. It was not that one wanted the entire ladder of social stratification removed, so to speak. It was merely the longing to be placed on a different rung on that ladder that often led to civil strife.[11] In fact, Plato's *Republic* written in the 4th century BC seeks to defuse this tension and restore harmony in the polis by not merely highlighting the *natural* basis of the hierarchical structure of the polis, but also by providing consolation to those who do not make it to the upper rungs by enunciating the fact that one's piety is manifested precisely in the efficiency that one displays towards the execution of one's allotted role within the hierarchical structure. Plato reminds his fellow polis-inhabitants that each is endowed with a function within the polis — a social role — in accordance with the endowment that nature has bestowed upon each.[12] Everyone has an assigned role in the greater scheme of things, and impiety lies precisely in rupturing the cohesive fabric of the polis by violating this grand scheme of *being*. Seen thus, to go against the *civitas* was to go against the divine itself.[13]

Further, just as the *paterfamilias* was seen as the one endowed with the exclusive predisposition and skill to decode the dictates and warnings of the ancestors, in the context of the polis it was taken to be the exclusive capability endowed with the citizens — the male heads of aristocratic families (with the inclusion of his sons in later periods). Consequently, the responsibility to decipher the *plans* of the city-gods lay upon the citizens. In that they were *more* than the rest of the members of the polis; they were peculiarly *rational*. Their rationality was marked by their ability to *read*. Apart from the fact that literacy was itself largely confined to them, they could, in addition, *read* the divine signs and make sense of the world and their own existence in terms of the ordained order of things. Their

rationality was indicative of the fact that they were among the chosen scribes of the divine.

We often undermine the importance of our ability to *read*. And here, I am not exclusively talking of reading a book or a script, but am rather emphasizing our ability to *read* as such. When we come to think of it, the absence of the art of reading would also entail the absence of *sense* altogether. Sense, after all, emerges precisely through acts of *reading*. Emphasizing the importance of "reading" when understood in this broad connotation, Alberto Manguel, reflectively writes:

> ...[reading] is a function common to us all. Reading letters on a page is only one of its many guises. The astronomer reading a map of stars that no longer exist; the Japanese architect reading the land on which a house is to be built so as to guard it from evil forces; the zoologist reading the spoor of animals in the forest; the card-player reading her partner's gestures before playing the winning card; the dancer reading the choreographer's notations, and the public reading the dancer's movements on the stage; the weaver reading the intricate design of a carpet being orchestrated on the page; the parent reading the baby's face for signs of joy or fright, or wonder; the Chinese fortune-teller reading the ancient marks on the shell of a tortoise; the lover blindly reading the loved one's body at night, under the sheets; the psychiatrist helping patients read their own bewildering dreams; the Hawaiian fisherman reading the weather in the sky– all these share with book-readers the craft of deciphering and translating signs... [In] every case, it is the reader who reads the sense; it is the reader who grants or recognizes in an object, place or even a certain possible readability; it is the reader who must attribute meaning to a system of signs, and then decipher it. We all read ourselves and the world around us in order to glimpse what and where we are. We read to understand, or to begin to understand.[14]

What Manguel brings to the fore here is the idea that *reading,* in its most fundamental orientation, is simply an art of 'making sense' — that to read is to be a *hermeneut* at the same time. Understood thus, in the Greek world, the designated *readers* of the order of being were the class of citizens — the *rational* ones — those who could decipher the signs to reveal the hidden divine order of existence,

and then plan and direct the actions and thoughts of those who could not decipher them, or at the least were deemed as incapable of performing such hermeneutical feats. It is not surprising then that even Plato, in his ideal *republic*, reserves this task for the philosophers alone — those who can access the divine forms of things and the order of being. And even though it is common to hear or read that the Greeks took rationality as the mark of *all* human beings, we must remember that rationality was taken as a distinguishing mark of a chosen few by the majority of those living in the Greco-Roman world then. In fact, not all were deemed equally rational for rationality entailed the ability to decipher the *telos* of things and the natural end towards which it progressed. To be rational entailed the ability to unravel the divine order of *being*. Rationality presented to us how things *ought* to be against the horizon of such a preordained order of *being*. It is in this sense that reason entailed actions, for when mediated by reason, the cosmic order, it was believed, laid out a blue-print of a socio-moral order. Both, one's choices as well as one's identity — the terms in which one recognized one's existence — came to be inalienable enmeshed within the fabric of this preordained cosmic order.

In the beginning, therefore, the notion of the modern self that is autonomously oriented in its moral outlook is conspicuously absent. And if we are to locate a self in the early Greco-Roman world then we decode a self that is quite unlike the modern self. Antithetical to the modern self, whose subjectivity is construed as being shaped by the individuated significations that the world around has for it, we have a self here that operates exclusively in terms of significations that is externally provided to it by the *family* and the norms of the polis. Here is a self that surely *understands* but is, nevertheless, devoid of self-understanding of the modern man. It is a self that is thoroughly outward, not merely in terms of its identity formation — for that too is externally given — but more importantly in terms of the validation of its actions. It is a self that measures itself in the light of the evaluative gaze of the world. It is a self that is yet to develop a language to interpret the world and its actions in its own terms. Here, the self can be seen as a self that manifests itself only in terms of the image it outwardly generates.

Here, we have a self whose worth and acceptability is fundamentally dependent upon its adherence to certain preset norms and ideals of the family and/or the polis. A self that is exclusively *social* — a self, wherein it and its social image conflate as one.[15]

The intellectual climate suited for the cultivation of the notion of the modern *self* — the individuated self with which we are so well familiar today — is aptly aligned only centuries later.[16]

In fact, even the rise in philosophical thought — by which we mean the movement towards abstractions — clearly begins with the fundamental assumption of such an *a prior,* transcendent, and pre-ordained cosmic order.[17] Here too we find the presumption of an *a priori* structure of order underlying the unstable and changing realm of existence as fundamental to the very genesis of these philosophical though-schemas. In fact, the rise of Greek cosmologists, beginning in recorded history with Thales in the 6th century BC, can be seen in terms of a movement towards a more abstract understanding of the divine *a priori* order (*arkhé*), with a clear unwavering faith in the ability of reason to *read* and *decipher* this fundamental order of things. Though Thales begins this quest in terms of a more naturalistic or materialistic outlook given his material monism, nevertheless, it is he who inaugurates the possibility of imagining existence in terms of new, unfamiliar, and alternative articulations.[18] It is traversing through such an avenue that Anaximander, from the Milesian school of thought, proposes the abstract notion of a primordial *apeiron* as the singular *infinite* and *indefinite* source of temporal existence. It is with the inauguration of such abstractions that Heraclitus notably introduces *logos* as the singular cosmic principle of *order* underlying existence. It was also precisely this art of abstraction that was peculiarly shaped by Pythagoras in exclusively formal terms, and was further refined by the Eleatic School, in particular, by Parmenides. Notwithstanding the difference in the nuances among the contrasting views present in the writings of these early Greek cosmologists, the cosmic order was invariably seen as bearing an essential relation to the socio-moral order. The latter was construed in terms of an attempt to replicate the underlying principle of the cosmic order within the social world. It is precisely this impulse that is clearly seen in Plato's vision of his

ideal *republic*. It, therefore, is not a surprise to find that within the early Greek thought-schemas, barring the likes of Democritus, the *self* was inevitably construed as a being among other beings, and as ultimately embedded within an *a priori* and *a singular principle of order*, or within *the great chain of being*. What, however, made it stand out was its rational capacity that grounded its potentiality to *access* (discover) the *order*.

Initially, this invariable relation between the individual and the ordained cosmic order was not, as is in the present times, seen in terms of a relation of contrariety. It was not construed as a relation that was essentially marked by contest. Rather, within the ambience of the rising philosophical thought-schemas of the Greeks, this *a priori* order was primordially marked with the possibility of its actualization through our rational capacity. And thus, these thought-schemas presume, in a manner of speaking, a *pre-established* harmony between the individual's existence and the *a priori* order. Consequently, the defining feature of the rational individual is grounded in the very possibility of the individual to chisel oneself in harmony with the cosmic order, which is to say to chisel oneself in harmony with the social order since the social order was seen as mirroring the cosmic order. Within the dominant mode of Greek thought, it is this harmony that comes to be equated with the moral/social order itself.[19] To the Greek mind, a society governed by reason is, therefore, synonymous to a morally upright society, where members accord themselves to the dictates of this *a priori* order.[20] Consequently, the rational self acquires its moral significance precisely through its relation to the social order, which in turn is a derivative of the *a priori* cosmic order.[21] Rationality, therefore, comes to be seen as a faculty that is primarily responsible in the establishing of a social/moral order that mirrors, and is thus in harmony with, the *a priori* cosmic order. Within these early Greek thought-schemas *reason* becomes the sole faculty to aid us in decoding the cosmic order, so that our social world organizes itself in accordance with it. And further, given the hierarchical placement of the rational capacity within the Greek polis, the establishment of a moral order both legitimizes, as well as necessitates, the absolute demand of obedience from the lesser

rational, a-rational and irrational members of the polis. Any laxity in this matter, or a failure to decode or mirror the cosmic order thus came to be synonymous with a chaotic social world — a polis devoid of order. It is this belief that leads Aristotle to emphasize the pivotal relation between the arduous task of habit formation and the moral order within the polis. We must consciously train and develop our virtue of character, Aristotle tells us, to ensure that our actions come to habitually conform to the dictates of reason.[22] In fact, in this respect, Aristotle does not deviate much from the thought-schemas of the early Greek cosmologists who unfailingly emphasize the fact that an individual is only *potentially* capable of bringing about a moral/social order. Therefore, it was clear to them that the emergence and the sustenance of a moral order demanded a severe disciplining of the members constituting the social world with respect to their abidance to the laws of the polis instituted by the *citizens,* who were deemed as the *rational* ones.

We also now come to see that within the dominant mode of early Greek thought-schemas, one's *telos* is not a *product* of one's subjective reason or rational capacity but is rather rooted in a preordained order. Of course, subjective reason *reads* this cosmic order, but in this act of reading it does not *create* it. For the Greeks, the act of reading does not constitute the object it reads. The object, in its fullness, already *is*. Such an orientation can still be read in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which by virtue of its hylomorphism, grants the potential of rationality to the individual as his *form*, but nevertheless does not position subjective reason as the ground of his *telos* or *eudemonia* itself. The grounds of *eudemonia*, as Aristotle asserts, is to be found in the realm of the divine.[23] Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is not a product of subjective rationality but rather indicative of what it *can* achieve. Thus, within the early Greek thought-schemas, we have a self that is carefully entrenched in the triadic structure of subjective reason, the *a priori* cosmic order, and the entailing social/moral order.[24]

NOTES

1. Of course, the term "self" has come to don a variety of meanings in the history of Ideas and is employed within various disciplines to signify quite different things. In addition, when used as a prefix, it transforms into potent notions that are critical to disciplines such as Psychology, Theology, Sociology and Philosophy. However, cardinal to the term, as it is being used here, is the signification it entails in projecting humans as an *individuated agency* that can act through conscious determinations, or what has come to be labeled, following Kant, as an *autonomous agent.* Of course, the broader theme of the necessity for such a construal in light of the existential quest for meaning, though important, is not explored in this work.
2. It may do well to note the problematic relation of identity that is drawn between the notion of the "I" and the notion of the "me/mine" in the non-substantive, *dialogical, procedural, unencumbered* construals of the self. Elsewhere, I have argued that any non-substantive notion of the 'I' invariably reduces it to a 'me' thus conflating the *metaphysics* of the "I" with the *pragmatics* of the "me/mine-formation".
3. See, N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, 2006. *The Ancient City,* Trans. Willard Small (New York: Dover Publication). Coulanges' influential work, first published in French in 1864, tries to systematically explore how the Greco-Roman world was structurally influenced by religion. Coulanges' work still manages to influence historians of Ideas. For instance, Larry Seidentop's recent work, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014) clearly bases itself on Coulanges' scholarship. Importantly, Coulanges' work foregrounds the fact that the Greek world appears to be fundamentally and *essentially* distinct from our modern world which is critically informed by the beliefs and values of modernity. Thus, following the likes Coulanges, and even Durkheim, a certain lineage of French scholarship on Greeks seems to have held on to the view that our construals of the notions of the "individual" and "freedom" in modernity cannot be unproblematically seen as similar to what these terms meant within the Greek world. I share this discomfort, and extend it to the notion of the "rational" as well.
4. The term "social" is an elusive term to articulate with precise conceptual boundaries primarily because of its epistemic elasticity and its consequent fluidity in terms of its scope of signification. Here, I use the terms "social world/ society" to suggest a *historically* situated,

and *shared* structures of beliefs, implicating notions of interpersonal relations and shared institutions. It is not intended to suggest an abstract ahistorical homogenizing categorical construct.

5. The *family hearth* was a small fire/flame lit at the domestic altar and was considered as the vortex between the human and the divine worlds. The Latin term for the same is *focus* – a term than was later appropriated within the discourse on Optics during the 17th century.
6. Worship of ancestors has been found to be a common feature of the ancient worlds, and dead ancestors were construed as being present amongst the living in one way or the other. In fact, Aristotle, in providing us a blue-print of the landscape of human happiness, himself expresses his discomfort with any position that completely unhinges the notion of what is *good* for the living from the realm of the dead. (See, Aristotle. 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1100a). Within the Roman world, death masks of ancestors (*lares* of the family) that adored the walls of the household altar were reminders of their literal presence. It is this attitude of theirs towards their dead that is taken to be the ground for the institutionalization of *Lares Familiares* as a central feature of their religious belief-system and ancestral-worship seems to have continued in various forms even with the advent of Christianity within the Roman world.
7. The fact that the prehistoric Greek world operated through a language that was structured along materialistic significations is precisely what Nietzsche exploits to provide the legitimizing force to his proposal that it is through the crafting of a language that encompassed more abstract significations that allowed for the rise of the priestly class and its herd-morality. Towards this end, Nietzsche deploys his skills at elaborating the etymology of Greek moral terms in the "First Essay" of his 1887 work, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. See, Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996. *On the Genealogy of Morals.* Translated by Douglas Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
8. Its bequeathing through a legal Will, even till late Antiquity, was unthinkable. In fact, a Will concerning one's land was granted, even by Solon, exclusively for those who had no male heirs.
9. It is, therefore, not surprising that we often find the lineage of Greek and Roman heroes being traced back to some god or goddess in Homeric verses as well as in Herodotus', *Histories.* It was a common practice even in the later periods in the Hellenic world to draw one's lineage back to some hero or the other. In fact, we have none other than Socrates claiming his lineage to Hephaestus, in response

to Alcibiades' claim of his lineage originating in Eurysaces. [See, "Alcibiades", 121a-b, in Plato. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Trans. D. S. Hutchinson. Eds. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company)].

10. See, Seidentop, Larry. 2014. *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism.* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), p. 30.
11. However, there are Marxist historians like G.E.M. de Sainte Croix, who takes the exploitative relation between the *polis* and the *khôra* (the urban and the rural) as the leitmotif underlying these civic strives. See, G.E.M. de Sainte Croix. 1981. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests.* (New York: Cornell University Press).
12. See, Plato, *Republic*, 433b-e. Of course, Plato here is simply amplifying the tacitly held belief that nature is teleological — a belief close to the Greco-Roman world — and that everything in nature is, therefore, preordained towards a specific and singular goal which is its *end* — its *telos* — in the greater order of being. It is once again this belief that pervades Aristotle's philosophical works.
13. See, Plato, *Laws,* 907d-e. Notwithstanding the stark difference between Plato's *Republic* and the *Laws*, Plato goes on to suggest a minimal punishment of imprisonment for any act of impiety, or for a failure to alert the authorities when they come to see one. In fact, unlike his *Republic*, Plato's *Laws* proposes a much more conservative position and curtails the legislative rights of the guardians of his ideal republic to a considerable extent, making them much more subservient to the norms of the polis.
14. Manguel, Alberto. 1996. *A History of Reading.* (New York: Penguin Books), pp. 6-7.
15. For a more comprehensive understanding on the notion of the "self" in the philosophical landscape of Greek philosophy, see, Cartledge, Paul. 2002 [1993]. *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
16. For a broad tracing of the rise of the modern notion of the "self" in terms of human agency see, Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press). For a broad historical trajectory on the development of the notion of the self as an 'I', that is, in terms of personal identity, see, Martin, Raymond and Barresi, John. 2006. *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity.* (New York: Columbia University Press).

17. This assumption runs through the entire Greek thought-schemas, including the one proffered by Aristotle. It is for this reason that Francis Bacon (1561-1626) treats Aristotle as a philosopher of Transcendence, since his first principle of motion rests upon the postulate of the *Prime Mover*. Bacon, therefore, did not take Aristotle as an *ideal* for the naturalistic philosophy that he sought to advocate.
18. For a broad understanding of the Presocratics (a somewhat misleading tag, given that some of the figures tagged thus were contemporaries of Socrates) see, Guthrie, William K. C. 1985 (1962). *A History of Greek Philosophy (Vol. I): The Early Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Guthrie, William K. C. 1969(1965). *A History of Greek Philosophy (Vol. II): The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Barnes, Jonathan. 1999 (1979). *The Presocratic Philosophers.* (UK: Routledge); James, Warren. 2007. *Presocratics.* (UK: Acumen). For a thematic introduction to the philosophical problems that the Presocratics were primarily engaged with, see, Stamatellos, Giannis. 2012. *Introduction to Presocratics: A Thematic Approach to Early Greek Philosophy with Key Readings.* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell). For those interested in the English translations of the available *Fragments* of the Presocratics, see, Kirk, G.S. and Raven, J.E. 1977 (1957). *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia* (Second Edition), edited by Patricia Curd, Translated by Richard D. McKirahan and Patricia Curd. (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2011). For a broad understanding on the construal of "nature" in Greek philosophy that is not exclusively centered around the Presocratics, see, Furley, David. 1989. *Cosmic Problems: Essays on Greek and Roman Philosophy of Nature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
19. Here, of course, given the nature of the resources available to us in the reconstruction of the philosophical past of the Greeks, the term, "Greek" must be narrowed down to largely mean "Athens".
20. Moral philosophy, beginning with the Greeks, therefore, has always been cardinally concerned with the modalities of production/shaping/moulding of a *subject* that is fit for social co-existence (within the polis). Towards this end, within Greek thought, ethics and politics are co-extensive. This is evidenced in the manner in which Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, delineates the domain of 'political science' as being 'concerned most of all with producing

citizens of a certain kind...' (See, Aristotle, 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099b).

21. In fact, the term "cosmos" — "kosmos", if transliterated from Greek — in its original sense simply meant "order". However, the term was also then *derivatively* used to mean 'bodily adornments' given that 'order entailed beauty' for the Greeks, and it is in this derivative sense we have the term "cosmetics" as etymologically rooted in the Greek *kosmos*.) But as Paul Cartledge informs us, that the early Pythagoreans had already come to use the 'word to describe orderliness in nature (as opposed to human culture or adornment),' and that after the mid-fifth century, it comes to acquire the notion of a 'unitary, divine, harmonious and mathematical order'. See, Cartledge, Paul. 1998. "Introduction: defining a kosmos" in *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens.* Edited by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett and Sitta von Reden. (Cambrigde: Cambridge University Press).
22. See, Aristotle. 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a*ff.*
23. See, Aristotle. 2000. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099b.
24. The death of Socrates highlights the importance of this relational positioning of the individual and the cosmic order within the dominant Greek ethos. Socrates' influence upon the youth was taken to be an encouragement to blatantly flout the so-held 'cosmic/social' order. We come to know through Thucydides', *The Peloponnesian War*, that for the Athenians, Socrates's corrupting influence was most probably taken to be instantiated by Alcibiades, the once favorite of the Athenians, and a student of Socrates.

CHAPTER 2

Emergence of the Self

> ...all things happen according to this *logos*...
> ...all human laws are nourished by one law, the divine law...
> –Heraclitus. *Fragments* [22B1, 22B21].

> ...and once it is possible that Nature may all alone have done what you attribute to your god, why must you go looking for someone to be her overlord?
> –Marquis De Sade, *Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Man*.

The firm belief in a transcendent cosmic order deeply informed the manner in which the Greco-Roman world construed civil strife. The moral/social norms or *nomos* established by the chosen citizens of the polis were deemed to be an accurate approximation, if not a mirror image, of the cosmic order. Any social instability, therefore, implicated the citizens of the polis as incapable of providing an accurate picture of the cosmic order. Civil unrest thus put the rational capacity of the citizens — who were responsible for providing the norms of the polis — under a suspicious light. It often brought the legitimacy of their status as the true *readers* of *signs,* and thereby their *rationality*, under question. Infrequently, social instability would also be taken to be indicative of impiety on the part of the citizens since it could also be taken to be suggestive of their wilful disregard for the divine cosmic order itself.[1] In any case, strife in the social world meant a threat to the rational capacity of the citizens, if not impiety.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the norms-formulating citizens, social strife meant an oversight on their part in ensuring the adherence to the norms of the polis by the polis-members. This meant that the administration had failed to generate or induce the virtue of obedience among the members of the polis. After all, the socio-political dramas that Athens had seen by the 4th century BC[2] had led to the general conviction that neither obedience nor piety was something that came naturally to most humans. In fact, Aristotle formalizes this conviction in his *Nicomachean Ethics* by placing the individual's moral character more as a matter of cultivation rather than a matter of natural disposition.[3]

Consequently, social discords often resulted in the citizens and the other members of the polis pointing fingers at each other. Clearly, the sustenance of the moral/social order in the polis was, therefore, not an easy feat to either attain or maintain.

Seen from a philosophical perspective, the belief in the *a priori* cosmic order was cardinal to the worldview of the ancient Greek world. In its absence their moral/social norms or *nomos* would be devoid of a legitimizing foundation. Unlike today, where we can draw upon the ideals of freedom, equality, or dignity to ground our moral and social norms, the force of legitimacy of the moral/social norms within the Greek world depended squarely upon their belief in the *givenness* of this cosmic order. Thus, philosophically speaking, the sanction of the moral/social codes within the Greek polis rested precariously upon their belief in the divine cosmic order and in the unilateral relation that obtained between the cosmic order and the social/moral order.

And as in clear from the writings of the Presocratics, that are available to us, they acutely felt the ever-present threat of the possible unhinging of the moral order of their world. After all, any skeptical attitude towards either the cosmic order or its unilateral relation with the moral/social order would effectively translate into a skeptical attitude towards the very legitimacy of the exiting moral/social code of the polis. Such a skeptical attitude, therefore, threatened to bring with it the power to repaint the notion of *rationality*, and the rationality of the citizens in particular, as a *creative* faculty rather than a *representational* one.

It would be helpful to remember here that the dualism between *how things really are* and *how things appear* – that is, the dualism between reality and appearance — is the uncontested foundation of the thought-schemas of the Greek world.[4] Subsequently, it is this dualism that has been informing the dominant currents of thought-schemas of the West, until recent times. In the light of this primordial dualism, the *a priori* cosmic order represents the *reality* arm of the dualism, while the social order represents the *appearance* arm. Understood thus, an *ideal* is therefore not a matter of creativity, but rather a matter of discovery — a discovery that would legitimize the appearance as being ultimately rooted in reality. Thus, the citizens of the polis as *rational* beings — as *readers* of the cosmic order — bring to the fore their ability to discover rather than their ability to create.

However, under a skeptical stance, one could paint the citizens, who were positioned as the *readers* of the signs, as *creating* the moral structure of the polis through the act of *reading*, rather than as merely *discovering* them as discerning readers of the *given* cosmic order. Seen thus, the norms of the polis could be shaded in cynical hues of self-interests rather than in the colors of piety and cosmic harmony. The moral/social order could then be understood as a project involving creative powers of a few to ensure and sustain the interest of their families or groups. But more importantly, if the moral/social order was a matter of cynical *nomos* rather than indicative of a concern for *logos*, then it opens up the possibility of construing human beings as having the inherent capacity to govern themselves through *self-created laws*, for the better or for the worst.

In fact, that the Greek world had slowly begun to recognize the creative element within the human rational capacity is suggested by the rise of the sophists by the 4th century BC in Athens, and the attention and repute that they managed to garner (notable among them are Protagoras and Gorgias). The sophists explicitly proffered a distinction between the realm of conventions or norms of our social/moral world (*nomos*) and the cosmic realm of nature and its *a priori* order (*logos*). And notwithstanding the differing stands they held in terms of the relation between the two, they unanimously demarcated *nomos* from *logos*, and in the process opened up the pos-

sibility of granting more agency to the individuals in the creation and sustenance of the moral/social order. The rise of the sophists was also ushered in by the changing nature of the Athenian assembly with its steadily enlarging participatory democracy. Though the governance of the polis still structured itself along the overarching contours of the notion of the "family", keeping its religious scaffolding intact (with the selection of *archons*, magistrates and officers still being largely based on *drawing-a-lot*), nevertheless, the participatory democratic structure of the assembly brought with it the demand for oratory and debating skills.[5] Now, the Greeks had always operated with the notion of *truth* as essentially mirroring the *a priori* cosmic order and therefore, as wielding power over our actions. Within the Greek assembly, this belief translated into the view that truth as *logos* is therefore persuasive, and that our actions are persuaded by truths. The sophists offered tutoring services in the art of presenting the truth in its best persuasive form and force. Thus, if rationality constituted the ability to *read* signs and to access truth in the Greek world; logic and rhetoric soon became the tools that were most needed in the art of presenting truth. But somewhere in this rise of the arts of logic and rhetoric, skepticism concerning the unilateral relation between the cosmic and the moral/social orders tagged itself along as well. After all, if truth is marked by an inherent persuasive force then persuasion could well be manipulated through these arts, and thus, so could be truth. Form here, it was merely a simple move to reorient one's believe in the persuasive force inherent in truth to the belief that that which is persuasive is, in fact, truth. And if the social/moral order, as Protagoras held, is simply a matter of man-made *nomos*, then clearly it could be manipulated as well. Seen thus, *reading* could well be an active, rather than a passive, art form. The rise of the sophists made this possibility evident, and this in turn threatened the very legitimizing foundations of the norms instituted within the polis.

In fact, the Athenian assembly charges Socrates of being a sophist precisely because they see him as teaching the Athenian youths the art of manipulating truths, and therefore corrupting them in the process.[6] For the members of the Athenian assembly who stood against Socrates, Socrates was blatantly impious by casting doubts

on the legitimacy of the norms of the polis, and therefore casting doubts on the gods of the polis themselves. Notwithstanding this charge, ironically, it was in fact Socrates who saw the danger of conflating truth to the power of persuasion. We find Socrates ardently refuting such a reduction of truth to persuasive force in Plato's *Theaetetus*.[7] But unfortunately for Socrates, the Athenians assembled at his trail had not yet read Plato's *Theaetetus*.

It is at least clear that the early Greek cosmologists were well aware that a worldview that marked humans with unbridled creative freedom to decide upon the normative structures of the moral/social realm invariably opened up the problematic possibility of unbridled pursuit of vested interests in the guise of a moral order. This, they realized, could threaten the very fabric of a sustainable social/moral order, to say the least. To the credit of the sophists, it must be noted that it is precisely their intervention that brought to the fore — within the Greek world — the need to rigorously defend their belief in the *givenness* of the cosmic order. The need to rein in the normative structures of their polis to their belief in an *a priori* cosmic order was deemed all the more necessary given the entailments that ensued from the failure to do so. With the rise of the sophists, the Greek thinkers became more than conscious of the need to defend the cosmic order and its relation to the moral/social order.

Of course, within the thought-schemas of the early Greek cosmologists, the agency of the individual had always been positioned within the regulative bounds of an *a priori* cosmic order and the authoritative structure of the moral/social norms. Notwithstanding this intent, dents were nevertheless being steadily made by exposing the frailty and the illegitimacy of such a positioning of the rational individual. It was precisely this frailty that Democritus, who was aptly called the laughing philosopher given his passion for exposing human follies, sought to highlight and exploit.

Democritus, an outlier in the spectrum of the Presocratic thinkers in terms of his radical views, went on to highlight the illegitimacy of the belief that the social order mirrored, or even ought to ideally mirror, the cosmic order. In fact, Democritus posits the individual as the very grounds of the moral order. He held that

everything, apart from the underlying order of atoms, belonged to the domain of man-made *nomos*. For Democritus, what the cosmic realm of atoms discloses is precisely the accidentality that is inherent in any *order* in the realm of the experienced, the felt and the lived world. Though he grants reason the access to the mechanistic laws that govern the realm of atoms, he also declares this realm and its laws as completely indifferent to any social/moral order, whatsoever. Thus, it is in Democritus that we find an attempt to set the individual free from the unrelenting clutches of the normative structures of the social/moral world, by positing it as the *generator* of the moral order. It is in Democritus that one finds the first attempt to provide a sense of an active and a free *self* who not merely *reads* or *follows*, but more importantly, *creates*. The self is here pictured as a creator—an *artist,* if we please. It is this portrayal of the self by Democritus that would, many centuries later, lure the young Nietzsche to him.[8]

One can, thus, understand why Plato makes an almost immediate attempt to undo the Democritean lure of such creative prowess of the self by once again recasting the individual within a larger *given* social order. Plato, who was more than aware of the socially destabilizing force lurking within the vision propounded by Democritus, immediately sets out to undo it. It is towards this end that he sets forth his portrayal of the *ideal republic* with its negotiative socio-political structures, replete with the hierarchical positioning of souls in relation to their rational capacity. In this, Plato intends to secure the vision of a social and cosmic order as had been traditionally held within the Greek world. Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are formidable counterworks to defuse the anticipated sparks of individualism that might have been ignited by the teachings of the sophists and the likes of Democritus within the thoughtful minds of the Athenian world.[9] Following Plato's countermovement, Aristotle, in fact, takes his teacher's project further by firmly portraying human nature as being necessarily bound within the confines of the polis in a manner that the flourishing of the polis becomes a precondition for one's well-being itself.[10] Within Aristotle's thought-schema the realization of one's positioning within the larger context of the order of the polis is a natural precondition for being human itself.[11] As an

added precautionary measure, Aristotle convincingly recasts human rationality as an inherent human *potential* rather than an *actuality*, and posits the teleological order of the cosmos as an actuality. In that, the Aristotelian formulation re-casts the mark of rationality as a capacity of the self that can only be actualized through a conscious effort on the part of the individual to harmonize oneself with an *a prior* order. It is this Aristotelian sketch that becomes the standard mode of understanding the relation between the mark of rationality and the individual for the coming centuries.

Surprisingly, it is once again in Socrates (as presented to us in Plato's *Dialogues*) that we find a subtler challenge to the belief in the natural hierarchization of the self in terms of its rational capacity. Leaving the *a priori* cosmic order intact, Socrates in *Phaedrus* — a Dialogue of Plato's — nevertheless presents himself, in contrast to those around him, as not being in a haste to take the nature of the self as something obvious. Rather, he tells Phaedrus, his interlocutor, that his intent is to take the Delphic inscription, 'know thyself', with complete seriousness.[12] The Socratic interpretation of the Delphic dictum marks an important turn in the history of western thought.[13] The Socratic interpretation takes the dictum as implicitly acknowledging a certain sense of concealment and mystery surrounding the self, rather than as a forewarning concerning one's finitude and one's obligation of piety.[14] For Socrates, we are yet to recognize the true nature of our *self*. Within the Socratic schema, the self rather than being divinely favoured to receive truths, is itself sought to be construed as a self-motivated *portal* to Truth — a portal to *Being* itself. Thus, here the imploring call for an inward turn towards one's self is, in fact, a concealed push for an *outward* movement that leads one to the realm of eternal truths *via* the dialectic efforts of one's self. Consequently, the self within the Socratic schema is construed, not as an opaque and inactive receptor of truths, but as a vibrant and transparent locus of the movement from the realm of *appearances* to that of *reality*. And as Socrates sees it, the recognition of our own nature is a matter that demands our serious and immediate attention. It is this innovative interpretation of the Delphic dictum, 'know thyself', within the Socratic vision that comes to inaugurate the inquiry concerning the

self, which in turn inaugurates the possibility of construing human *agency* in terms of the self.

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates portrays *truth* itself as a product of one's ability to converse with one's self. This alludes to the possibility that truth is a matter for the self to discern of its own accord, and is suggestive of the inherent capacity of the self for truth. Such a view suggestively undermines the entire structure of the polis, wherein only a chosen few can *read* truths. Is this not what Socrates is insinuating in *Meno* by making the slave boy, who is portrayed as someone devoid of any formal educational training, come up with mathematical truths? Though the Socratic turn was indeed a threat to the stability of the way of the polis, as Aristophanes' *Clouds*[15] sought to show, it was not sterile or without its own enchanting charms. After all, the Socratic proposal to liberalize the access to knowledge and to open it up beyond the circle of a chosen few is surely a tempting call, especially for all those who had been denied its access.[16] The Stoics and the Epicureans took the Socratic interpretation with due seriousness. Their ethical and metaphysical formulations are precisely an attempt to distill and amalgamate the Socratic vision of the self with the belief in a cosmic order. And interestingly, it is precisely Stoicism that would speak to the diasporic Jews of Babylon.

The vision of the self as being self-responsible in relation to truth also finds a rather interesting beginning in Babylon in the last decade of the 6th century BC. Apparently, the Jewish population that had settled along the banks of the Cheder, which they named Tel Aviv — after their deportation following the Babylonian invasion of the Kingdom of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 589 BC — began to take individual responsibility for their monotheistic religious faith. It is here, as Karen Armstrong reminds us, though unbound by the compulsions of community worship of Yahweh, that

> Judaism came of age... and the Jews learnt a deeper level of religious commitment. A new individual element entered Jewish practice... the Jews of Babylon became personally responsible for their own religious life. Each Jew renewed his own covenant to Yahweh. He had to learn the Torah himself and absorb it to his heart and mind so that

> it became his own... personal accountability [became] a hallmark of Judaism and in exile the importance of the individual was emphasized in quite a new way.[17]

Apart from the contribution of the Greek world, the origins of the self in the western world have deep roots in this Jewish experience. For it is the variety of 'compassionate Judaism'[18] that began to flourish in Tel Aviv and Babylon — the variety that was confident enough to allow Stoicism to later talk to them[19] — that nurtured the fertile grounds that would go on to nourish the thoughts of the Jewish Jesus and Paul, ultimately culminating into Christianity — a religion that in the hands of St. Paul, gave up the essence of exclusivity that was so very central to Judaism and to the Jewish identity. It is this Pauline vision that took the Roman world of Gentiles by storm in the 1st century AD.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, Saul — who came to known more through his Latin name "Paul" after his professed spiritual experience while journeying from Jerusalem to Damascus — held the belief that God, the transcendent and *singular source of all order* and wisdom, had finally revealed that *each* individual had the needed spiritual agency to redeem themselves. This, for St. Paul, was made evident by the death and resurrection of Jesus. As St. Paul saw it, it is *in*, and *through*, the sacrifice made by Jesus that the possibility of one's salvation through one's faith in God comes to be confirmed. Through Jesus, St. Paul held, God had revealed his plans for human salvation. But of course, this would be possible only when one came to know one's *true* self. In tune with the Socratic insistence, St. Paul emphasized the necessity to realize one's *true* nature over and above the other identities that one forms and operates with within the social hierarchical structure of world. The true nature of one's being, as St. Paul advocated, is universal in its freedom to be one with God. In essence, therefore, though within the social hierarchies that are operative in the world we may fulfil certain *secondary* roles, nevertheless, one's *essential* role remains the attainment of one's salvation through actions steeped in universal love — a spiritual passion that is neither directed towards any particular or peculiar feature of one's object of love, nor driven by a sense of sympathy or pity. It is through the spiritual gaze of such a universal

love that one comes to recognize the other as equally empowered with a potential for salvation. Thus, at the spiritual level, social and material hierarchies dismantle and the fundamental truth of equality of all selves — as children of God — reigns, with each self being capable and free to find its salvation through Christ.[20]

Of course, the Pauline vision would require a few more centuries of adjustment, readjustments, alignments, and realignments before it finds its most well-chiseled formulation in the works of St. Augustine, who crafted his thoughts by amalgamating the best of Hellenic philosophy with the Pauline vision. In the process, St. Augustine gave the western world a model of the *self*, and its relation to the cosmic order that came to be central to the entire edifice of western thought. Though Philo, the Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, had earlier sought to employ insights from Hellenic philosophies in the 1st century AD, it is in Augustine that this syncretism comes to acquire a different level of finesse and maturity. Augustine carefully reinstituted the central belief of the Greco-Roman world in the primacy of the *a priori* cosmic order in terms of the *Will* of God.[21] In fact, Augustine characterizes God's *Will* as 'supreme reason', 'eternal and unchanging' and as the basis of the moral order quite early in his thought-schema, as is reflected in one of his early Dialogue, *On the Free Choice of the Will*. Echoing the Hellenic spirit, Augustine proffers the view that all man-made laws or 'temporal laws' must be in consonance with the 'eternal law' if it to measure up as a moral one.[22]And in tune with the Socratic-Pauline vision, he portrays each individual as being capable of following the supreme dictate of reason placed in each. Augustine once again ensures that the individual, though essentially free and equal, is neatly embedded within the transcendent and eternal bounds of God's *Will* and His *grace*. It is in the Augustinian vision of the self that the spirit of the Greco-Roman world becomes Christianized — a vision that would last for centuries with the Church as its guardian and as the exclusive site of the *readers* of God's *Will* as revealed through the Scriptures.

As we can now see, just as the upholding of the constrictive horizon of the *given* a priori cosmic order within the thought-sche-

mas of the Greeks foreclosed the very possibility of the belief in an unbridled primacy of the self as upheld in the modern times (Democritus being an exception), the Augustinian vision deploys the *Will* of God to the same effect.

This, rather brief, historical sketch provides us a historical context to appreciate the fact that the emergence of the category of the modern self as a primal *autonomous* being — something that we have come to take as obvious in contemporary times — was a result of a long intellectual engagement. After all, such a construal of the self could only dawn with the dismantling of the foundational belief that individual self-realization was necessarily dependent upon an *a priori* and a transcendent order — as was indispensable to any philosophy of transcendence — as seen in the Greek as well as the Pauline-Augustinian thought-schemas. In fact, the notion of *autonomy* as the salient mark of the individual makes its first central appearance within the western philosophical tradition in the works of Immanuel Kant.[23]

Fortunately, Kant finds himself in a time where skepticism regarding the legitimacy of the assumption of the primacy of a transcendent cosmic order had already spread its roots within the intellectual soil of the period. However, the then prevalent *modus operandi* of challenging the dogma was through the upholding of the thesis of *Natural Law,* with *nature* supplanting the transcendental grounds of morality. But the Natural theorists, notwithstanding their constant dispute concerning the semantic extent of the term "nature", had to themselves grapple with the problem of legitimizing the *givenness* of the natural order.[24] Towards this end, many of them followed St. Aquinas who saw the natural order as something established by God himself.

Kant realized the threat to the independence and sovereignty of the self as fomented by the Hellenic and Augustinian visions of moral order and, as had also been envisaged by earlier and other dissenting voices within the history of Ideas. But in Kant's view, this threat was not neutralized by the proffered naturalistic schema of moral order. In fact, as Kant saw it, the project to construe moral order as immanent within nature, by dislodging it from the realm

of the transcendent (and therefore, from the realm of the divine), made freedom itself impossible, and consequently rendered morality as an imaginative fiction at best. But if Kant was not comfortable with the philosophies of immanence that anchored themselves on Aquinas' insistence on the Divine *Will* as pervading the phenomenal world, he was equally uneasy with the alternative perspective of the moral order being completely contingent, as proffered by thinkers like Locke or Hume. The latter alternative, as Kant saw it, problematically anchored moral order on the natural forces of human passions and subjective interests that were deemed as universal and intrinsic to the self. Such a portrayal portrayed the self squarely as any other object in nature. If so, then human actions would have to be construed as a consequence of an underlying necessary causal operation, akin to the underlying causal relation that necessarily regulates and determines all motions in natural objects. This, as Kant read it, presented human actions as devoid of any genuine element of conscious choice. For Kant, such a portrayal of moral choices and actions, strictly speaking, portrayed our choices as being completely determined by nature through causal laws that underlay our actions. And as Kant saw it, the independence and sovereignty of the self was, therefore, irredeemably lost within the then-available philosophies of immanence that based moral order on the notion of Natural law.[25] Hence, for him, the available naturalistic discourse on moral order, as an alternative, revealed itself to be a sham on closer scrutiny. Kant recognized very early on — as is evident from the nature of discomfort that Kant had with these attempts of naturalizing the moral order — that the self demands an element of *transcendence* if it is to retain its freedom. It must, so to speak, go beyond the phenomenal realm that is bound by the necessity inherent in any empirical causal law (we shall elaborate upon this Kantian discomfort in the following chapter in details). It is in this context that the Kantian attempt to completely confine the moral order within a purified realm of reason takes center stage.

The Kantian solution to the problem lies in executing a subversive recasting of both the moral order as well as the self. Kant manages to do this precisely by positing rationality as the ground

for both the self's *autonomy* as well as the moral order itself through a novel treatment of the notion of *causality*. Kant's treatment of causality discloses the *forms* through which causality operates and manifests itself. Working within the purview of his noumenal-phenomenal divide, Kant manages to forge a unique reading of causality that enables him to establish *autonomy* as the undisputable mark of the self. It is in Kant that one finds the primacy of the self as never before, thereby making him, by far, the most important thinker within the project of Enlightenment and its promise of "liberty".[26]

Kant's formulation of *autonomy* as an inviolable marker of the self was intended as a part of an elaborate plan to retain an element of transcendence within the self and the moral world. Kant's autonomous self, just as Aristotle's, was a potent portrayal of the self. It was lucrative in its promise of 'absolute spontaneity' to the self. Perhaps — and this is merely *my* conjecture — Kant was aware of the potency in his portrayal and thus its possible *abuse*, so he neatly places this *autonomy* within a carefully designed moral order. After all, and we shall see shortly, given the transcendental form of the moral law in his formulation of the moral order, he breathes a fresh lease of life to the Hellenic belief in an *a priori* order. It is as if Kant was not too sure, or rather hesitant, about disclosing the truth that he had discovered about the self in its entirety and purity to us. Perhaps, a Sade would be needed to show to us the true nature of the autonomous self as discovered by Kant, and to lay out why we are better off without the realization of such truths.

Perhaps — and this again merely as a conjecture — Kant foresees the dark possibility of the rejuvenation of the Democritean vision, now even better equipped with his notion of the autonomous self, and what it could do to the very possibility of a stable and universal moral order.

Notwithstanding his intentions, the Kantian discovery inadvertently finds itself in the hands of others who accepted his portrayal of the self only to wage interesting wars against his very construal of the moral world. It was only a matter of time till someone discovered Democritus all over again, and Nietzsche did.

NOTES

1. The belief in the relation between impiety and discord in the human world manifests itself in various forms in the history of human civilization. Most notable here is the relation drawn between impiety and plagues or other natural calamities in the Judeo-Christian traditions. After all, the old gods were not merely protective but also construed as vengeful and vindictive who demanded absolute obedience and loyalty.
2. By the 4th century BC, Athens for instance, had already seen various forms of political structuring of the *polis* — aristocracy, tyranny and participatory democracy (though clearly not in the form that we understand it today given that theirs was a *direct* democracy, and that today the "class" of citizens has become more inclusive). However, its historical lineage is nevertheless retained even today given that the notion of "citizenship" still cardinally operates through the *principle of exclusivity* in one form or the other.
3. Aristotle writes, '...So virtues arise in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but nature gives us the capacity to acquire them, and completion comes through habituation.' See, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a. 2000. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
4. Closely associated with this dualism is the other foundational belief that the nature of *how thigs really are* is essentially *hidden.* Thus, the whole of western philosophical tradition takes the question of 'method' with utmost seriousness, since if the *hidden* is to be discovered then we must have an appropriate *method* to discover it.
5. See, Krentz, Peter, 2007. "The Athenian Government in Herodotus (Appendix A)" in *Herodotus: Histories*. Edited by Robert B. Strassler. Trans. Andrea L. Purvis. (New York: Anchor Books).
6. See, Plato. *Apology,* 19b*ff*. Also see, Xenopone, 2002. "Socrates' Defense to the Jury", in *The Trial of Socrates: Six Classical Texts*. Translated by James Doyle, edited by C.D.C. Reeve. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), p. 181*ff.*
7. See, Plato. *Theaetetus*, 201a-e.
8. It is, therefore, not a surprise that Democritus is one of the few Greek thinkers who had a profound influence upon Nietzsche, especially during Nietzsche's formative years. It is through Democritus that Nietzsche freed himself from the teleological picture of human existence. See, Paul Swift. 2005. *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections*

on Democritus, Schopenhauer and Kant. (Lanham: Lexigton Books).

9. That the Platonic resurrection of the individual as someone who is necessarily bound within an *a prior* cosmic order was in opposition to Democritus' formulation of the 'unbounded will' of the individual was well recognized during their times. It is clearly suggested to us by Diogenes Laertius, the biographical thinker of the times, who records that Plato wanted to burn all of Democritus' works. See, Laertius, Diogenes. 2018. *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, [Book 9: 40–43]. Translated by Pamela Mensch and edited by James Miller. (NY: Oxford University Press), p. 331.
10. This step is clearly evident from the fact that Aristotle defines man as a *political* being — that is, as a being who draws its very life from the life of the *polis*. He holds that humans nevertheless do have an inherent capacity to be rational.
11. Aristotle. *Politics,* 1253 a1. See, Aristotle. 1998. *Politics.* Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).
12. Plato. *Phaedrus,* 48c.
13. The thought-schemas of the thinkers prior to Socrates is largely characterized as "cosmological" in contrast to the Socratic "ethical" to mark the shift of the philosophical gaze from the *cosmos* to concerns of human existence.
14. The dictum as it appeared in the Delphic temple, dedicated to Apollo, was originally meant to be a mere resounding reminder of man's finitude and mortality. Since it was a space of oracular prophecy, it was a warning to those who dared to challenge the divine. In fact, in Plato's *Charmides*, Critias' makes this clear. See, *Charmides*, 164e.
15. Aristophanes' *Clouds* is, perhaps, the only work available to us that presents us with a picture of the possible discomfort that the citizens of Athens could have harbored against Socrates. It explicitly posits Socrates as a sophist and portrays him as an impious man. See, Aristophanes. 2002. *Clouds.*in *The Trial of Socrates: Six Classical Texts*. Translated by Peter Meineck, edited by C.D.C. Reeve. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).
16. For a more detailed elaboration see, P. G. Jung. 2014."Scepticism, Socrates and the Socratic Vision of Liberalization of Knowledge" in *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. XXI, No. I/II. pp. 78-104. However, it must be noted that the Socratic call for the liberalization of knowledge is still squarely positioned within the foundational dualism between *how things really are* and *how things*

appear (reality-appearance). Thus, the Socratic vision of liberalization of knowledge merely opens up the possibility of access to the realm of *how things really are.* In that, it surely does not discard the *givenness* of the nature of things. This acceptance of the intrinsic nature of the objects of knowledge thereby forecloses the possibility of any form of cultural or any other variety of contextual relativization of knowledge. Thus, though the Socratic appropriation of the Delphic dictum, 'know thyself', is often portrayed — and rightly so — as inaugurating an ethical turn in so far as it posits the self in its moral dimension; it must also be remembered that it is, at the same time, an effort to project the self in its epistemic dimension as a *knowing being* and thereby, is equally a call to evaluate ourselves in terms of our value as epistemic beings — to realize our status as beings who *can* know. But for Socrates this "can" is precisely to be taken as a *can* — an epistemic potential. In other words, just because *I can* does not entail that *I do.* Simply put, the Socratic placement of our epistemic ability as a *potential* rather than an *actuality* is a bid to curtail the threat of relativization of knowledge by foreclosing the possibility of grounding our epistemic ability in anything *external* to the self. The inauguration of such an epistemic self within the Socratic vision is what comes to be later established firmly by Descartes in the modern period through his thesis that one's existence as an epistemic self is beyond any doubt in so far as the very act of thinking entails the existence of a thinking self. This is what comes to be famously capsulated in his statement, *cogito ergo sum.*

17. Karen Armstrong.2001. *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World.* (New York: Anchor Books), pp. 13-14.
18. Armstrong in her *Holy War* contrasts this variety of Judaism from what came to be established in Jerusalem and the land of Israel after 538 BC. The Babylonians were defeated by the Medes and the Persians, and in the year 538 BC, Cyrus, the king of Persia permitted the Jews to return back to Jerusalem. However, not all did. Some chose to stay back in Babylon and Tel Aviv, establishing Babylon as an important center of Judaism. These diasporic Jews were seen as more accommodating and less radical in their attitude towards people of other faiths. See, Karen Armstrong. 2001. *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World.* (New York: Anchor Books), pp. 16-17.
19. For a detailed account of the context and layout of the Pauline ethical vision see, Thompson, James W. 2011. *Moral Formation According*

to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics. (Michigan: Baker Academic). Interestingly, Thompson stresses that 'Hellenistic Jewish writers rarely cite the Torah in giving moral instructions, but assume that all of the commands are derived from the Torah. While the ethical instructions of Hellenistic Judaism frequently intersect with the Greek ethical tradition, Jewish writers insist that the commandments derive from the will of God.' (p. 41).

20. It is to a similar effect that John Locke (1632-1704) invokes the distinction between the *spiritual* and *civic* status of an individual as a consolation towards the natural inevitability of material inequality.
21. Augustine. 1998. *The City of God Against the Pagans*. Edited and Translated by R. W. Dyson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Particularly, see Book V, Chapter I, pp. 187*ff* and Chapter 8, pp.197*ff*.
22. Augustine. *On the Free Choice of the Will*, 1.6.14.44 *ff*. See, "On the Free Choice of the Will" in *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. Edited and Translated by Peter King. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 13.
23. For a broad historical tracing of the changing notion of the "self" in modern European thought, see, Solomon, Robert C. 1988. *Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
24. For a detailed account of the conditions contributing to Kant's construal of the concept of autonomy in relation to the self in modern times, see Schneewind, Jerome B. 1998. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Western Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
25. See, *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe*. 2008. Edited by Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis. (UK: Ashgate). For a recent and an interesting attempt to engage with the thesis of Natural law for contemporary day liberal theory see, Wolfe, Christopher. 2006. *Natural Law Liberalism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
26. Formulated as such, Kant seems to provide the necessary justification for the ascription of the mark of *autonomy* and that of the entailed rationality upon the self. The primacy of the self as autonomous, and as an *end in itself* given its *spontaneity*, makes it an ideal framework to appropriate for a discourse on basic human rights. In fact, the twentieth-century rise in the discourse of 'rights' invokes the Kantian frame in one way or the other; the most explicit being the case of medical

ethics. The contemporary discourse of rights takes these inalienable predicates of *autonomy* and *rationality* of the individual as disclosing a specific modality of our *being*.

First, it takes these markers to legitimize an assertion of *individuality,* which could be expressed through the form; '*I* am *I*'. Now, notwithstanding the vagueness of the term *I*, the primacy of the individual is legitimately asserted through such a claim in light of the 'spontaneity' of the 'autonomous' self that is established within Kant's framework.

Second, the expression of this 'spontaneity' could be expressed through the form 'I *can*, because I *am*...' This second invocation of autonomy enables Individualism to justify the choice of an individual by grounding it in one's rational *spontaneity.* The claim therefore holds, that any form of manifestation of the individual's autonomy that is legitimized by the first claim, essentially necessitates the expression of the second form. These two assertions are central to any discourse on rights. Without the first claim, the primacy of the individual cannot be established, and hence, neither can the individual be taken to be the established locus of rights (we must note that the notion of "right" is *intentional* in its very orientation and thus demands a locus — an object—of which it is a predicate *of*). And without the second claim, the discourse on rights would lack the form of expression of the individual's assertion of her *autonomy* within the lived phenomenal world. Consequently, without the second claim, the first claim would merely remain a metaphysical postulate.

Thus, Kant's notion of *autonomy* becomes central within contemporary discourse on rights. However, as we shall see, not only can the Kantian notion of autonomy not sustain, but can in fact be read as being even opposed to the above asserted dual claims that are central to the discourse of rights. In brief, one can hold that for Kant, autonomy emerges within the three inviolably associated demands of a *Universal Rational Order*, *Equality*, and *Reason*, which the present-day discourse on rights are not essentially embedded in. In fact, the Kantian formulation of the *rational order* is the most crystalline articulation of the Greco-Roman triadic apparatus of reason-self-moral/social order, though it is couched within a vocabulary that gains much acceptance and currency in the modern times. In contrast to this, the twentieth century discourse on rights, following J. S. Mill, places the individual within a space that is enigmatically silent about the social/moral order and the relationship that holds

between the social and the individual is taken to be marked, *a priori*, in terms of *contest* rather than *harmony*. Further, within the modern discourse on rights, the *will* of the individual is seen as a self-sufficient concept that not merely houses reason, but is also the seat of its own *telos*, which as we shall see is a highly problematic claim to be made within Kant's framework.

SECTION II

Immanuel Kant [1724-1804]

...the one who worked out a philosophical schema wherein the human subject was finally bestowed with a sense of genuine *agency*. It is through his formulation that the *self* comes to be redeemed from its image of being a *recipient* of knowledge to an elevated and unique position of privilege, as a *doer* — without whose active participation the whole mechanism of knowledge comes to a halt. It is he who made us understand that knowledge of the world cannot be independent of our participation — that, if there is any knowledge at all, it must always be *our* knowledge. It is Kant's proclamation that every invocation of the notion of knowledge synchronously invokes the self as its necessary other half.

...the one who made us realize that there is more to human freedom — that we are truly *autonomous* in so far as freedom is concerned. It is Kant who made it possible for us to think that in so far as our autonomous status is concerned, we can still, while remaining a part of the natural world, rise above all the material conditions along with its governing causal laws.

...the one who made us realize that ultimately our freedom lies precisely in our ability to obey the voice of *reason*, while remaining undeniably constrained by the various material, sociological and psychological conditions that condition our existence. It is Kant who proclaimed that our *hope* for freedom lies rooted precisely in this obedience that we are uniquely capable of.

CHAPTER 3

Kant: Freedom as a Form of Causality

> In the concept of a will, however, the concept of causality is already contained, and thus in the concept of a pure will there is contained the concept of a causality with freedom, that is, a causality that is not determinable in accordance with laws of nature and hence not capable of any empirical intuition as proof of its reality, but that nevertheless perfectly justifies its objective reality a priori in the pure practical law...
>
> —Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:55.[1]

Irrespective of the subtler differences, our modern self-image is that of a being who is peculiarly endowed with a rational capacity to choose. This self-portrait of our own nature constitutes the bedrock of almost all the available moral frameworks. Consequently, the notion of choice, in a fundamental way, has been the central axial around which we have woven our morals, and the fundamental debates of our moral discourse in modern times have revolved precisely around the diagnosis of the underlying primal determinants of our choices. The question as to "what grounds the conditions that determine our choices" thus comes to occupy a cardinal position in our moral discourse.

However, the failure of moral theories, as Kant sees it, lies precisely in their inability to adequately address this specific question concerning the underlying structures and determinants of human choices. As Kant sees it, while we have been keen on listing out the material conditions underlying our choices, the formal condi-

tions that underlie them remains largely ignored. Therefore, for Kant, even prior to the articulation of a moral framework, the fundamental task demanded of us is the critical exploration of the very possibility of such a moral framework. And if this is a legitimate possibility, the task must then be to carefully elucidate the *form* underlying our choices and their determinants within such a framework.

Of course, Kant is not the first to have realized this foundational demand. Almost all modern theories of morals realize this demand. However, the novelty in Kant's observation lies in the emphasis he places upon the fact that moral theories, hitherto, have unwaveringly assumed human actions as being subject to the same *form* of causality that underlies all causal relations in the natural world. In doing so, they accord the *form* of *natural* or *empirical necessity* to human actions as well. For Kant, the error and the poverty of such accounts is that they are thus necessarily bound to identify the possible determinants of our choices exclusively in terms of our *natural* impulses, passions or interests. Consequently, for Kant, all of these moral theories essentially constrict themselves into 'a metaphysics of interests' underlying our morals, rather than a foundational inquiry into the metaphysical nature of our moral choices *per se*.[2] For Kant, any construal of morals in terms of 'a metaphysics of interests' problematically ignores the inherent threat that it poses to the very foundation of morality, that is, to human *freedom* itself.

As Kant reads it, to uphold the causal *form* of empirical necessity — the form of causality that underlies all changes or alterations in the natural world — in relation to our actions would fundamentally amount to giving up the notion of freedom itself. After all, to treat human actions — which are essentially enacted within the phenomenal world — as exclusive products of choices that are determined by our interests implies that all our moral actions are merely manifestation of the empirical causal relation that *necessarily* holds between our interests and our choices. The poverty of this account then, in Kant's reading, is that it reduces all moral laws into empirical causal laws that serve the singular purpose of actualizing the reality of our objects of interest. Clearly, if our moral actions are in fact exclusively determined by our interests, then the objects of our

interest that we would want to actualize within this phenomenal world would be the sole determinants of our moral choices. And if this is in fact the case, then within the realm of morals, *reason* comes to play a mere *instrumental* role in assisting us to determine the most suited empirical *means* to bring about the actualization of the desired object, by enabling us to aptly recognize the associated causal relations. Consequently, moral actions must then be seen as fundamentally grounded, not in *freewill*, but rather in the nature of the objects of our interest, which though extrinsic to us, are nevertheless the grounds that causally determine our moral orientation.

Kant's uneasiness with such an understanding of human choices is understandable. Such a picture, for all intents and purposes, construes moral actions as being determined by certain empirical causal laws that obtain between the object of our interest and its actualization. It thus construes the determinants of our moral choices as being external to reason, and as regulated by empirical causal laws; consequently rendering human freedom as *instrumental* rather than *absolute*.[3] That is, it pictures us as *free* only in so far as our moral choice concerns the *how-to-bring about* aspect of our morals but not with respect to the *what-to-bring-about* aspect of our morals. The latter, in light of such a picture, is predetermined by the nature of our object of interest. For Kant, such a picture of human freedom distorts the nature of human *autonomy* for it curtails the extent of determination that we have over our own moral orientation. Simply put, if my moral orientation is fundamentally determined by the material conditions of the external world and the causal relations that necessarily hold therein, then human freedom is clearly not *absolute* but externally conditioned. That is, our moral choices are, therefore, not *spontaneous* or *absolutely determined* by us. For Kant, such an admission amounts to the same as the denial of human moral *autonomy*.

To articulate Kant's concern in a different manner, think of human actions that are generally taken to fall under the scope of moral purview. When we deem such actions as being either moral or immoral, we are in a sense *describing* these actions through a particular frame — the *moral frame*. However, we also describe human actions outside the purview of morality. Say, for instance, the blink-

ing of one's eyelid, waving of one's hand to greet someone, raising my hand holding a glass of wine to raise a toast in honour of someone. Our descriptions of such human actions, in contrast to our descriptions of moral actions, invoke a different frame of description — the *a*moral frame. The latter variety of actions, in themselves, do not invoke questions of morals without being extrapolated to some explicit moral concerns. Kant's intervention intends to draw our attention to the fact that our invocation of such a dual framework of describing human actions itself demands some legitimization. Kant's discomfort here can, thus, be formulated in terms of the question: "what discernable feature of actions performs the task of legitimizing the invocation of a moral descriptive framework?" After all, in absence of such a discernable element, our distinction between the *moral* and the *amoral* frameworks would itself become superfluous. For Kant, seen from the lens of the then available moral discourse, the distinctiveness of the moral framework was taken to lie in the *nature of the cause* invoked in the description of a moral act — that the *cause* behind the action was discerned in terms of some *interest* of the agent undertaking the action, notwithstanding the fact that the *interest* may very well be altruistic. Kant intends to highlight that such a position, in legitimizing the invocation of the moral frame on the basis of the nature of the cause involved, problematically structures our moral framework through the same *form* of causality that is assumed to be operational in the world of natural objects — that is, the form of causality as *empirical necessity*. For Kant, such a mode of legitimizing our moral frame of description fails to see that if the *causal form* underlying moral action is taken to be that of *empirical necessity*, then we must invariably accept our moral choice (effect) as being *necessarily* entailed by the cause (*interest*). Thus, our very acceptance of the underlying form of causality, in relation to moral actions, as being that of *empirical necessity* forecloses the very possibility of invoking the notion of "choice" in relation to actions. Of course, here, one may hold that the element of "choice" enters the equation through the fact that one's *interest* is a matter of one's choice. Thus, one is *free* in choosing the interest (cause) that is to determine one's action (effect). But as Kant sees it, this merely postpones the problem for we can surely raise further

questions concerning the determinants (cause) of the *interest* itself. And given that the only causal relation at our disposal is that of empirical necessity, we must invariably construe the causal relation between the *determinants of the interest* and the *interest* itself as one of *invariable necessity*. Thus, within any *metaphysics of interest*, the element of choice or freedom becomes a matter of illusion.

Though Kant agrees that a causal form must necessarily underlie our choices, and that more often than not, our actions are causally determined by our interests, he nevertheless insists that this does not exhaust the modality of describing human actions and choices. Of course, as long as we are interest-driven and construe the nature of our choices as determined by our interests, our actions are necessarily grounded in the causal form of empirical necessity. But Kant insists that our choices have the possibility of being seen as being determined through a different *causal form.* They can, Kant insists, be legitimately described through a moral frame by invoking a distinct form of causality. That is, for Kant, it is possible to hold that though our actions are determined causally, they are nevertheless grounded on a different *form* of causal law.[4] It is, in Kant's vision, this distinct form of causality invoked by the moral frame that legitimizes and renders our descriptions of moral actions as peculiar and distinct from *amoral* ones.

Kant's confident assertion is based on the fact that he has discovered a distinct form of causality other than the form of causality underlying empirical necessity.[5] He had come to see that we could construe the form of causal efficacy or causality in terms of a cause that is *absolute* and *spontaneous*, such that nothing that is external to it determines it in turn. In other words, he has discovered a form of causality wherein the *cause* in turn does not itself demand a cause other than itself. He had, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, already christened this peculiar form of causality as "causality *as* freedom".[6] Now given that causality must necessarily be intertwined with the notion of a *causal law* that governs its underlying causal relation, the *form* of the law underlying this peculiar form of causality is what Kant calls the *moral law* and the form of such a moral law is exclusively accessible to reason and reason alone. Kant, with a precision that is a hallmark of his works, therefore goes on to provide us

with a *metaphysics of morals* and goes on to argue that it is precisely this causal form — *causality as freedom* — that underlies our moral laws. Thus, unlike a metaphysics of interests, which would surely contribute to our understanding of our psycho-physiological selves (as beings driven into actions by *interests*), Kant's metaphysics of morals is a one-of-a-kind attempt to understand our rational-moral self (as beings driven into action purely by the moral law). In that, it is an endeavour to frame the act of willing or volition and the moral will squarely within the bounds of reason, and as something that determines moral choices in complete isolation from the phenomenal world of empirical objects and the empirical form of necessity operative therein. Kant writes:

> *Will* is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational, and *freedom* would be that property of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it, just as *natural necessity* is the property of causality of all non rational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes.[7]

Therefore, as Kant sees it, to acknowledge our ability to choose is also to immediately recognize that our choices can be determined by rational principles (*practical laws*). And to recognize this unique aspect of our nature, as Kant puts it, is to recognize that one is *rational* and has a *will*. The Kantian explication immediately demystifies the notion of the "will" by casting it in terms of a form of causality underlying our choices, and *nothing more*.[8] To say that one has a *will* is to say nothing more than the fact that apart from being subject to the empirical laws of causality, one is also uniquely subject to the form of *causality as freedom* with respect to one's choices (that is, one is also subject to the causal form underlying the moral law). In a similar manner, rationality in its moral orientation — or as Kant puts it, pure reason in its *practical aspect* or *practical reason* — is simply our ability to recognize this form of causality in our moral laws when they are represented to us as principles of action, and to cognize them as the foundational determinants of our moral choices. It is this element of allowing a particular form of causality — a form of *determination* — to *condition* one's choice, and thus in turn to deter-

mine one's action, that is pivotal to the whole question of the nature of causality underlying our moral choices. Consequently — and as is indicated by the quote above — to have practical rationality, and to have a will, amounts to recognizing the fact that one has the moral capacity to act in accordance with the 'representation of these laws'.

However, one's awareness and recognition of this peculiar causal form, in contrast to the causal form underlying an empirical law, does not by itself ensure that one would, in fact, determine one's choice in accordance with the practical law afforded by this causal form. After all, I may downplay my practical rationality or simply ignore its moral demand, and let some material object of interest determine my choice.[9] Kant holds this to be one of the demarcating marks between the two *forms* of causality. For in contrast to causality *as freedom*, the form of causality *as empirical necessity* forecloses the possibility of any intervention of a subjective choice to negate or withstand the causal determination from actualizing.[10] Bluntly put, if two material objects are causally related under the form of empirical necessity, then given that the cause and the causal law are in place, the effect would *necessarily* follow irrespective of one's desires, inclinations or interests. It is precisely this element of unfailing empirical necessity that is absent in the *causal form* of *freedom*. Put in a different fashion, for Kant, the causal form of empirical necessity operates through the force of a *must* (entailing that something *will necessarily* take place), while the causal form of freedom operates through the force of an *ought*. Now clearly, this Kantian characterization of freedom as a form of causality seems counterintuitive given that we understand a relation to be a causal relation (rather than say, a mere correlation) precisely because the invocation of a causal relation brings with it the force of an invariable *must*. It, therefore, goes without saying that Kant would need to elaborate on the possibility of construing a causal form devoid of such a force of an invariable *must* in the first place. It to this Kantian elaboration that we will briefly turn to.

Now, within the Kantian project of Critical philosophy[11], the dual nature of the causal form is first articulated in the "Transcendental

Dialectic"[12], where Kant projects the apparent irreconcilable tension between the notion of freedom and the demand of *causality* as *natural necessity* as is posited by our *faculty of understanding*.[13] After all, freedom demands the dissolution of any natural necessity given that the notion precisely entails 'independence from the laws of nature [and] is indeed a liberation from coercion [and] also from the guidance of all rules'.[14] Thus Kant clearly acknowledges that our postulate of freedom runs counter to the very conclusions that he drew in the "Transcendental Analytic"; as there Kant demonstrates that we can only experience and make sense of the empirical world (the phenomenal world) through the aid of certain *pure a priori* categories that our faculty of understanding is structured with, and *causality* as *empirical necessity* being one among them.[15] That is, in making sense of the phenomenal world, I invariably construe it in terms of certain relations between material objects that are based upon the *causal form* of empirical necessity. And thus, the very fact that we do experience the empirical world in such a manner irrevocably establishes the fact that our faculty of understanding must necessarily frame the phenomenal world — if it is to frame it within a form of causality — within the constraints of such a causal form of natural necessity, *without exception*.[16] Thus, in its first formulation as a problematic in relation to the empirical world, Kant acknowledges that 'freedom' comes across as a metaphysical impossibility.

Given that Kant is firmly committed to his arguments and explications provided in the "Transcendental Analytic", and holds them as conclusively establishing the legitimacy of empirical necessity as held by the laws of the natural sciences, his attempt in the "Transcendental Dialectic" is, therefore, to elaborate on the possibility of freedom without forgoing or denying empirical causality. Kant does this precisely by recasting *freedom* as *a distinct form* of causality in relation to human choices and actions. More importantly, he derives the legitimacy of such a causal form from the very force of necessity present in the inviolability of our belief in empirical causality. Put differently, for Kant, our faith in the possibility of an *ought* is fundamentally grounded upon our inevitable belief in the invariable *must* of empirical causality. If the latter holds, the former must hold too.

However, to keep the records straight, it is not that philosophers prior to Kant were unaware of the problem highlighted by him. After all, it is precisely the recognition of this discordant relation between *empirical necessity* and *freedom* that informs the positions of natural determinism. What is of importance, however, is the import that Kant derives from this problematic. Kant is himself aware that it is precisely this problem of reconciliation of natural necessity with freedom that manifests itself in terms of

> an appeal to a first beginning from freedom in the series of natural causes [in the discourse of] all the philosophers of antiquity [who] saw themselves as obliged to *assume* a first mover for the explanation of motions in the world, i.e., a free acting cause, which began this series of states first and from itself. (Emphasis mine).[17]

But Kant takes this problematic to entail a unique possibility that goes beyond the *assumptive* stance of postulating a *prime mover* – in the spirit of the Greek thinkers – or the then prevalent stance of resigning to either one of the two arms of the dichotomous disjunctive plane of natural necessity on the one hand and freedom (free will) on the other. Kant's unique proposal is to explore the possibility of a harmonious coexistence between natural necessity on the one hand and freedom on the other, without denying either.[18]

However, this problematic is of greater concern specifically to Kant given his *noumena-phenomena* distinction, and his insistence that *appearances* (the realm of phenomenal) cannot be equated with *reality* as such (the realm of noumenal).[19] His epistemic position, as laid out in the "Transcendental Analytic", emphatically curtails all of our experiences of the material world to the realm of the phenomenal alone. Thus, for Kant, the entire epistemological enterprise of making sense of the phenomenal world through our faculties of *understanding* and *imagination* is necessarily, and exclusively, limited to the world as *it appears to us*. However, notwithstanding this, within Kant's framework, the sense imparted to our experience through our faculties of *understanding* and *imagination* is neither subjectively relative nor is it arbitrary. This is so because within Kant's framework, these appearances are nevertheless grounded in *intuitions* that are transcendentally grounded and are their *intelligible* cause.[20] For

Kant, it is this transcendental basis that enables us to construe our representations of the phenomenal world *as re*presentations rather than illusions as such.[21]

Notwithstanding the strict noumenal-phenomenal demarcation, Kant's juxtaposed picture of the noumenal as the transcendental ground of the phenomenal realm becomes tenable within his epistemological framework because of his radical conceptualization of our ability to forge a relation between two categorically-distinct elements. That is, Kant highlights the fact that we, as rational beings, also operate with a *form of synthesis* that enables reason to establish a comprehensible relation between two heterogeneous elements. It is in light of this that Kant distinguishes the 'dynamical synthesis of appearances' from a 'mathematical synthesis of appearances'. The latter, for Kant, is the *form* that underlies the synthesis of homogenous elements — that is the bringing together of homogenous elements to cognize it as a comprehensive whole — as manifested in a relation of *appearances* under the causal form of *natural necessity*. Here, the elements of the causal series are related as conditions (cause) and the conditioned (effect), and both the related elements of the causal relation relate elements of the same kind, namely, 'appearances' (elements of the phenomenal world that are experienced by us).[22] In contrast to this, a *dynamical synthesis* opens up the possibility of a series that relates two heterogeneous elements, classes or ideas – such as the noumenal with the phenomenal – into a synthetic whole. That is, it enables us to grasp the distinctive possibility of relating the *necessary* (transcendental) with the *contingent* (phenomenal).[23] Thus, for Kant, the structure of dynamical synthesis inaugurates the possibility of relating a whole causal series of appearances to a further preceding cause that is not itself an *appearance* (phenomenal), but rather an *intelligible* cause (noumenal).[24]

Accordingly, for Kant, it is the problematic of freedom that shows us the poverty of our notion of "synthesis" that we have hitherto operated with. In that, we have been erroneously equating "synthesis" squarely with "mathematical synthesis", while completely ignoring "dynamical synthesis". As Kant sees it, the problem of freedom emerges precisely when we seek to synthesize — through

a mathematical synthesis — the series of *appearances* in a causal relation to an unconditioned element as its originary ground. This, as Kant sees it, surely runs counter to the very tenet of the faculty of understanding and the form of causality that underlies natural necessity. After all, the causal relation is foundationally hinged on the principle that every phenomenal cause is also an effect of a preceding cause. Kant formulates this problem thus:

> Among the causes in appearance there can surely be nothing that could begin a series absolutely and from itself. Every action, as appearance, insofar as it produces an occurrence, is itself an occurrence, or event, which presupposes another state in which its cause is found; and thus everything that happens is only a continuation of the series, and no beginning that would take place from itself is possible in it. Thus in the temporal succession all actions of natural causes are themselves in turn effects, which likewise presuppose their causes in the time-series. An *original* action, through which something happens that previously was not, is not to be expected from the causal connection of appearances (Kant's emphasis).[25]

However, in contrast to the traditionally prevalent position of a resolute disjunctive stance that permits us to either affirm the thesis of *Determinism* in nature or that of *Freedom*, Kant's suggestive stance is rather to argue for the possibility that 'by the fact that the dynamical ideas allow a condition of appearances, i.e., a condition that is not appearance', it is now possible to conceive a series of *appearances* related to each other within a series of causal necessity that can nevertheless be thought of as *ultimately* 'connected with a condition that is empirically unconditioned [and] nonsensible'.[26] Kant asserts that the hitherto offered resolutions to the enigma of freedom failed to recognize the possibility of this relation that is afforded to us by the our structures of thought. The constrictive notion of "synthesis" that the traditionally available resolutions concerning human freedom and causal determinism operated with misled us to exclusively read human actions in terms of a series that is governed by the structure of *mathematical synthesis*. However — and this is Kant's *discovery* — when we come to this realization, the enigma resolves itself, and reveals to us that the two opposing poles of freedom and causal determinism can, in fact, coexist

in a comprehensive unity when viewed through the structure of *dynamical synthesis*.[27] As Kant sees it, the apparent tension between natural necessity and freedom is merely a result of an erroneous way of treating them as contradictory and, therefore, impossible to synthesize when, in fact, they are not.[28]

For Kant, the structure of dynamical synthesis clearly permits us to conceive a form of *free causality* as the noumenal or the transcendental ground of a causal series within the world of appearances. Kant's novel proposal is that we view human actions in terms of such a series of events (appearances) that are causally related through the causal form of empirical necessity, but with the possibility that one can legitimately construe its *first cause* as an element that is not itself an *appearance*. That is, though our actions can very well be laid out in terms of a causally related series, one could very well postulate the ground or the *first cause* of the series itself as something that is not determined by anything outside itself. It is such a *first cause* that Kant calls *free will*. In Kant's formulation then, *free will* lies outside the realm of appearances as its 'intelligible cause or ground', while its effects are nevertheless related to each other through empirical causality, and therefore, remain in a necessary relation with one another as elements of the phenomenal world. Thus, within the Kantian perspective, it is perfectly permissible to link each event of the causal series to the preceding *appearance* that determine it, thereby locating it within a series that reflects empirical necessity according to the demands of scientific understanding. However, in doing so what is not foreclosed is the possibility of conceiving the *series in itself* as being ultimately grounded in a transcendental *first cause* that lies outside the purview of empirical causality. The notion of moral *choice* makes sense precisely against the horizon of this Kantian discovery of *free will* as a *first cause*. Put differently, for Kant the assertions of natural necessity and freedom are not truly contradictory but rather dialectical, which when grasped in its correct form reveal a synthesis of the two into an organic whole, as is manifested in our actions emerging out of our choices.

Further, to deny such a reading, Kant argues, would either amount to the inadmissible reduction of the appearances of things or their empirical representations into *things-in-themselves*, or force

us to hold the untenable view that the phenomenal realm is the sole source of any 'determining cause, sufficient in itself, of every occurrence…' After all, such a view would defy what has been already established in the "Transcendental Analytic", namely that the appearances are 'mere *representations* connected in accordance with empirical laws' that must themselves presuppose 'grounds that are not appearances'.[29]

Within the Kantian schema of thought, to portray nature as self-sufficient in terms of its causality would amount to the view that causality in accordance with the laws of nature is the 'only one from which all the appearances of the world can be derived'[30]. But such a position is untenable and cannot be consistently held for 'the proposition that all causality is possible only in accordance with laws of nature, when taken in its unlimited universality, contradicts itself'.[31] This contradiction, as Kant holds, becomes explicit when one recognizes that the asserted universality of the laws of nature entails the conviction that 'everything that happens presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule'. But such a view must, therefore, presume that every cause is in turn an effect caused by a prior cause. Kant writes:

> Assume that there is no other causality than that in accordance with laws of nature: then everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule… If, therefore, everything happens according to the mere laws of nature then at every time there is only a subordinate but never a first beginning, and thus no completeness of the series on the side of the causes descending one from another. But… the law of nature consists just in this that nothing happens without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*.[32] (Kant's emphasis).

Thus, though the phenomenality of the world of nature firmly establishes the fact of causal necessity for the unity of experience, this very necessity of understanding seems to posit the enigmatic demand that transcends the very notion of such a causality through its requirement for an *a priori* ground that is not itself caused by anything other than itself. After all, a denial to accept such a *first cause* would lead us to unwilling embrace the enigma of infinite regress of causes, and consequently embrace the fact of indeterminacy of

sense and meaning.[33] Thus, while one can surely assert natural necessity with certitude, one must also concede following this very stroke of assertion, that the empirical form of

> ...causality cannot be assumed to be the only one. Accordingly, a causality must be assumed through which something happens without its cause being further determined by another previous cause, i.e., an *absolute* causal *spontaneity* beginning *from itself* a series of appearances that runs according to natural laws, hence transcendental freedom, without which even in the course of nature the series of appearances is never complete on the side of the causes.[34] (Kant's emphasis).

Accordingly, in the Kantian resolution offered to the problem of freedom, any series in a relation of causal necessity must necessarily be seen as resting upon an *absolute* first beginning — wherein the series ultimately grounds itself — thereby, providing a comprehensive basis to the series, and subsequently satisfying the demand of reason for a foundation of the series itself. Kant's view is premised on the view that given 'space' and 'time' are mere forms of intuitions pertaining to the phenomenality of things as *appearances*, therefore, a transcendental first cause — as an intelligible cause — does not demand that it be related to the causal series of appearances in terms of a prior temporal cause at all. After all, by its very conceptual demand, our *first cause* must stand *outside* the phenomenality of the world and thus outside *time* itself, unlike an empirical cause.[35] In that, it precludes the very demand for a prior cause that causes it. It is a cause that is itself *unconditioned*.[36] Furthermore, it is also established that the faculty of 'understanding does not permit among appearances any condition that is itself empirically unconditioned'. Given this, the only mode in which such a transcendental *first cause* can be permitted is as an 'intelligible condition', which though a foundational part of the series, is not itself yet another member of that empirical causal series.[37] Therefore, in the Kantian explication, to uphold the idea of an intelligible cause is to uphold a notion of a causality that does not intervene in the phenomenality of the world in so far as the empirical causal series is concerned, but nevertheless provides it its fundamental ground. Thus, to speak of the *first cause* as *intelligible* is to foreground the fact that such a

cause is necessarily beyond the phenomenality of the world, and is 'not itself an appearance'. Accordingly, the 'intelligible' is that aspect 'in an object of sense which is not itself appearance'.

Kant's resolution of the problem of freedom, therefore, conceives of *causality* in terms of a dual, though compatible, aspects.[38] Kant's proposal is that we can view every causal series as facilitating two distinct readings, or as bearing a "double aspect". Thus, while one can read the causal series through the form of *intelligible causality* (first cause), one can equally read the same causal series through the form of *empirical causality* (natural necessity).[39] In other words, this double aspect reading of causality, as Kant emphasizes, would leave all 'physical explanations to proceed on their own course [governed by the law of empirical necessity] unhindered'[40] such that though,

> ...the intelligible cause, with its causality, is outside the series; its effects, on the contrary, are encountered in the series of empirical conditions. The effect can therefore be regarded as free in regard to its intelligible cause, and yet *simultaneously*, in regard to appearances, as their result according to necessity of nature...[41](Emphasis mine).

Of course, what is achieved by such a reading of the notion of causality as propounded by Kant, is that it inaugurates the notion of the *will* as an *intelligible* cause that can be thought through without disturbing our belief in the causality that operates in the phenomenal world 'in accordance with laws of empirical causality', as the natural sciences would like to have it.[42]

Thus, what we come to see is that within Kant's early formulation itself, freedom as a form of causality is construed as 'noumenal', and thus beyond our capability to 'know' as such. It is secured as a 'transcendental idea' that can surely be *thought of* through reason but is positioned beyond the reach of our faculty of understanding to either prove its reality or otherwise. That is, though Kant establishes the possibility of freedom as a demand of reason, this nevertheless merely secures freedom as a legitimate object of thought. That is, for Kant, though we can think through freedom, but given its transcendental nature, freedom as such cannot be grasped by our faculty of understanding since the latter exclusively concerns itself with the phenomenal realm of appearances. Thus,

freedom as such cannot be an object of our knowledge, and consequently we cannot admit its *reality* per se.[43] But notwithstanding this fact, he, in his later works, firmly emphasizes that this does not render the transcendental idea of freedom as something 'superfluous and void'. After all, it is undeniable that it is "invested with a heuristic validity".[44]

NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant. 1996 (1788). "Critique of Practical Reason" in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy.* Translated and Edited by Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Henceforth, cited as *CPrR,* followed by the Academy Number. All references to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* are from this edition. For ease of reference to other translations, instead of page numbers, the Academy Numbers following the German Royal Academy of Sciences Edition of Kant's works are provided.
2. See, Immanuel Kant. 1996 (1785). "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy.* Translated and Edited by Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 4: 432-433. Henceforth, cited as *GMM,* followed by the Academy Number.
3. The initial sections, and particularly the first two theorems of Kant's *CPrR* are devoted to the expressions of his discomfort with accounts that operate with the tacit assumption that it is the form of empirical causality that underlies the moral law. See, *CPrR,* 5:19-5:26.
4. See, *CPrR,* 5:3.
5. We must bear in mind that the foundations of such a distinction appear, in a much suggestive tone, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781] itself. Of course, in its first emergence as a problematic there, it is not explicitly clear that it would ultimately translate into the very grounds for his idea of 'autonomy', the bedrock, or the foundational principle of his moral theory as articulated in his later works.
6. See, Immanuel Kant. 1998 (1781/87). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited and Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). A446/B474; Also see, A532/B560*ff.* Henceforth, cited as *CPR,* followed by the Academy Number.
7. *GMM,* 4:446.
8. In fact, such a demystification clearly has important implications

for the manner in which the moral and the *thinking subject* in the phenomenal world can be construed. Given that for Kant, the metaphysical idea of a substantive self is a 'Transcendental idea', and thereby beyond the scope of human knowledge, the important question is "how are we to make sense of the moral subject/thinking subject?" Of course, this question is not addressed by this book. However, for an interpretative venture into Kant's idea of the 'subject' that would suit our reading here, see, Melnick, Arthur. 2009. *Kant's Theory of the Self.* (New York: Routledge). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in the first half of the Twentieth century, K.C. Bhattacharyya attempted to resolve the issue of the unknowability of the Kantian 'subject' by showing how the Kantian self could be knowable through the lens of Vedanta. See, Bhattacharyya, Krishna Chandra. 1958. "Studies in Kant" in *Studies in Philosophy.* Vol. II. Edited by Gopinath Bhattacharyya. (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers), pp. 299-360; Roshni Babu and Pravesh Jung. 2020. "Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's Interpolation of Kant's Idea of the Self" in *Sophia.* Vol. 60. pp. 331–347.

9. See, GMM, 4:421.
10. *CPR,* A451.
11. 'Critical philosophy' is the label provided to those works within Kant's corpus that are primarily invested in drawing out the limits of human reason and the bounds of human rationality. His three *Critiques* – *Critique of Pure Reason* (-1781/87), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790) — are taken to be the central works constituting his Critical philosophy.
12. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is broadly divided into two parts: *Transcendental doctrine of elements* and *Transcendental doctrine of method*. The former is then broadly thematized under two aspects; *Transcendental aesthetics* and *Transcendental logic.* The latter is then further divided into two divisions; *Transcendental analytic* and *Transcendental dialectic.* Most of Kant's central conclusions pertaining to the possibility of knowledge of the empirical world is established before he begins the *Transcendental dialectic.*
13. See, *CPR,* A450/B478. For those unfamiliar with Kant's technical philosophy, generally speaking, the phrase 'faculty of understanding' can be understood as the formal features of our capacity to experience, categorize and make sense of the everyday world. Also see, note 15 below.

    For a general introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,*

see, Guyer, Paul and Wood, Allen. 2021. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Savile, Anthony. 2005. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Orientation to the Central Theme*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing). For a more advanced introduction, see O'Shea, James R. 2012. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction and Interpretation*. (UK: Acumen); Rosenberg. Jay F. 2005. *Accessing Kant: A Relaxed Introduction to the Critique of Pure Reason*. (Clarendon Press: Oxford). For a general textual guide to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* see, Burnham, Douglas and Young, Harvey. 2007. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). For a detailed textual commentary see, Smith, Norman Kemp. 2003 (1923). *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* [with a new introduction by Sebastian Gardner]. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

14. *CPR*, A447/B475.
15. For those unfamiliar with Kant's philosophy, it can be said that Kant argues that in our bid to make sense of the empirical world, our faculty of understanding structures our experiences in certain formal manners. Bluntly put, for Kant, our capacity to make sense of the empirical world comes formally pre-structured. In that, it is equipped with certain formal *a priori* categories (formal modes) in which our understanding can structure our experiences. Kant lists twelve such *pure categories* to be precise, with *causality* as one of these twelve. They are qualified as *pure*, precisely in order to indicate their *formal* nature. That is, these *a priori* categories are devoid of *any* content in themselves, but they necessarily impart the *form* in which we come to arrange *any* content presented to us concerning the world. It is through these formal structures of understanding that we finally experience the world as we do. In other words, the world *appears* to us as it does precisely because our formal structures of understanding shape them thus for us. Further, Kant argues that the mediation by these formal structures of our understanding in our endeavor to make sense of the world is inevitable and invariable. Thus, how the world *really* is can never be known and all that can be known is necessarily confined to the *phenomenal* world, that is, the domain of how things *appear* to us. The *noumenal* remains forever unknowable to us. *Also see, note 20 below*.
16. See, *CPR*, A542/B570; Also, A536/B564. Interestingly, it is precisely by placing the notion of "causality" amongst the twelve *a priori* categories that Kant manages to safeguard the epistemic value of the natural sciences (specifically, what we would today label as "Physics")

by establishing the formal legitimacy of the causal laws propounded therein. But in doing so, Kant also defines — in his very defense of the possibility of knowledge through the natural sciences — the bounds of the natural sciences as being exclusively curtailed to judgments concerning the phenomenal world (the world of empirical objects), thereby making it impossible for natural science to pass judgments upon the domain of our religious, moral and aesthetic beliefs.

17. *CRP,* A451/B479.
18. See, *CPR,* A336/B564.
19. See, *note 15* above.
20. For those unfamiliar with Kant's philosophy, we must note that Kant does propose a picture where one, as a knower, plays an active role in the formation of knowledge about the empirical world. In the Kantian thought-schema, we come with a faculty of understanding that is pre-equipped with certain *a priori* modes of arranging our experiences of the world. It is for this reason that he is marked as a Transcendental Idealist within the annals of western philosophy. However, Kant is not a proponent of Constructivism — either individual or collective — given that Kant believes in both *a priority* and *universality* of these formal structures of human understanding. That is, notwithstanding all cultural, historical and environmental contingencies, even the most idiosyncratic understanding of the world necessarily operates through these *a priori* formal structures of understanding. Simply put, for Kant, no sense-making is possible without them.

    Furthermore, Kant is a realist *in so far* as he believes that existence is mind-independent. That is, things (objects) *are,* irrespective of whether there is a knower to know them or not (the realm of the *noumenal*). Thus for Kant, when we experience the world, our *a priori* forms of understanding are not creating the contents (object) of our experience but merely arranging them in particular orders. The *contents* of our experience are merely received by us from *without* as representations of these objects. Our ability to receive these representations or our receptivity towards them is what Kant calls "sensibility" (*sinnlichkeit*) and these *representations* are labelled broadly as *intuitions* (See, *CPR,* A19/B33). Generally speaking, our ability to represent objects in our mind is what Kant deems as the function of our *faculty of sensibility*, which includes our ability to represent *imagined* objects to ourselves. Thus roughly put, an experience occurs when our faculties of sensibility and understanding work together to provide us

a representation (conscious and objective cognition) that is formally ordered in a particular order. This collaborative endeavour (*synthesis* of intuitions of sensibility and concepts of understanding) is what Kant calls *unity of apperception. Also see, note 35 below.*

21. See, *CPR,* B69–B70. For Kant, letting go of this transcendental basis would either lead us to dogmatically believe that our representations happen to be determined as such by the objects themselves, in tune to their respective natures; or it would lead us to accept that our representations are solely our creations, and thereby have no necessary relation with the objects that they represent, even if there happens to be any object independent of these representations. In the first case, the subject would be a completely passive receptivity, and in the latter it would be rendered as a complete active creativity. The first of these options would not be agreeable to Kant, for as he sees it, it inaccurately depicts our *finitude* as a negative condition thereby construing *finiteness* as a limiting privation, given our complete dependency on objects for their representations. The latter is discomforting to Kant, given that its acceptance leads us to posit ourselves as capable of creating representations out of *nothing* but from the confines of our individuated subjectivities alone (*ex nihilo*). This would then lead us to the untenable position (at least for Kant) of discarding our *finitude* completely. Kant's effort of establishing the transcendental basis of our representations can thus be read as the establishing of a middle way in the face of this enigma concerning the finitude of the epistemic *subject*. Towards that end, we can see Kant as positing the *subject* somewhere between finitude and divine infinitude as *a*finite or as *non*finite (See, *CPR,* B166*ff*). Nietzsche would later go on to present this move as constituting the Kantian betrayal of the true nature of the *subject* at the altar of religious dogma.
22. See, *CPR,* A528/B556 *ff.*
23. See, *CPR,* A530/B558.
24. *CPR*, A531/B559; Also, see *CPrR,* 5:104.
25. *CPR,* A544/B572. Readers who are unfamiliar with the problem of "infinite regress" may wonder why having a *first cause* is taken to be such an urgent demand by many philosophers. Well, simply put, in absence of such a postulate of a first cause, an analysis is taken to be non-terminating. A non-terminating analysis is taken to be a serious problem by many philosophers for it is taken to imply "non-determinacy" of *sense*. For instance, if my causal chain does not terminate into a definitive cause, then my causal analysis, and thereby all

the causes of that causal chain — that is, the causal chain itself — is indefinite, inconclusive and uncertain. Hence, any judgment that I make, basing myself on such a causal chain, is therefore taken to be indefinite, inconclusive and uncertain. Think of it as you hear a judgment about Mr. X from Mr. Y, who in turn heard it from Mr. Z, who in turn heard if from Mr. L and so on. You surely would not be certain whether to take the judgment about Mr. X seriously, if this loop continued infinitely.

Now, an infinite regress can be squared off by invoking the causal chain as terminating into a circular loop, but such an attempt would now have to face the challenging problem of addressing the *circularity* of sense. Consider in the above example, that Mr. L in turn had heard the judgment about Mr. X from Mr. Y. The problem of circularity is considered by many as a problem precisely because it is suggestive of the loss of 'objectivity' of sense. Thus, many philosophers in the history of *Ideas*, saw the postulate of a first cause as a *foundational* necessity.

26. See, *CPR,* A531/B559.
27. See, *CPR,* A532/A560.
28. See, *CPR,* A558/586. Kant goes to great length to caution us that as far as freedom as a form of causality within its cosmological perspective is concerned, we can only assert its characteristic as an 'intelligible cause, but [that] we cannot get *beyond* it; ...[and ask] why the intelligible character gives us exactly these appearances and this empirical character under the circumstances before us, [and] to answer this surpasses every faculty of our reason, indeed it surpasses authority of our reason even to ask it'. (Kant's emphasis. *CPR,* A556/B585).
29. See, *CPR,* A537/B565.
30. *CPR,* A444/B472.
31. *CPR,* A446/B474. This, after all, is the crux of the "Third Antinomy of Reason" in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.
32. *CPR,* A444/B472-A446/B474.
33. See the explication provided in *note 20* above.
34. *CPR,* A446/B474.
35. For those unfamiliar with Kant's philosophy, it can be broadly said that for Kant, our *faculty of sensibility* (see note 19 above) is also constricted by certain *a priori* conditions. That is, our *sensibility* is conditioned in terms of the nature of *intuitions* that it can receive in certain *formal* ways as well. In terms of *intuitions* concerning the

empirical (phenomenal world), our intuitions are conditioned by the *a priori forms* of *space* and *time*. Thus, Kant treats space and time as the *transcendental conditions* (*a priori preconditions*) of our faculty of sensibility. That is, for Kant, all our intuitions must conform to the *forms* of either space or time (Kant terms them as *pure intuitions* as well). Simply put, for Kant if *anything* is to be the content of my experience concerning the empirical world, then *it* must accord itself to these *forms* of sensibility and present themselves to us in *time* or *space*. This is dramatically put as the demand that Kant's philosophy imposes upon the world of objects to become objects of knowledge for me — If I am to *know* you, then you must come to me in either of the two forms of *space* or *time*. This is also why Kant is seen as bringing about a "Copernican revolution" in epistemology, for his epistemic schema places the first burden of *knowabilty* upon the *object* of possible knowledge rather than the *subject* who seeks to know it.

36. See, *CPR,* A451/B479.
37. *CPR*, A 531/B559.
38. For a comprehensive layout and a defense of such an aspectual reading, see, Carnois, Bernard. 1987 (1973). *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom*. Trans. David Booth. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). Furthermore, Kantian scholars like Henry E. Allison too hold the aspectual reading as being central to Kant's Transcendental Idealism. See, Allison, Henry E. 1990. *Kant's Theory of Freedom.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
39. See, *CPR,* A538/B566; also see A546/B574.
40. See, *CPR,* A545/B573.
41. *CPR,* A537/B565.
42. *CPR*, A544/B572.
43. See, CPR, A220/B268.
44. See, Carnois, Bernard. 1987 (1973). *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom*. Trans. David Booth. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 23.

CHAPTER 4

The Grounds of Autonomy: The Dual Nature of the Self

> Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from necessitation by impulses of sensibility...
>
> The human power of choice is indeed an *arbitrium sensitivum*, yet not *brutum* but *liberum* because sensibility does not render its action necessary, but in the human being there is a faculty of determining oneself from oneself, independently of necessitation by sensible impulses...
>
> –Kant, *CPR*, A534/B562.

In the preceding chapter we elaborated on the fact that Kant's treatment of the causal relation as involving two distinct structures of synthesis — the *dynamical* and the *mathematical* — is what enabled him to construe two distinct forms of causality, and inaugurate the notion of freedom as a form of causality that is distinct from the form of causality as empirical necessity. In doing so, Kant formulates the idea of an *intelligible* cause in contrast to a *perceptible* one. Consequently, Kant comes to construe freedom *as* causality in terms of an *intelligible first cause*.

As Kant sees it, in its necessary characterization as first or 'original cause', freedom as a form of causality bears certain fundamental markers. It inaugurates the surety of a cause that bears the possibility of '...beginning of a state *from itself*, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it

in time in accordance with the law of nature.'[1] In that it enables us to construe choice, and thereby *freedom* as *absolute*. Furthermore, it enunciates that freedom as causality, 'is a pure transcendental idea, which, first, contains nothing borrowed from experience, and second, the object of which also cannot be given determinately in any experience'.[2] It is worth noting that it is this self-sufficiency and independence from all phenomenal conditions that enables Kant to picture freedom as a transcendental form of causality, and to consequently elevate it as the basis of moral causal laws that are both *objective* as well as *universal*. These markers of freedom as a transcendental form of causality further enable us to conceive the very idea of freedom as a *spontaneous* beginning.

Therefore, in his ingenious treatment of the problem of freedom in the "Transcendental Dialectic", Kant, through his treatment of the form of causality, manages to present to us the *idea* of freedom as unproblematically compatible with *natural necessity*. But more importantly, in doing so he manages to secure two fundamental markers of freedom.

First, as we have already remarked, the form of causality *that is freedom* is necessarily marked by 'absolute spontaneity', which highlights its 'self-sufficiency' and its 'independent' nature, and thereby portrays it as a distinct form of causality. Thus, in contrast to the form of causality *as* empirical necessity, freedom as the first cause of the series and as an intelligible cause or 'condition' is itself never conditioned by any other cause prior to it in the *dynamical sequence* of the series of the "condition-conditioned" that holds between all the other members of the causal series and itself.

Second, within Kant's formulation, it thus becomes clear that this freedom as a form of causality essentially posits freedom in terms of a cause that is *intelligible* rather than *sensible*, thereby foregrounding the fact that freedom stands not merely independent from realm of empirical causality *as such*, but rather stands independent from the very phenomenality of the world itself.

As a cautionary remark to ourselves, we must recall that the established form of causality as freedom is possible only as a *transcendental idea* of reason that 'can be *thought*' but can 'never be known immediately', because all that can be known through our

faculty of understanding is confined to the realm of the phenomenal.[3] *Freedom* is a transcendental idea arrived at only through a *transcendental deduction* in so far as it is this idea of freedom 'through which reason thinks of the series of conditions in appearance starting absolutely through what is sensibly unconditioned'. What has, thus, been accomplished by Kant through his reading of causality is 'that the thoroughgoing contingency of all natural things and all of nature's [empirical] conditions can very well coexist with the presupposition of a necessary, even though merely intelligible condition, and thus that there is no true contradiction between these assertions, hence they [forms of causality, *as natural necessity* and *as freedom*] can both be true'.[4]

Though it is clear that it was in his later work, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), that Kant came to concretely articulate the entailments of such a notion of freedom through his formulation of the notion of "autonomy", what must nevertheless not be forgotten, is that he had clearly adumbrated the possibility of drawing the entailments of the cosmological idea of freedom — as outlined in his *Critique of Pure Reason* – for moral or practical freedom.[5] In fact, the aspectual reading of causality that enables Kant to legitimize the very notion of freedom as a form of causality, as we shall see, positions itself as the pivot of all his insights concerning moral actions.[6]

Seen thus, the fundamental thematic of Kant's moral framework, which he first lays out in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, can simply be expressed as the delineation of the bounds of morality in relation to our actions. And thereby, his quest to draw the limit of the moral realm is clearly informed by his reading of causality. Kant's fundamental insight is that if morality pertains to *free* choices, then we must be able to limit its foundations precisely where freedom is possible. That is, morality must ground itself precisely and exclusively within a form of causality that is *not* of the form of *empirical necessity*. After all, empirical necessity is, by its very nature, deterministic and opposed to the very idea of *freedom*. It is now understandable as to why Kant deems it to be the first task of any moral framework to explore and explicate the form of causality that underlie the determination of our choices. For Kant, the chal-

lenge is, thus, to ground and explicate the nature of causality that harbors our own nature as beings *that choose*.[7] As such, Kant saw early on that no *metaphysics of interests*, including those operating with the notion of *utility*, could ever successfully provide a basis to morality, precisely because it overlooked this demand.

A framework of morality that bases itself upon the notion of "utility" would fail to account for moral actions squarely because it fails to recognize the distinct form of causality required of moral acts. As Kant highlights, this oversight on the part of the utility theorists of morality is brought to the fore by their construal of the moral law in terms of a *hypothetical causal form* in consilience with the causal form of *empirical necessity* that governs the phenomenal realm of nature. Kant's uneasiness with such an account is understandable. After all, if the form of causality underlying moral actions share the form of causality of empirical necessity, then our acts could never be *free* in the true sense of the term, thereby undermining the whole idea of practical freedom in the first place.

Kant fears that such a failure to secure *free will* would necessarily endanger the very possibility of morals itself. And perhaps, rightly so! But to the rescue of morals, Kant in his treatment of causality has already discovered a peculiar form of causality — that is, causality *as* freedom. Extending this insight from his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant, for all practical purposes, recasts the very notion of "will" as being synonymous with such a form of causality.[8] By the same stroke, it is now clear that for Kant, the 'will' is not something that can be located within the phenomenal realm. Clearly then, the moral will is neither to be confused with, nor reduced to, the *psyche* or the physiological self, which is exclusively the seat of our interests, impulses and inclinations. Kant thus emphatically claims that 'what the metaphysics of morals must engage with is not the actions and conditions of human generally (psychology) but the pure will'.[9]

Kant's portrayal of the 'moral will' thus colours humans as beings that are capable of causally determining their actions through choices that stand-up in a stance of stoic indifferent to the phenomenal world — including our cultural, material, as well as our psychological make-up. This is not to say that our actions are not

determined by our preferences, inclinations and cultural settings. Of course, they are. However, our actions *could* well be viewed, given the aspectual reading of causality, as being determined by an *intelligible cause*, that is to say, by a *free will*. And the question of morality can only emerge when we view actions under the purview of the form of causality as freedom, and thereby, begin to treat each human being as a rational being capable of causally determining its actions through laws that are *a priori* and indifferent to the phenomenal world.[10] Kant explicitly holds that the 'moral ought' can arise only if one can conceive the 'will' as an intelligible causality, while at the same time upholding the possibility of one's phenomenal existence as capable of manifesting this determination through one's action in the phenomenal realm. That is, rather than in the realm of the natural sciences, it is in the realm of morals that the 'dynamical synthesis of a series' actually manifests itself *in concreto*.[11]

Kant is emphatic in his vision that morality is possible only when we recognize an aspect of our being — our will — as transcendental and untouched by our phenomenal existence. It is only in this aspect of the *purity* of the self, that we can even deem ourselves to be moral, and as capable of making and enacting genuine choices.[12] In other words, for Kant, freedom of the will as a transcendental element is not merely a requirement for a moral framework, but is rather, the foundational stone of morality itself.

In fact, the centrality of his discovery of the possibility of reading causality through the form of freedom in relation to human choices and actions becomes even more explicit in *his Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). It would serve us well to allow Kant to speak at some length for himself here.

> ...to remove the apparent contradiction between the mechanism of nature and freedom in one and the same action, one must recall what was said in the *Critique of Pure Reason* or follows from it: that the natural necessity which cannot coexist with the freedom of the subject attaches merely to the determinations of a thing which stands under conditions of time and so only to the determinations of the acting subject as appearance, and that, accordingly, the determining grounds of every action of the subject so far lie in what belongs to past time and *is no longer within his control* (in which must be counted

> his past deeds and the character as a phenomenon thereby determinable for him in his own eyes). But the very same subject, being on the other side conscious of himself as a thing in itself, also views his existence *insofar as it does not stand under conditions of time* and himself as determinable only through laws that he gives himself by reason; and in this existence of his nothing is, for him, antecedent to the determination of his will, but every action — and in general every determination of his existence changing conformably with inner sense, even the whole sequence of his existence as a sensible being — is to be regarded in the consciousness of his intelligible existence as nothing but the consequence and never as the determining ground of his causality as a *noumenon*. So considered, a rational being can now rightly say of every unlawful action he performed that he could have omitted it even though as appearance it is sufficiently determined in the past and, so far, is inevitably necessary; for this action, with all the past which determines it, belongs to a single phenomenon of his character, which he gives to himself and in accordance with which he imputes to himself, as a cause independent of all sensibility, the causality of those appearances.[13]

Clearly then, for Kant, as beings that partake in the phenomenal world, we are undeniably subject to the causal relations of empirical necessity that govern the phenomenal aspect of our existence. But as Kant argues, the phenomenality of our being does not saturate our nature exclusively. For we, given our rational moral orientation, also partake in the noumenal. It is precisely this thesis that underlies Kant's general division of the *practical laws* underlying our actions as either grounded upon a *hypothetical imperative*, which is a determination of our actions through the form of empirical causality, or upon a *categorical imperative*, which is a determination of our actions through the form of *free causality*. Acknowledging this dual aspect of our being, Kant writes:

> The human being is one of the appearances in the world of sense, and to that extent also one of the natural causes whose causality must stand under empirical laws. As such he must accordingly also have an empirical character, just like natural things. We notice it through powers and faculties, which it expresses in its effects. In the case of lifeless nature and nature having merely animal life, we find no ground for thinking of any faculty which is other than sensibly

> conditioned. Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in actions and inner determinations which cannot be accounted at all among impressions of sense; he obviously is in one part phenomenon, in another part, namely in regard to certain faculties [namely, understanding and reason], he is a merely intelligible object, because the actions [that ground themselves in these faculties] cannot at all be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility...[14]

Put another way, Kant in his portrayal of human action, brings to the fore the difference in the modes in which our choices are determined by practical rules — or what Kant labels as *imperatives*– in terms of the causal form that underlies them. Kant argues that when we determine our choices through our free will, then as an intelligible cause that is indifferent to the phenomenal world, the imperative provided to us in the determination of our choice is of the modality of an *ought*. Thus, the determining causal law or the practical imperative in the determination of our choice would be of the form "you ought to..." Surely, though the *ought* here articulates a *necessity*, it is clearly a necessity that is distinct from the necessity expressed by the form of a *must*, as is implied by a practical principle grounded in the causal form of empirical necessity and articulated as "this will necessarily follow if..." Essentially, the mode of *necessity* commanded by the inviolable laws of nature cannot permit the formulation of an *ought*. After all, the necessity expressed by the form of empirical causality restricts its domain to what *is, was,* and *will necessarily be* the case. It cannot, so to speak, accommodate any form of leeway that is permitted by the obligatory force of a "should/ ought", and is primarily expressed through an inviolable "must".[15] It is in this respect, as Kant asserts, human actions differ from those of animals, since in absence of the transcendental aspect of free will, their actions can only be read as *arbitrium brutum,* or actions in accordance with the brute causal force of impulses. By contrast, human actions also afford the possibility of being read as *arbitrium liberum* and thus, as determined through a *free will*.[16] Elaborating on the dual-aspectual reading of human actions, Kant writes:

> Take a voluntary action, e.g. a malicious lie, through which a person has brought about a certain confusion in society; and one may first investigate its moving causes, through which it arose, judging on that basis how the lie and its consequences could be imputed to the person. With this first intent one goes into the sources of the person's empirical character, seeking them in a bad upbringing, bad company, and also finding them in the wickedness of a natural temper insensitive to shame, partly in carelessness and thoughtlessness; in so doing one does not leave out of account the occasioning causes. In all this one proceeds as with any investigation in the series of determining causes for a given natural effect. Now even if one believes the action to be determined by these causes, one nonetheless blames the agent, and not on account of his unhappy natural temper, not on account of the circumstances influencing him, not even on account of the life he has led previously; for one presupposes that it can be entirely set aside how that life was constituted, and that the series of conditions that transpired might not have been, but rather that deed could be regarded as entirely unconditioned in regard to the previous state, as though with that act the agent had started a series of consequences entirely from himself. This blame is grounded on the law of reason, which regards reason as a cause that, regardless of all the empirical conditions just named, could have and ought to have determined conduct of the person to be other than it is. And indeed one regards the causality of reason not as a mere concurrence with other causes, but as complete in itself, even if sensuous incentives were not for it but were indeed entirely against it; the action is ascribed to agent's intelligible character: now, in the moment when he lies, it is entirely his fault; hence reason, regardless of all empirical conditions of the deed, is fully free, and this deed is to be attributed entirely to its failure to act...[17]

As Kant sees it, in so far as we are a part of the phenomenal world, and to that extent are beings that act in terms of self-interests and impulses through our embodied self, we have an empirical character to our existence. In this, our actions are no different from those of other animals populating the world. However, as Kant stresses, our actions, when viewed exclusively as an expression of our empirical character, forecloses the possibility of being framed within the purview of freedom and consequently precludes the possibility of framing and describing them within a legitimate moral

framework.[18] But then, much along the lines of a 'first cause', Kant directs us to the possibility of construing these very actions as a product of a *first choice* that one initiates. Consider this — a certain impulse or interest can causally determine my actions resulting in a certain empirically related series of events. But then, for the series to actualize, an initial choice on my part to accept the inauguration of such a series is presupposed. This presupposition is made even clearer when I have the choice to choose from a range of impulses or interests available to me such that I could initiate very different series of events. This leads Kant to argue that human actions, if construed as a series bound by the form of causality of empirical necessity, 'can never constitute an absolutely first beginning in this series' since given the form of causality underlying it, every cause will subsequently demand a prior cause determining it. Hence, the problematic of practical freedom would demand a form of causality that can ground it. This demand, as we have seen, is fulfilled by reason through a form of causality, which Kant construes as *free will* and positions it as the transcendental ground of our actions.[19] This entails that the empirical character of our actions is the sensible schema, while *free will* constitutes its transcendental ground. And as its transcendental ground, *free will* must essentially be construed as being independent from any empirical determining grounds, or what comes to amount to the same thing as being construed as *spontaneous*.[20]

In doing so, Kant squarely delineates the central concern of any metaphysics of morals to be the investigation of the form of causality *that is* freedom. In his attempt to safeguard freedom, Kant thus manages to project a peculiar picture of the human agent as a being that is necessarily dual-natured in terms of its phenomenal and noumenal natures. He thus construes humans as beings that, in so far as morals are concerned, partake in both the worlds — the *noumenal* as well as the *phenomenal*. The latter in terms of our given empirical nature, aided by our faculties of understanding and desire, determined and determinable in actions, predictable, and through and through governed by the determinism of empirical necessity. The former as *freedom*, aided by reason, self-determined, with the ability to project into the future through an 'ought', and as

an absolute spontaneity. For Kant, this unalterable duality is what being human entails — a dualism that is lived not in a contradiction, but rather as a harmonious reconcilement. It is in grasping this harmony that I come to comprehend the grounds of my ability of make and enact choices.

It is with this defining picture of the nature of our being, with the underlying construal of the dual aspect of causality that we embody, that Kant thinks through the notions of freedom and choice. Kant's explicit portrayal of the notion of "will", as well as that of "freedom", exclusively in terms of the category of *spontaneous* causality is what brings about the birth of a *self* that is *absolute* in so far as its determination of choice is concerned. A self that is *autonomous*.

NOTES

1. *CPR*, A533/B561.
2. Ibid.
3. See, *CPR*, A540/B568.
4. *CPR*, A562/B590.
5. For a general introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy, see, Wood, Allen W. 1999. *Kant's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Uleman, Jennifer K. 2010. *An Introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). For a broad understanding of Kant's philosophy see, Guyer, Paul. *Kant*. (London: Routledge). For a detailed textual commentary to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, see, Beck, Lewis White. 1963 (1960). *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). For a textual guide to Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* see, Guyer, Paul. 2007. *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: A Reader's Guide*. (London: Continuum).
6. Kant himself acknowledges in his "Preface" to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that the notion that '...reason of itself alone suffices to determine the will' is clearly opened up by the 'concept of causality justified by the *Critique of Pure Reason* [...], namely that of *freedom*' (Kant's emphasis, *CPrR*, 5:15). Kant, in fact, explicitly notes that '[it] is especially noteworthy that it is this transcendental idea of freedom on which the practical concept of freedom is grounded, and the former constitutes the real moment of the difficulties in the latter,

which long surrounded the question of its possibility' (*CPR,* A534/B562). It was precisely his aspectual reading of causality that provided a novel way of conceiving freedom as a *form of causality*. With a sense of achievement, he notes, that unlike 'speculative philosophy' which had failed to bring morals in its relation to reason 'out of the field of sensibility to something real outside it', his formulation of freedom as a form of causality could provide a peculiar shade to reason that as a form of causality could now provide the objects of morals an 'existence that is not sensible, through laws that are grounded on reason'. Morality would have to be conceived through such a form of causality, Kant asserts, 'if one admits it through freedom' (See footnote to *CPR*, A542/B570, p. 537). Thus, for Kant, morality– if it is to be possible at all– necessarily presupposes the notion of causality *as* freedom as its precondition.

To see how Kant sustains this doctrine of freedom throughout his corpus, see, Bernard Carnois. *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom.* 1987. Trans. David Booth. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). Originally published in 1973 in French, Carnois' lucid and compelling study has influenced many scholars in their reading of the Kantian corpus, especially in understanding the significance of the "Transcendental Dialectic" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in relation to his philosophical corpus.

7. See, *GMM,* 4:388.
8. See, *GMM,* 4: 446.
9. *GMM,* 4: 390.
10. See, *GMM,* 4:389.
11. See, *GMM,* 4:455.
12. Kant explicitly asserts that 'if pure reason has causality, then the will is a pure will, and its causality is called freedom'. (See footnote to *CPR*, A538/B566, p. 536).
13. *CPrR,* 5:97-5:98.
14. *CPR*, A546/B574.
15. See, *CPR,* A547/B575.
16. See, *CPR,* A534/B562.
17. *CPR,* A554/B582-A556/B584.
18. See, *CPR,* A549/B577. Also see, *CPR,* A550/B578.
19. See, *CPR*, A554/B582.
20. See, *CPR*, A553/B581.

CHAPTER 5

Kantian Autonomy: Autonomy as Obedience

> Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within.
>
> –Kant, *CPrR*, 5:161.

> Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act in accordance with the representation of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a will.
>
> –Kant, *GMM*, 4: 412.

As we have seen, Kant's aspectual reading of causality clearly informs his formulation of the inherent dual nature of our self and consequently shapes his metaphysics of morals in a fundamental manner. After all, his newly discovered notion of *free-causality*, or freedom as an 'intelligible' cause, comes to be the very basis of his moral discourse.[1] In doing that, he manages to draw the limits of morals as lying beyond the realm of the sensible, and as squarely confined to the realm of the 'intelligible' that is accessible to 'reason' alone. For Kant, *free will* — that is, a causality that is absolute and spontaneous — manifests itself only within the landscape of a moral realm that is free of any phenomenal concerns. It is here, detached from my empirical character, and in a state of indifference to the world of appearances, that I come to cognize my own nature as capable of making *autonomous* choices; choices whose origins

find their ultimate roots in reason and reason alone. And as Kant sees it, it is this intelligible nature of the self that marks it as the precondition of morality — as a *transcendental causality* – and presents us as a *self* that is capable of partaking in the form of *free-causality*. It is *exclusively* through this moral realm that I uphold my right to assert the distinctive mark of my *autonomy*.[2]

Of course, as was seen in the preceding chapter, Kant firmly grounds *autonomy* as a legitimate attribute of the self, but in doing so, he splits the *self* into two aspects. In the light of the first aspect of my being, I cognize myself as a being that is determined by subjective incentives and interests — a being that is thoroughly caught up within the phenomenal world of appearances — and subject to the form of empirical causality and its laws. In this aspect, the self manifests its empirical and phenomenal character. It is a manifestation of what Kant labels as my *heteronomous* self. Accordingly, practical rules that pertain to the heteronomous determination of the *will* cannot, for Kant, be equated with a legitimate moral determination *as such* since such determinations are essentially governed by the causal form of empirical necessity.[3]

But then there is the second aspect of my being, wherein I cognize myself as an *autonomous* being and construe my choices as being determined not by some subjective incentives or interests but rather *solely* by reason. In this aspect, the self manages to completely insulate itself from the phenomenal world of appearances and the empirical causal laws that govern it. And, for Kant, it is exclusively in this aspect of the self that my moral character finds an avenue to manifest itself. It is precisely in this facet of insulation *from* the phenomenal world that the self comes to be recognized as a moral being that is thoroughly marked by 'freedom', and thereby as capable of absolute 'spontaneity'. Hence, in Kant, *autonomy* entails precisely this freedom *from* the phenomenal world of interests and inclinations.

It is precisely by drawing upon his discovery of freedom as a form of causality that Kant presents us with his thesis of the possibility of determination of human volition that is thoroughly and exclusively grounded in the noumenal realm. In Kant, such a form of determination of the will is what comes to be equated with *autonomy*. And

given that the possibility of such a determination of choices is the precondition of morality itself in Kant's schema, he emphatically holds autonomy be the 'supreme principle of morality'.[4]

Kant's portrayal of our nature in terms of *autonomy* is crucial in the genesis of the peculiar modern self — a self that is not merely a being who *abides by* the law, but as one who ascribes a law *unto* itself *by* itself. This firmly establishes the thesis of subjective ownership of a moral law. That is, Kant formally insulates the view that the origin of a moral law that one subjects oneself to must *necessarily* lie in the subject itself if it is at all to be adjudged as a moral law. One can, in a way, hold that Kant actualizes the Socratic vision of fashioning the individuated self as the actual locus of the moral law.

Kant's framing of the moral law as being lodged firmly within the self — as a force that can determine our choices in isolation from our existential phenomenal realm — and as exclusively accessible through reason, however, also colours the moral self in the light of *purity*. After all, to be autonomous in Kant is clearly synonymous with the suspension of all of one's material interests and inclinations, and the clear foreclosure of their role in the determination of one's choice. As mentioned earlier, in its *negative* formulation, such a foreclosure is precisely what the principle of autonomy asserts. However, *positively* formulated, we could assert that autonomy is, therefore, the *freedom to* determine one's choices solely in accordance with reason and to place its determination in the form of causality that is unaffected by the form of empirical causal necessity demanded by the phenomenal objects of our interests and material inclinations.[5] That is, even in its positive formulation, for Kant, autonomy is made possible precisely by what I refer to as autonomy's *demand of purity* of the form of determination of our choices. And this is of some importance here since the universality of the moral law is precisely grounded in this aspect of purity in Kant. This is what ensures, in Kant's view, the fact that a moral determination is necessarily a determination of a *universal* law since subjective interests and inclinations play no role in its determination. That is, the manifestation of autonomy of the self can *only* translate into moral choices in the form of actions that are grounded in choices that arise from the necessitation of pure reason rather than subjec-

tive incentives that pertain to the existential phenomenality of the self. In more general terms, autonomy within the Kantian schema translates into freedom *from* the phenomenal world of desires and inclinations, in order to realize one's freedom *to* be moral. Thus, by casting human *freedom* as squarely emerging from within the bounds of our primordial autonomous nature, Kant reclaims one's *self* as being valuable *in itself* irrespective of where one happens to be situated within the contingent material conditions of existence. As we shall see shortly, it is this Kantian picture of an intrinsically valuable self that anchors both the modern notions of *equality* and *dignity*. And as can be seen, Kant achieves this precisely through the subversion of the self as a being *in*, and *of*, this world — that is, through a subversion of its existential phenomenality. After all, it is only by bracketing its existential phenomenality that the self can manifest its autonomy, and thereby its primordial spontaneous nature. And such an autonomous determination of our choice translates into a "will" that has the sanction of the moral force behind it. Seen thus, for Kant, only an autonomous determination of our choices legitimizes the invocation of a moral frame of description concerning our actions.

Accordingly, if the form of assertion of autonomy is taken to translate as 'I *will* because I *am*', then within Kant's formulation the 'I' that *wills* can only be pictured in terms of reason that is non-instrumental and *pure*, the 'will' as expressing a moral—and therefore, universal – *ought*, and the 'am' as indicative of the self that partakes in the noumenal realm. Seen thus, to recognize that one is autonomous is to recognize the self in its noumenal aspect — as a rational and *intelligible* medium of self-determination of one's choices — and to recognize the intrinsic ability of the self to be *spontaneous*.

Furthermore, it is precisely in light of this demand of purity of autonomy from the realm of the phenomenal that Kant's moral framework is broad enough in terms of its extent and scope to encompass, within its folds, the *entire* spectrum of rational beings. Kant's moral schema is, in fact, unique in the annals of the history of morals, in so far as it unveils a moral structure that encompasses *all* rational beings, inclusive of 'the infinite being of supreme intelligence', that is, God.[6] The moral framework that emerges from

Kant's metaphysics of morals is not exclusive to human beings. Rather human beings, by virtue of their faculty of reason, merely partake in it, just as *any* rational being would. As Kant sees it, the recognition of our autonomy as an inalienable aspect of our nature clearly resolves the tension between the demand to follow the dictates of God and yet construe ourselves as moral beings with free will. It reconciles the demand of obedience to the laws of God while retaining human freedom, for clearly, to obey God's Will is identical to obeying one's moral dictates given that both emerge from the same rational grounds.[7] In the very act of steering clear from the overpowering tendency to base our morals on our phenomenal nature, and thereby avoiding the grave threat that such a tendency poses to the very possibility of our freedom, Kant's moral framework ceases to be an exclusive paradigm for human morality.[8] Thus, Kant's move to ground his moral structure within the bounds of pure reason and its *a priori* laws entails that all rational beings must essentially partake in the same dictates of morality.[9] It is precisely this expansive framework of morals that is unveiled with the realization of the autonomous nature of the self, that enables Kant to conceive the self in its moral aspect as a member of 'a kingdom of ends'; 'a systematic union of various rational beings through common laws' — laws that are expressions of what Kant calls, the *moral law* or principles of determination of our choices that are grounded upon the form of the causality *that is* freedom.[10]

Thus, Kant's effort can be summarized as a commitment to establish a 'pure' paradigm of morality that is completely distilled from the more commonly held moral ideal of subjective happiness,[11] and to position reason in its purity as the 'governess of our will'.[12]

Though Kant realizes that more often than not, our choices are made under the force of our interests and material inclinations and are heteronomously determined, nevertheless, that our choices *can be* determined by *more* than our desires, and that we are *more* than our phenomenal nature, is amply clear from the simple fact that we bear the power to hold ourselves back from pursuing them if we allow our reason to intervene. As Kant sees it, if our moral basis fundamentally consisted in the mere satiation of our interests, then reason in its practical aspect should have been ideally devoid of this

power of intervention. But human nature is not identifiable with such a brute animal nature.[13] Had it been so, Kant contends, the occasional conflict or unease that we experience while we set out to satisfy these inclinations should not have occurred within our experiential realm at all. But as Kant observes, contrary to this, reason does seem to have an influential role in determining our choices in a manner that opposes the direction set out by our inclinations. Reason often determines our choice in opposition to the demand to satisfy our inclinations. For Kant, this is clearly indicative of the fact that the function of reason in its pure practical aspect is more cardinal than merely assisting us in the determination of the best *means* towards the *end* that is invoked by our desires and inclinations. Rather for Kant, the critical role of reason in its *pure* practical aspect is precisely to determine our choice through *autonomy* — a determination grounded upon the form of causality *as* freedom — which is to say that the primary function of practical reason is 'to provide a will that is good'.[14]

Now clearly, given the demand of purity invoked by the notion of autonomy permeating Kant's moral framework, the ascription of moral 'goodness' to a will that is determined purely by reason cannot be by virtue of the effects it engenders within the phenomenal realm. The ascription of moral goodness to such a *will* — which is to say that the ordination of one's choice as morally good — is in order sheerly because of the very nature of the volition or the underlying form of causality involved in the determination of one's choice, and is thus a *good* in itself.[15] Thus, as we can see, Kant characterizes the *form* of free-causality itself as the basis of the moral good. This foregrounds the fact that for Kant the 'good' engrained within an autonomous choice is intrinsic to the choice itself, and that the 'good' is thus a constitutive nature of autonomy itself.[16] Therefore, in laying out the nature of moral good, the Kantian vision asserts that the moral worth of an act is exclusively a product of the mode in which it comes to be determined. Within his moral schema, if an act is deemed good, the predication of goodness to the act, though a derivative one, is not derived from the consequences that unfold through the act. Rather, the goodness of the act is derived precisely from the form of causal determination underlying one's choice to

act thus. For Kant, *free will* is thus squarely identifiable as a *good will*, that is, a will that is good *a priori*.[17] All of our choices that are determined by the causal form of freedom — that is all of our choices that emerge from an autonomous self — are morally good, *unconditionally*. Within Kant's schema, the effort to be morally good is thus synonymous to the effort to realize our autonomous nature.

By contrast, the nature of goodness ascribed to all heteronomous actions, are only *conditionally* good. As Kant sees it, heteronomous choices are essentially determined in relation to something else, namely the *ends* they aim at in terms of the material conditions of my phenomenal existence or the material *utility* they manage to achieve or maximize for my phenomenal existence. After all, such choices are conditioned by the subjective interests that one deems *as* "good". That is, these choices are "good" precisely because they satiate our material desires that are *subjectively* deemed as good. However, unlike heteronomous choice, Kant's notion of autonomous choice is marked by spontaneity which characterizes the form of causality *that is* free from the material concerns of my phenomenal existence. Thus, a will that is *necessarily* and *exclusively* determined by the form of 'free-causality', which is to hold that it is necessarily *autonomous*, essentially entails that all choices ensuing from such a will are inevitably and necessarily good. And a being whose choices are *exclusively* grounded upon such a will is what Kant calls the *Holy Will*.[18]

But as Kant realizes, human choices, given their dual nature, do not necessarily arise from the autonomous aspect of our self. In that, it is clearly distinct from the 'Holy Will'. After all, our choices are neither essentially nor exclusively determined in conformity with the form of free causality. That is, they are not autonomous by default, but are rather predominantly determined through the form of heteronomy; given that we are, more often than not, clearly affected by the materiality of the phenomenal world we live in, rather than our reason *per se*.

In distinguishing our moral will from the Holy Will, Kant recognizes that our everyday choices are not necessarily determined through *autonomy*, though they could be. After all, as beings *of* and *in* the world, we have a natural disposition to partake in the phenom-

enality of the world.[19] Thus, Kant recognizes that as *pathological*[20] beings with the capacity of executing a conscious heteronomous determination of our action as well, the form of causality underlying our *subjective* determination of choice need not necessarily be in unison with the form of *objective* determination that is solely guided by reason. Therefore, given the possibility of our choice being determined thus, an objective determination of our will expresses itself to us in the form of an *imperative* or an '*ought*'. That is, rather than translating into immediate action, an objective determination of our will merely translates into a principle of *necessitation* or *moral obligation*.[21] In contrast, in the case of the Holy Will – given that it is *exclusively* autonomous – the objective and the subjective determinations become identical, and thus the 'ought' finds no place. Consequently, in the case of a Holy Will, the determination of the will translates into an *inevitable actuality* rather than a demand for necessitation.[22] Simply put, with respect to the Holy Will, to *will* is to necessarily act in accordance with it. But unlike the Holy Will, we, as pathological beings, have the capacity to determine our choice through either of the forms of causality – that is, through *autonomy*, wherein the determination is purely through the form of free-causality; or through *heteronomy*, wherein the determination of our choice is externally grounded in an empirical causal relation concerning the objects of our inclinations and interests. That is, the determination of our choice could either be an autonomous determination wherein the force of determination emerges from its *form* alone, namely 'good', or it could be a heteronomous determination, wherein the force of determination of a choice is rooted upon *incentives* and, therefore, upon self-interests.[23]

Kant is in no way unclear that our desires and inclinations need not, and usually do not, agree with the dictates of pure practical reason. The former seeks the attainment of its own satisfaction, which lies in the fulfillment of inclinations, in contrast to the demand of the latter, where the concern lies in the realization of the dictates of reason alone.[24] For Kant, since our choices are capable of being determined either autonomously or heteronomously, it is precisely in the exercise of this *fundamental choice* concerning the ground of determination of our choices that becomes the decisive

factor in the assertion of our autonomy. But as Kant sees it, we can surely *aspire* towards the 'Holy Will' within the phenomenality of our worldly existence itself through an act of purification of our choices by consciously adopting *free causality* as the underlying form of determination of our moral choices.[25] That is, we can, given our autonomy, begin to *approximate* the "Holy Will". And it is in this quest to realize our autonomous nature that we elevate ourselves as truly moral beings. In fact, it is this tension, or what Kant calls a 'natural dialectic' between the demands of pure reason and the demands of incentives of our phenomenality, that opens up the space for the cardinal concept of 'duty' within Kant's moral framework.

For Kant, 'duty' is but the recognition of this fundamental demand of pure practical reason made upon us as beings *qua* reason in contrast to the demands *qua* our subjective interests and inclinations.[26] Consequently, the demand of duty is unconditional as well — that is, it is expressed through the form of a *categorical imperative*.[27] To act 'out of duty' is thus to act in conformity with this call of reason and to determine one's choice solely on the 'free-causality' that is cleansed off all our inclinations that are rooted in the phenomenality of the world. Given its insulation from our material interests and inclinations, the demand of a duty therefore expresses a spontaneous determination of our choice. That is, to *act out of duty* is to act *from* duty itself, rather than merely acting in *accordance* with one.[28] In the latter case, the exteriority of the act, though in accordance *with* a duty, might be nevertheless grounded upon incentives of self-interest and thus be grounded upon heteronomy, rather than autonomy.[29] After all, to act out of duty is not merely to act in conformity with the dictates of reason but rather to act in a manner that one's spontaneous act and one's duty conform to each other. This is what grounds the critical distinction between a practical *maxim* and a moral *law* in Kant.

This much is made abundantly clear by Kant that the demand of duty is, therefore, a call for a particular orientation of the self, such that its intelligible aspect shines through and through. Accordingly, for Kant, only a choice that fulfils the demand of duty manifests the rational purity of our being, and thus manifests our

moral nature. Such a conscious assertion of autonomy on our part is cardinal to Kant, for it is only in this purity that we can assert any claim of transcending our material phenomenality as a numinous being and truly partake in the realm of the noumenal (*kingdom of ends*) as equal participants.

Implicitly lying here is the Kantian thesis that the *worth* of our being, in relation to other beings, lies in this unique possibility of ours to partake in the noumenal realm. It is this latent potential inherent in us that demands and deserves *respect*.[30] Given that the categorical imperative arises only through the recognition of my membership to an intelligible realm, it entails that my duty, though determined by *my* will, is nevertheless a duty that is demanded of *any* rational being at the same time.[31] That is, the duty expressed by a moral law, though subjectively willed, is nevertheless objectively valid. This gives Kant the first formulation of the categorical imperative[32] that a choice is moral only if 'one can at the same time will that it become a universal law'.[33] Thus the universality of the categorical imperative is insured *not* by virtue of the fact that it expresses a moral *ought*[34], which of course it does. Rather the universality is entailed by the fact that its determination is not grounded in the fact of my phenomenal existence as such but rather in the nature of my being *qua* reason, and thus expresses a law that is applicable to *all* rational beings.[35] For Kant, what this possibility of partaking of the realm of 'intelligible/rational' firmly establishes is that the "dignity of human beings consists just in this capacity to give universal laws, though also being itself subject to this very law".[36] For him, the objective validity of 'duty' expressed by the categorical imperative foregrounds that the demand of the moral law is an 'end in itself'.[37] That I can act from duty testifies to the fact that my being too is primarily such an *end in itself*. It is through this belief that Kant defends universal human dignity, irrespective of our existential condition within the phenomenal realm.[38] For Kant, human dignity is assured *a priori* by our very nature as an intelligible causality and is, therefore, independent of the phenomenality of one's existence.[39] Simply put, for Kant, our very *being* ensures our 'dignity'.[40]

The demand of freedom, and therefore of morality, upon the

self is quite clear. To be autonomous is therefore to be free from all the noise and commotion of my phenomenal existence in terms of the voices of my self-interests. It is only through a consistent effort to silence the various demands of my subjective inclinations concerning my phenomenal existence that I attain a state of purity, wherein the voice of duty becomes audible to me as a rational being. And it is only within such a state of purity that my choices conform to the dictates of duty. For Kant, a spontaneous determination of my choice, therefore, is not merely bereft of any motivation hinged on self-love, but is also indicative of a state of the self wherein it is open exclusively to the voice of reason. Seen thus, for Kant, to be autonomous — and therefore spontaneous — is manifested in my *obedience* to the voice of reason, to the dictates of duty.

However, as we shall soon see in the following chapters, both Sade (implicitly) and Nietzsche (explicitly) reads such a formulation of our autonomy as a form of violence upon the self in so far as it dislodges the self from its own material world with the promise of moral perfection. Further, for both Sade and Nietzsche, the Kantian portrayal of the autonomous self assumes the spontaneity of the self — which is the mark of its autonomy — as being essentially and *conveniently* 'moral' in its very orientation. For them, though the Kantian reading of human freedom in terms of the mark of autonomy as characterizing the self is unquestionable, their discomfort lies in the fact that the Kantian position problematically approaches autonomy, and therefore human freedom, through a presumed moral lens and clothes it in moral terms. It conveniently assumes spontaneity to be *essentially* moral in its primal orientation, and that too as something that is necessarily embedded in *Christian* moral hues. They hold this assumptive underlying trait that pervades Kant's formulation of autonomy as unacceptable, not merely because it is erroneous in so far as it uncritically presupposes the *a prior* nature of moral values, and thereby ignores the possibility of their *a posterior* origins; but more so, because it renders the spontaneity entailed by our freedom as being subservient to morality. For them, the Kantian formulation of freedom *as* autonomy, therefore, presupposes the fact that the pursuit of autonomy is in harmony with the pursuit of a socio-moral order. Thus, though Kant posits

his position as an undertaking of a *descriptive* task highlighting the grounds of morals, and consequently, characterizes the form of autonomy as expressed through a categorical imperative as a *discovery*, Nietzsche sees the latent prescriptive force operative in Kant's description. For Nietzsche, the Kantian formulation of the mark of spontaneity suits Kant's own pre-established religious and moral views that project a particular picture of the 'social' — a *Christian social*. That is, both Sade and Nietzsche are uncomfortable with the fact that Kant deploys his important discovery of our primordial nature as autonomous beings towards the furthering of the Christian moral-order. They read the Kantian "kingdom of ends" as being conveniently rendered as a Christian kingdom by Kant.

However, Kant's discovery of autonomy is no small matter for both Sade and Nietzsche. It is rather a matter of grave concern to humanity as a whole, since the discovery of autonomy as the essential marker of the self *might just not* accord itself with the promise of a 'socio-moral order'. An objective inquiry free from religious, moral and humanitarian biases might just reveal that in the final analysis, our autonomous nature runs contrary to all such orientations.

In other words, like Kant, both Sade and Nietzsche seek to highlight that our 'pursuit of autonomy' needs to be thought through not because in thinking through autonomy they seek to undermine freedom, but rather it is precisely to grasp what our freedom, in fact, entails. The fundamental question that thus arises, post-Kant's discovery of the autonomous self, is precisely this: "Now that I know that I am autonomous, what kind of being am I?" And clearly, both Sade and Nietzsche are not convinced with Kant's proposed answer, for they do not see autonomy as necessarily entailing the fact that I am a 'moral' being. In fact, the efforts of Sade and Nietzsche to show the origins of our moral values as something squarely grounded within the phenomenality of the world is precisely an effort to rupture the Kantian assumption of the *apriority,* and thereby the transcendental grounds, of morality. For them, if this act of subversion has any worth, it is precisely in freeing the notion of autonomy from the restrictive clutches of morals, and thereby to *disclose* the true nature of our freedom *as autonomy*.

But if Kant is mistaken in his portrayal of freedom in terms

of our autonomy, and if autonomy is not the basis of our moral values, then what precisely does autonomy ground? What then does human freedom in terms of autonomy entail? If my nature as an autonomous being is not indicative of my inherent potential to conform with the demands of duty, and does not express a moral *ought*, then what precisely does my autonomy entail? If therefore, to be 'free' is neither to be free from self-love nor to be free to subject my being to the demands of a moral order, then how precisely are we to understand freedom and autonomy? It is precisely towards these questions and the consequent alternative formulations of autonomy in Sade and Nietzsche that we now turn to in the subsequent chapters.

NOTES

1. There are scholars who do not see the Kantian mark of 'spontaneity' of the self that is engaged in knowing the world (a 'thinking' self) as necessarily entailing a spontaneous self that is in engagement with and in the world in terms of its actions (a 'doing' self). For instance, see, Pippin, Robert B. 1987. "Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind" in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy.* Vol.17/ No.2. pp. 449-475. However, for an extensive defense of the possibility of taking the position that I hold here, see, Sgarbi, Marco. 2012. *Kant on Spontaneity.* (London: Continuum).
2. See, *GMM, 4:432 ff.*
3. See, *GMM,* 4:389; Also see, GMM, 4:408. Kant puts in extensive effort, as we have already seen, to oppose any form of 'faculty morality' proposed within the framework of empiricism that seeks to ground the determination of the will upon motives that have their basis in human nature.
4. *GMM,* 4: 392; Also see, *CPrR,* 5:33.
5. See, *CPrR,* 5:33*ff.*
6. See, *CPrR,* 5:32; Also, see *GMM,* 4: 412. This, though it might be coincidental, gels well with Kant's religious belief as well, for it strongly echoes the dictum, that 'man is made in the image of God' (*Genesis* 1:27). This can also be read as Kant's resolution of the 'Euthyphro dilemma'. Plato, while dealing with the nature of piety in his Dialogue, *Euthyphro,* has Socrates raise the enigmatic question whether the *good* (the pious) is loved by gods because it is good or if

it is deemed good precisely because the Gods love it. Seen thus, the Kantian response clearly accepts the former suggestion of the two offered.

7. See, GMM, 4:440. Kant believed that his formulation had finally resolved the question concerning 'equality' — not merely between the *created* but also between the *creator* and the *created*. However, his formulation of equality along the principle of freedom was already felt to be inadequate by some. Apart with the well-known critique of the Kantian formulation by Hegel as being excessively formalistic and insensitive to the nature of human motivation, we also have F.W.J Schelling, whose discomfort with Kant lay specifically with Kant's formulation of freedom as a mark of equality. For Schelling, the Kantian formulation of freedom, much like Spinoza's Pantheism, fails precisely to secure freedom as distinctive mark (*Differenz*) of human beings. Consequently, for him, Kant fails to adequately address the grounds of good and evil in the phenomenal world as rooted in human freedom. See, F.W.J. Schelling. 2006 [1809]. *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom.* Translated by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt. (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 22-23.
8. Thus, though it is true that it is ultimately for locating the purposive grounds of *happiness* in the pursuit of moral perfection that Kant must bring in the notion of God, nevertheless, the relation between the notion of God and the Kantian moral framework is not 'forced' but is rather permitted by the very nature of his boarder moral structure which is based upon his aspectual reading of causality following the noumena-phenomena divide. It is precisely this realization that leads Nietzsche to declare that the Kantian system is precisely geared towards making room for God and faith.
9. In this broader framework of morals, all rational beings are equal *qua* their moral aspect.
10. GMM, 4:33. This is what is explicitly expressed in Kant's third articulation of *autonomy.* (See, GMM, 4: 438).
11. See, GMM, 4:389.
12. GMM, 4:395.
13. See, GMM, 4: 405; Also see, 4: 395.
14. See, GMM,4: 396.
15. See, GMM, 4:395.
16. See, GMM, 4:393-4:394.
17. See, GMM, 4:393.

18. See, GMM, 4:414; Also see, *CPrR*, 5:32.
19. See, GMM, 4: 447.
20. Kant uses the term 'pathological/pathologische' to refer to our dependency on sensibility for the determination of our choices.
21. In relation to freedom as a form of causality, 'necessitation' is for Kant an obligation demanded by duty (See, GMM, 4: 439).
22. See, GMM, 4:412-4:413; Also see, *CPrR*, 5:20.
23. See, GMM, 4:428; Also, see GMM, 4:433. For Kant, all such incentives, which are geared towards making our life within the phenomenality of the world more *agreeable*, can be clubbed as operating under the principle of 'happiness', or 'self love', and are heteronomous in their form of determination (See, *CPrR*, 5: 22). Thus, a heteronomous determination is one when its determination 'goes beyond' the form of determination and grounds itself 'upon properties of objects' (See, GMM, 4:441). Accordingly, for Kant, as opposed to the 'good' that is grounded firmly upon reason and at best can be said to aim at 'perfection' (See, GMM, 4: 443), 'happiness' is 'an ideal of the imagination... resting on empirical grounds' (See, GMM, 4:418). Kant further classifies hypothetical imperatives as either *problematically* practical principle (when one is not sure if in fact the intended goal is in fact conducive to happiness), or an *assertorically* (when one sees that the intended good is in conflict with a moral good) practical principle. This is in contrast to the categorical imperative which is an *apodictically* practical principle, wherein its evaluation as good is absolutely assured by virtue of the form of determination of the choice alone (See, GMM, 4: 415).
24. See, GMM, 4:396-397.
25. See, *CPrR*, 5:32.
26. See, GMM, 4:397. For Kant, the simple fact that we are rational beings ensures that a *moral ought* entails a *can* for us. Of course, we must be careful to remember, that what the 'can' here signifies is merely our capacity, as rational beings, to determine our choices in accordance to the form of autonomy (form of causality as freedom) that expresses itself through an 'ought'. This entailment is deemed legitimate by Kant precisely because the 'ought' expresses a form of determination that holds for all rational beings. Therefore, as rational beings, it entails that we too can be determined in terms of this *ought*.

    For Kant, it is a different matter if such a determination of our choices based on the form of autonomy *in fact* translates into an

action in the phenomenal world (See, GMM, 4: 427). The actualization of such a determination is beyond the purview of the metaphysics of morals that he intends to present to us. After all, questions concerning the actualization of our autonomous choice must also take into account the form of causality as *empirical necessity,* given that the act must materialize within the phenomenal realm through the materiality of my body, even though its determination is purely in the noumenal realm grounded in the form of *autonomy*. Accordingly, a metaphysics of morals can only concern itself with the former notion of 'can' and not the latter, since it is an inquiry solely concerned with the transcendental conditions of morality. That is, the act that is to take place within the phenomenal world is nevertheless grounded upon the form of *intelligible causality* rather than the form of *empirical causality*, as would normally be the case in relation to cause-effect in the phenomenal world. Hence, for Kant, though a content-laden moral *ought* is expressed through an 'a priori synthetic practical proposition', a *metaphysics of morals* must concern itself primarily with the *a priori* aspect of the proposition (See GMM, 4: 420).

27. See, GMM, 4: 414 *cf*.
28. See, GMM, 4: 406; Also see, 4:421.
29. See, GMM, 4: 397.
30. Kant holds that actions governed by inclinations, however altruistic they might appear, do not call for our 'respect' but merely our approval or disapproval. He writes, 'what counts is not the action which one sees, but [the] inner principles of actions that one does not see' (GMM, 4: 407). Accordingly, *respect*, as Kant emphasizes, is the sole privilege of the moral law and thereby are to be reserved for those choices determined from duty alone. (See, GMM, 4:400).
31. See, GMM, 4:420.
32. See, GMM, 4:421.
33. GMM, 4:421/ CPrR, 5:31; Also see, GMM, 4: 431-433.
34. The moral aspect of the 'ought' is, as we have seen, assured by virtue of the fact that the underlying law expressed, is at the same time, an expression of the *unconditional good* will.
35. It is for this reason, that for Kant, the test of universality is more of a methodological step, that is the 'shortest and yet infallible way', to ensure that the determination of my choice is autonomous rather than being a determinant of my choice itself (See, GMM, 4:403).
36. GMM, 4:440.

37. Kant's argument for this seemingly arbitrary conclusion, however, rests upon his argument that if such a rational determination that expresses itself as a *duty* demanded an *interest/motive* that is external to its form as an incentive that could then act as the source of its sanction for abidance, then we would need yet another law to bind this specific *interest/motive* to duty, and this would lead to an infinite regress (See, GMM, 4: 432).
38. This provides Kant his second formulation of the categorical imperative. Given that the rational nature is essentially an end-in-itself, therefore, any being that partakes in the realm of reason must essentially be an end-in-itself. Consequently, we ought to accordingly treat them as such, never as a *means* (See, GMM, 4: 429).
39. Consequently, for Kant 'only a moral being has *dignity*' and thus the worth of its being is independent of any phenomenality of its existence. Evaluations of the worth of a being in relation to its phenomenality concerns its 'market value' or 'price' in so far as it is considered as a *means* rather than an end-in-itself (See GMM, 4: 435).
40. It is also this *a priority* attributed to dignity that renders Kant as an appealing basis for the formulation of the very idea of 'human rights'. For those interested in the centrality of Kant's notion of autonomy to the discourse on human rights, see, *Kantian Theory and Human Rights*. 2014. Edited by Andreas Follesdal and Reidar Maliks. (London: Routledge). However, this is what becomes, as we shall see in the coming chapters, for Nietzsche (explicitly) and Sade (implicitly), an unwarranted positioning of human dignity by Kant. For Nietzsche, such a basis for arguing for the universality of the demand of duty, and the consequent positioning of human dignity, betrays in Kant, the fundamental assumption that there remains, by virtue of reason, a minimal but sufficient set of similarities among human beings to ensure a form of egalitarianism, which then acts as the basis for altruism. However, for a thorough defense on behalf of Kant against such a charge, see, Wood, Allen W. 1999. *Kant's Ethical Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

SECTION III

Marquis de Sade [1740–1814]

...the lone thinker — perhaps, because he was misunderstood; or perhaps, precisely because he was understood. It is Sade who opens up the possibility of exploring the nature of the autonomous self in isolation from its ever-assumed moral scaffolding. It is Sade who dares us to think of our self *as a* self, devoid of any other attributes that we have unwittingly come to colour it with — as just a *being* of, and in, nature. It is also Sade who shows us the avenue of thinking of the self in isolation from an 'other'.

In opening up these postures of suspicion over our beliefs that the self is essentially social, and that it is constitutionally moral, Sade intends to share with us his scandalous discovery that to be autonomous and to be *transgressive* amount to the same thing.

...the one, whose foremost assertion is that 'perversion' is natural and that to be a *pervert,* in the true sense of the term, is to be autonomous. In this, Sade shows us what accepting the Kantian discovery of autonomy, as the foundational mark of freedom, in fact, entails.

CHAPTER 6

Making Sense of Sade: Philosophy through Pornography

> [Sade was] the freest spirit that ever existed...
>
> –Guillaume Apollinaire[1]

> His was a strictly sexual perversion... His philosophical disquisitions, which like his pornographic daydreams...were the theoretical justifications of his erotic practice...
>
> –Aldous Huxley[2]

Sade's "shady" persona contributed to the proscription of his works, and they in turn ensured him the image of a social menace.[3] The commonly available perceptions about him and his works project a case of mutual partaking of each other such that together they create a web of an *organic* existence, to the extent that it becomes difficult to decipher if it is the author who is the expression of the text, or the text that is an expression of the author. They seem to mutually live off each other. This is, perhaps, why Sade and his texts collectively lived a life of exile.[4] And it is precisely because of this *apparent* commingling of the person and his works that his philosophy has — assuming that he has one — been predominantly seen as either an attempt to justify his personal sexual dispositions, or as thoughts that are simply the invariable products of the psychological trauma of a man who had borne twenty-seven years of imprisonment.

Therefore, with any attempt to sieve out his philosophy, the looming question that demands an immediate addressal is precisely to figure out where one begins with Sade. [5] Where do we even start to make sense of Sade's works? And this, of course, assumes that there is in fact sense to be made of in the first place — in the midst of all those *pornography* — which even if titillating at first, appear to run exactly in the opposite direction; towards boredom from repetitiveness and violence that is equipped to ignite disgust, nausea, shock and ultimately, *dis*belief.[6] Consider that in spite of the fact that Sade's *Justine* (1791) was published during a time when French "gothic" was still acceptable within the reading community, and "pornographic writings" were far darker than E. L. James' *Shades of Grey*, 'reviewers pronounced it "odious", "depraved", and "monstrous", and compared it to a poisonous mushroom which, if tasted, would prove fatal'. Obviously in an act of literal exaggeration, Nicolas-Edme Restif (Rétif de la Bretonne), himself a writer on the *voluptuous*, claimed 'to have evidence that two hundred women had already died agonizing deaths at the hands of men who had read it, and he warned the authorities that if it were to ever fall into the hands of common soldiers, the fate of a further twenty thousand would be too gruesome to contemplate.'[7]

The incorporation of violence and a willful celebration of pain is not a novel feature of Sade's writings *per se*. What, however, is peculiar is his mastery over the art of depicting mutilation of bodies — bodies which always somehow manage to endure the violent ordeals of desire at the hands of the libertine — that subsequently manage to drive his reader into a frenzy of *indifference*, rather than a state of empathy for the victim. Now generally, a state of indifference is a *relational* failure. That is, a state of indifference comes about when a relation of interest fails to obtain between an *object* and a *subject*. A state of indifference is, thus, indicative of a cognitive failure to recognize an object as being relatable in the manner in which the object presents itself to the subject. Indifference, therefore, is a simple manifestation of an *absence*. But the indifference that one encounters in Sade's works is peculiar, in so far as it is not marked by absence as such but is rather marked by a willful *denial*. That is, a state of indifference is solicited from his readers, precisely

by stimulating the reader to a point wherein one seeks to *cancel* the interest-relation that is in place — and *fully present* — between oneself and the depicted violence. This effect is reached in Sade's works through the generation of boredom that emerges out of the repetitive and relentless depiction of violence unto the body of the other, such that the initial interest of a reader *as* a reader, soon turns into the realization of being an accomplice to the perpetuator's acts of mutilation itself. Perhaps it is this unbearable burden of the realization of being an accomplice in the depicted acts that leads his reader to construe the violent mutilations with not merely a sense of disgust but with a peculiar form of *dis*belief — a complete suspension of belief that usually accompanies the realization, "how *horrible,* I could do that too! But of course, I can't, no, not me!" This is suggestive of a willful suspension on the part of the reader of one's belief that the source of such violence *potentially* lies in me, his reader, as well. Thus, what Sade's works manage to generate in his readers is a deliberate feeling of subjective indifference towards the bitter revelation of the truth about one's own true nature. One lulls oneself to hold that the universal truth — though both true and universal — somehow does not include oneself within the scope of its universal reach. Such a state can only be reached through a state of *dis*belief — a state of suspension of one's belief.[8] Thus, to make sense of Sade is, in a way, to make sense of this wilful *dis*belief. That is, it is a call to recognize and face one's self *as* being mirrored by his characters and their inherent and intrinsic potential for *violence*.

Seen thus, we can construe Sade's project as a genuine attempt to lay out the metaphysics of man. It is the possibility of such a construal that leads writers like Jacques Lacan to suggest that we view Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*,[9] within a more appropriate setting — like that of the Greek *Academy* or the *Lyceum* or the *Stoa*[10] — and accord to it the philosophical stature that it deserves. On the other hand, any efforts towards that direction leads us, as Jacques Lezra points out, to face the daunting challenge of deciphering the direction of flow of 'the venom of philosophical knowledge' in Sade.[11] But then, why can philosophy not be *venomous* and why should we shun the possibility of poisonous wisdom, irrespective of its recipient? After all, as we shall see, Sade believes that for the emergence

of the genuine autonomous self, the celebrated virtuous-self, *must* die! Is it not precisely for this reason that the task of discerning the philosophical voice of Sade amongst the various chatters that surround it falls upon his reader?

Of course, it has been well recognized that the Sadean take on the expression of freedom through the form of violence is the key in any attempt to make sense of him. Though in her essay, *Must We Burn Sade* (1951-52), Simone de Beauvoir is critical in ascribing much literary merit to Sade's works; she nevertheless takes his obsessive portrayal of violence as rightly highlighting the primary existential relation between the *self* and *other*.[12] However, she takes Sade to be undiscerning, and culpable, for resigning himself to believe in the impossibility of transcending the structure of violence, and for identifying them as the only genuine mode of expressing one's freedom. And as Beauvoir sees it, this fatally leads Sade to read himself in his works and then present himself to the reader as an exemplar of one who embodies the essence of such freedom. Thus, his treatment of violence simply runs the purpose of privileging his own life choices and presenting them as being worthy of universal emulation.[13] In doing so, Beauvoir argues that Sade's depiction of violence falls short of exploring its entailments and fails to elevate itself into a possible ground for an *ethics of authenticity* as such. Thus, Sade's works run the risk of being an unhealthy guide to the very existential question of violence. Notwithstanding the differences in the nuances and the finer intricacies, the rejection of Sade's work, beginning with the early reception of his works in the hands of his contemporaries, lies precisely in such a reading – that his *pornographic violence/ violent pornography* just does not illuminate enough to be redeemed into either the literary or the philosophical canons in any seriousness.[14] In light of the lack of such illuminating force, Sade's portrayal of human nature was, therefore, seen as ill-conceived, injudicious, imprudent and immature. They were, at best, a creative assemblage of the choicest perversity permitted by a perverse imagination. Thus, what was deemed as rightfully due to Sade's work was simply abject rejection.

So, it appears that to the question, "how do we begin with Sade?" we must boldly answer that we must begin with the very idea

of "perversion". Thus, as an incision for entry into the labyrinthic thought-schema of Sade, the category of *perversion* presents itself to us as the key. Any inceptive move to fathom out his thoughts must cardinally anchor itself on the possibility of delineating the conceptual contours of the notions of *perversion* and *the pervert* – not because they provide us with a ready category under which we could then comfortably categorize the person and his works, but rather because we are forced to recognize that they constitute the pivot around which his thoughts revolve. That is, as we shall see, it is through the category of the "pervert" that Sade philosophizes. The Sadean "libertine" or *the pervert* — a term that we will seek to understand here in its various layers in Sade — is Sade's Socrates. The "pervert", as Sade construes it, is an enlightened individual who encounters *existence*, including his own, in its bare nature. For Sade, the pervert is the one who has comprehended the *being* of *nature qua* nature, and it is in the light of this revealment that he consciously considers *perversion* as his chosen mode of response to *existence*. Thus, in making *perversion* the central radial in the weaving his thought-fabric, Sade presents it as the only authentic *comportment* that one can adopt towards existence. Clearly then, contrary to what would appear to be the case, his invocation of perversion is not a subjective pathological accident but rather a systemic demand of his discovery of the nature of being *qua* being. That is, perversion is an objective demand of existence itself rather than a subjective fabrication of a pathological lie, which is then presented *as* a truth. For Sade, perversion is *truth* itself. Seen thus, Sade's works can be legitimately labelled as a philosophy *of/as* perversion. We stand on the first recognition that Sade intends to re-define the very idea of "perversion" in an attempt to bring forth his thesis that philosophy can be nothing other than a deeper understanding of the self's *perversion*, for the self is essentially a *pervert*. The fundamental thesis of the Sadean corpus can thus be neatly summarized in the claim that any genuine philosophy must necessarily be an inquiry geared to foreground the expressions of our perversion that we live *through*, though it may very well be a ground that is eternally in self-concealment afforded by the structure of the moral/social around us.[15]

Clearly then, the pervert is not, as has been often treated, an

individual with a psychological disorder — an individual whose subjective libidinal desires have somehow inverted his entire perspective towards existence. Sade's pervert, first and foremost, cannot be grasped in terms of its semantic richness within a frame that positions it merely as a representative of an individual who has a propensity towards sexual orgies. That is, Sade's insistence is that we make sense of the pervert *as such*, without taking recourse to any other adjective that may come to qualify it in its manifested form. And while both the sexual and the sensual are central to Sade's works — and in this it anticipates the Freudian *libido* — the Sadean pervert is not someone who is essentially marked by the urge to satiate one's call of the *libidinal energy* even at the cost of transgressing the bounds of the "normal" and the socially acceptable. Rather, and as we shall shortly see, for Sade such sexual transgressions are merely *one* — though an important one — of the material manifestations of a deeper primordial energy. In Sade, therefore, the case of a pervert is not a case of "abnormality", a psychiatric pathological manifestation that can be *cured*.[16] Sade's whole emphasis is to invert the very structure of our understanding that tacitly takes the *normal* as a given and then evaluates the very bounds of "normalcy". He seeks to foreground the fact that the "normal" itself is the most abnormal of all of our pathological creations. It is the "normal" that thus casts a veil upon our genuine nature which, as we shall see, is essentially marked by our drive to *transgress* — a term that marks the self in terms of its inherent necessity for *movement*, and a term whose semantic scope we shall soon unfold.

Sade holds that it is precisely this primordial nature of man as intrinsically *transgressive* that remains hidden from the diagnostic gaze of the progressive and free thinkers of his era. And as Sade sees it, it shall forever remain hidden from us as long as we retain our presumptive stance in our quest to uncover the nature of the autonomous self that the self must essentially be moral/social. It shall forever remain concealed from us because we are merely looking for an affirmation of what we desperately want the self *to be*, rather than honestly seeking the disclosure of our being *as such*. In that, we are adamant to make sense of our autonomy only within an *a priori* structure of morals. It is precisely this horizon of an *a priori* moral

structure that subsequently informs us in our delineation of the *normal*. It is, in the Sadean analysis, precisely this erroneous belief that enables modern moral theorists (like Kant) to unproblematically present our autonomy in terms of an intrinsic propensity towards the "good", towards altruism — as embedded in sympathy — and to picture ourselves as a being who is deeply inclined towards the realization of a social/ moral order. For Sade, such a construal of the fundamental nature of our being would have failed to genuinely discern the nature of the autonomous self behind the veil. And for Sade, the uncovering of this veil precisely discloses to us the image of the *pervert*. In fact, in the extreme depictions of violence and perversion in his works, Sade can also be compared to Socrates, 'a gadfly... who disturbed people and forced them to re-examine their fundamental beliefs' concerning the nature of the self and the ethical.[17] But through his very defiance of this presumptive belief that constitutes the core of the project of Enlightenment, Sade's philosophy partakes in Enlightenment's quest for unveiling the genuine nature of man.[18] Having said that, however, it is no easy task to unproblematically place Sade within the framework of Enlightenment and to explicate the nature in which he partakes of it.

Clearly, it is not difficult to discern the spirit of Enlightenment that is at work in Sade's abject rejection of any form of authoritative moral structures grounded in the sanctions of either the state or religion. In doing so, he upholds the legitimacy of a call for free and assertive individuality. But neither is it difficult for one to read the hints of Romanticism in Sade's insistence on the primacy of understanding *nature* over reason.[19] Thus, Sade's writings, though clearly wary of the overemphasis on our faculty of reason as prevalent amongst free-thinkers during his times, nevertheless *appears* to be in tune with the rationalistic orientation of Enlightenment as such.

The possibility of reading such a continuity is also offered by Klossowski's, *Sade my Neighbor,* where he underlines the fact that Sade's works still follow 'the logically structured form of classical language' that treats itself as a site of creation and demands that one reproduces and perpetuates oneself through language. This

corresponds to the normative structure of subordination of life functions that ensures the preservation and propagation of the species through reproductive structures and strategies.[20] Understood thus, in light of Klossowski's analysis, Sade's emphasis on the libidinal is merely a heightened expression of the intellectual urge identifiable with the need to reproduce.[21] It is, *perhaps*, keeping these aspects of Sade's writing in mind that Klossowski saw the Sadean corpus as belonging to the 'larger generality' when he asserts that Sade takes his 'counter generality to be implicit in the existing generality'.[22] This is suggestive of the fact that we should treat Sade's construal of *perversion*, first and foremost, as a phenomenon that can be grasped like all other phenomena within the structure of reason and language. And it is arguably to highlight this aspect that Sade carefully plants his plots within the *everyday* social structures and familiar institutions. This belief is also evident from the literary form of the Sadean corpus, which takes the shape of a structured rational discourse. However, Klossowski's reading of Sade's continuity with the rationalistic orientation of Enlightenment ignores the fact that Sade, with his radical insight — but still remaining within the frame of the discourse of Enlightenment — seeks to undermine this very structure of *writing* by precisely making provision for movements that are not reproductive, but are still *writings* nevertheless. Though, Klossowski seductively highlights the fact that Sade stays well within the confines of the classical structures of argumentative language, he nevertheless fails to see that by doing so Sade produces something that can neither add to the corpus of the *literary* nor can it find acceptability within the very bounds of Enlightenment's imaginative rational. That is, Sade's works exemplify how the rationalistic discourse can be *transgressed* from *within* the bounds of Enlightenment's own cherished measure of a creative discourse given that for Sade they are merely *re*-productions of the Rational — the *a priori*. This nudges us to acknowledge that perhaps Sade's efforts, in his works, is to highlight the multitude of possibilities of transgression that is afforded by the very nature of *existence* itself, even if that existence is grandly construed by us as being guarded by the rational. And he does this precisely to bring out the primacy of the *perverseness* that is intrinsic to very nature of the autonomous

self when encountered in its originary stance — still *undocile* and uncurtailed within an imposed *a priori* structure of order.

But if autonomy is not thus bound by any *a priori* moral rational order, then how does one construe freedom and the nature of determination of our choices that thereby ensues from our autonomy? Towards this end, Sade's fundamental contention is that the true nature of existence is that it is solely conditioned by its own inherent principle of *general movement*. A movement that does not, in itself, have a *telos* or an ordained purpose. A movement — a *becoming* — that does not presuppose a finality or a *towards*. We, as part of existence, are therefore, primordially bound to this very principle of *becoming*. Thus for Sade, to *be* is to *become*. It is this principle of *becoming* that marks our autonomous nature in its primordiality rather than the Kantian noumenal realm of pure practical reason, which assumes this *becoming* as a movement towards a being that is specifically moral. That is, for Sade, Kant was right in deciphering the nature of the autonomous self as a movement, but he erred in positioning this movement within a transcendental moral order. Consequently, Kant fatally placed autonomy as a movement of the self towards the realm of pure reason.

It is precisely this 'repulsive', and mostly unexplored possibility, that problematizes the likeliness of Kant and Sade traversing the same terrain of *autonomy* as opened up with the '*avec*/with' that Lacan suggestively inserted in the very title of his reading of Sade in his essay, *Kant avec Sade* (1963).[23] The fundamental problem with such a reading, as Lacan himself realizes, is posed by the challenge of bringing together the Kantian ethical attitude, which is deeply characterized by the transcendence of the phenomenality of the self — and thereby of all phenomenal desires — and the Sadean insistence in unrestrained violence seeking 'pleasure' in the phenomenal realm. Lacan sought to resolve this deadlock through the interpretative move of construing the Sadean libertine as precisely the remnant of the Kantian autonomous self, when the Kantian *voice of conscience* is thoroughly externalized and removed from all its transcendental underpinnings.[24] Following Lacan, one could well argue that through this subversive move, Sade thus opens up the possibility of acknowledging the prospect that the very idea

of complying with one's desire that is grounded in one's deep pathological being, in fact, meets the very demand of the Kantian ethical and autonomous self.[25] That is, the Sadean formulation of autonomy simply refuses the legitimacy of Kant's *demand of purity* as a transcendental condition for freedom. However, within such a portrayal, the Sadean self must once again be construed within the bounds of the materiality of one's desire. That is, the autonomous self, within the Lacanian reading, still posits autonomy as a psycho-pathological condition rather than a *formal* attribute of the self. But as we have sought to argue, the '*avec*/with' that invokes the possibility of congruity between Kant and Sade is not hinged on Sade's betrayal of the Kantian transcendentality of the *a priori* moral order. Rather the 'with' is opened up precisely because both concur in their assessment of the essential mark of the autonomous self to lie in the formal principle of *movement*. That is, correspondingly, within the Sadean portrayal of the self, the primordial — or what would come to constitute the noumenality of our being in the Kantian sense — is precisely this *formal* necessity to *transgress*. Seen thus, for Sade *transgression* is a formal attribute of the self, and is thus essentially "universal" precisely in the Kantian sense. Thus, though what renders the manifestation of a specific act of transgression particular, or even singular, is its materiality, but the formal ground of its possibility nevertheless lies in the primordial mark of *movement* of the autonomous self. That is, the materiality of an act of perversion, which manifests itself as psycho-pathological condition is merely the phenomenal manifestation of the formal condition of the autonomous self — the *form of transgression*.[26]

If for Kant, the moral law merely provides the formal conditions of morality while the phenomenality of one's being in the world provides us the content of the law, then in Sade too, the demand of transgression constitutes the *form* of an autonomous choice while the specificities of the limits that present themselves to us, for transgression, are precisely provided by the phenomenality of the world in which we find ourselves. The Sadean dictum *Transgress!* in its *form* thus becomes synonymous with the Kantian dictum, *Act from duty!* Accordingly, this transgressive nature of the self is not, as is often seen, a Sadean prescription to us. In as much as Kant's depiction

of the autonomous nature of the self is not a Kantian prescription to us, but is rather a description of the *form* underling all our moral choices, so too, for Sade, the disclosure of the inherent and primordial instinct for movement — *to transgress* — is posited merely as a *description* of the *form* that underlies the various expressions of our perversions. Thus for Sade, his writings are merely disclosures or a revealing of our intrinsic propensity for perverted/transgressive acts. Partially, the failure to recognize Sade's dictum of *transgression* and his invocation of *perversion* as formal expressions is clouded by Sade's excessive and exclusive depiction of sodomy as *the* manifestation of our transgressive drive. But soon we shall at least hint, if not argue, as to why sodomy is Sade's primary choice to depict *transgression*. Emphasizing the formal aspect of Sade's dictum, Klossowski too points out that the Sadean perversion is an outrage, that is, a '*pure* explosion of an energy accumulation...'[27] [emphasis mine], and that it is impossible for us to 'formulate any positive content of perversion' *a priori*.[28] In that, though the propensity to transgress is inscribed in our nature, there are no *a priori* limits ordained by nature for the self to transgress. For Sade, the self, in so far as it is autonomous, is *free* precisely to transgress *all* that it envisions as limiting its self-assertive capacity — as limiting its *movement*.

In fact, as late as the second half of the twentieth century, the contention during the trial of Jean-Jacques Pauvert for having published Sade's works lay precisely in the claim that Sade, without adding any literary or philosophical value, merely projected a dangerous example through his works. The uncomfortable question that one must pause here to ask is, precisely "What does Sade's works exemplify/ what image is projected in his works that threatens the very fiber of the society?" It is in adopting this interrogative stance that Sade begins to talk to us. And it has largely been assumed that the threat lies in his attempted justification for a certain subjective orientation befitting a *depraved* soul. However, as we have seen, a closer scrutiny of his works can clearly render such a charge as being misdirected. After all, Sade's work can be interpreted in a manner that neutralizes the charge of being an attempt to justify a psycho-pathological condition of a depraved soul. Therefore, the *threat* does not lie in the *perceived* justification of debauchery by

Sade. However, the charge is not *wrong*, and holds if we construe the real *threat* as lying in his disclosure of the true nature of the autonomous self. In that, for Sade, the libertines in his works project the "true" image of the autonomous self — free and spontaneous in the expression of their *movement* — the authentic *libertine*, the enlightened man of modernity contra Kant's autonomous self, whose very fibre is drenched in the *a prior* moral order.[29]

In fact, read thus, his works are a threat in that they can themselves be seen as projecting the inherent threat that the autonomous man, as promised by the project of Enlightenment, poses to the very moral fibres that are necessary to weave the 'social'. If left to its own devices, for Sade, nothing could be further than the truth of the autonomous self than the hopeful construal of a moral being as pictured by Kant. Man, Sade pronounces, is quite far from the Kantian sketch of a rationality that is comprehensively determined by the form of the moral law *within*. In fact, as Sade pictures it, contra Kant, the moral conscience is not a fact of nature at all. The Kantian faith in the apriority of the moral law *within*, in Sade, turns out to be a hopeful creation to precisely curtail what the self discovers *within* — the *within* as the locus of a lurking primordial instinct of movement that seeks to overcome and transgress all that posits itself as a *limit*. That is, the *within* as the primordial seat of transgression; as the locus of limitless "violence". This fundamental drive for "violence" instituted in our being, therefore, cannot possibly uphold the principle of sanctity of life, nor can it elevate human existence to any anthropocentric position of superiority. To do so would amount to recognizing these aspects as non-transgressible *a priori*. The force of *transgression* — of *movement* — thus stands committed to a completely fair and impartial treatment of all beings of nature, simply *as* beings of nature and nothing more. For Sade, it is this intrinsic sense of violence — of transgression — and the demand for its satiation that is the primal call of existence *as such*, and thus of human existence as well. In the light of the transgressive nature of our being in its primordiality, *death* for Sade is, therefore, not to be cast as a limit to movement but merely the complimentary aspect of the principle of movement. Death is but a mere point of translation of the primordial principle of movement in nature from

one mode to another. It is for this reason that none of the libertine characters in Sade's works indicate any fear for their own death.

In fact, the theme of death and decay, therefore, occupies a central space of concern for Sade. Under the accepted ambit of the finitude of the phenomenal world, destruction must be presupposed within the ambit of the principle of eternal motion as a prerequisite for the regenerative processes of nature.[30] Accordingly death, for a Sadean libertine, is a fair price for the satiation of this *primal* urge in conformity to the demands of the principle of eternal movement. It is this realization that is responsible in our willful embracing of the "Kantian gallows".[31]

Now this fearless ability to embrace death — to completely wipe off one's phenomenal existence — can be seen, *prima facie*, as an echo of the Kantian demand for the erasure of one's phenomenality as a response to the demand of the moral, and thus a response to the demand of the rational noumenal self. However, that said, in Sade, with the realization of Kant's portrayal of the self as schizophrenic — as a farce or a delusion at best — what remains is the task of standing up to the challenge of erasing one's phenomenal existence, while remaining true to one's inherent transgressive nature and the principle of movement that one embodies, rather than self-erasure at the altar of some fabricated laws of morals.

Seen thus, Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* can be read as an attempt to highlight the fact that the Kantian understanding of autonomy as a demand for self-erasure as being fundamentally correct. However, for Sade, Kant's error lies not in his excessive formalism, but rather in his treatment of the phenomenal aspect of the self. Kant's error, as Sade sees it, lies in his portrayal of the phenomenal aspect of the self as an *impure* corporeal form that stands in abject opposition to the noumenal aspect of the self and its mark of autonomy. For Sade, the Kantian belief in the noumenal is itself a falling back upon yet another mythical cascade. In truth, the noumenal self is nothing more than the self in its true nature — a spontaneous transgressive force — whose corporeal phenomenality, if left to itself, is precisely the medium in which this noumenal aspect expresses itself. Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* thus seems to proclaim that 'evil never breaks out but lies in the depths of our

very being', and that to be autonomous is therefore to unconditionally embrace this 'perversity' — this principle of movement that undergirds all of existence.

We must, therefore, read the Sadean corpus not as opposing, but precisely as an extension of the project of Enlightenment, in so far as Sade seeks to warn us about our ill-preparedness for the autonomous self that is waiting to be unleashed. For Sade, Enlightenment's project of the pursuit of freedom as autonomy fails to realize that autonomy, and thus spontaneity, can only express itself in the form, "I am, *because*, I can". It fails to bear in cognizance, that here, the "because" is not a pathological function, as Kant holds, but is rather a deep-seated *necessity*. As Sade sees it, the "am" here, which stands indicative of my existence, is crucially dependent upon the "can", which is indicative of my inherent transgressive nature. Thus, for Sade, it is a *must* rather than an *ought* that expresses autonomy in the true sense of the term. Seen thus, if transgression is the true mark of the self in its primordiality, then transgression can never be resolved into a state that is free of the drive to transgress without forsaking the very idea of the autonomous self. Such a denial, for Sade, is identical to our forsaking of the genuine nature of our *being*. Accordingly, for Sade, this transgressive nature, being the fundamental formal element underlying all manifestations of perversion, must thus be permitted within the bounds of the project of Enlightenment, because in the final analysis, underlying them is but the very *form* in which autonomy can ever find a genuine expression.

Thus, in Sade we find the philosopher who sees *through* the legitimacy of Kantian insistence on autonomy as the ground for the genesis of — borrowing Klossowski's phrase — 'the philosopher villain... who are villains to the core'.[32] Seen thus, Sade's violent pornography depicts the self's insatiable urge to transgress and its drive to therefore violate, mutilate and overcome any challenge that poses itself as a limiting condition for self-assertion. And the ultimate face-off in terms of this transgressive instinct, and thereby also the ultimate source of pleasure, is when one confronts *nature* itself as a limit to transgress. Read thus, for Sade, sodomy becomes the ultimate transgressive act for it affords oneself *one's* phenom-

enal telos of subjective gratification, while nevertheless denying *nature* the pleasure of binding us to our nature-bestowed *telos* of procreation for its sake and its *principle of movement*. It is also in the context of this primal transgressive nature, that the figure of the "mother" comes to be seen as the ultimate limit to desecrate. And not because, as held by most critics, that the self in Sade symbolizes masculinity. Such a reading necessarily frames the Sadean corpus in a presumed self–other framework. Rather in Sade, the *feminine*, and in particular the image of the "mother" symbolizes the "womb" through which nature's telos for man — that is procreation — is attained. Thus, in the ultimate standoff between man and nature, both sodomy and the desecration of the "feminine" *symbolizes* the final act of transgression. [33] Seen thus, in Sade's works, sodomy is not an accidental choice that highlights a subjective fetish. Rather, it is a carefully chosen act to depict the only *mode* through which the extent of the transgressive urge in us can truly be presented when nature itself comes to be seen as the limit.

In this sense, Sade's works forebears the challenge that is merely glossed through by the project of Enlightenment, namely, that of containing the autonomous individual within the ideal of the "social/moral" given our essential, but extreme, transgressive nature. This emphasis of Sade can be deciphered in his *Yet another Effort, Frenchmen, if you would become Republicans* — which is a pamphlet nestled within the larger plot of his *Philosophy in the Bedroom* – which is suggestive of a literary move that perfectly pictures Sade's writing as a whole. It is, perhaps, through his choice of this literary move of nested narratives that Sade suggests to us that his philosophical insight is precisely lodged within the larger seemingly senseless violence that is depicted in the equally senseless plots of most of his novels, playwrights and stories. Correspondingly, it is also precisely through the literary devise of *frame narrative*[34] that Peter Ulrich Weiss chooses to structure his 1963 play, *Marat/Sade.*[35] Weiss's play is, perhaps, the few literary appropriations of Sade's works that comes to make sense of the violence against the horizon of a larger problematic, which essentially has the social/moral as its primary concern. Thus, central to the play is the space it allows for Sade to present his philosophy in his own terms by carefully craft-

ing a play (with Sade at the helm of its direction) within Weiss's play, such that the undiluted voice of Sade, who in his dialogues with Marat, and through his prophetic declarations, demand that he be heard precisely for the sake of the sanity of the society.[36]

Accordingly, Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* structures itself squarely in the frame of a rational discourse. It does this to first show the primacy of nature over our rational discourse, and to portray the nature of the genuine *naked* self that is embedded within it. When uncovered from our constructed veil of ideals of traditional religious/moral codes and beliefs, the autonomous self is neither an optimistic heralding of the era of *Nature* as pronounced by the Romanticists, nor is it an enlightened celebration of Reason. On the contrary, Sade discovery of the autonomous self is not celebratory but rather cautionary. It raises a genuine concern for our inability to see and acknowledge the *true* image of our autonomous self as the *monster* that we essentially are. It is a bold attempt, though unconventional, to foreground the poverty of our rational thought-structures in terms of their inability to grasp the autonomy of the self that we have *rightly* freed from the lies of false beliefs and superstitions. Sade's appeal is, thus, to push us to philosophize the modalities in which we can live as "perverts" in this newly inaugurated era of the 'Enlightened Republic', while remaining true to the demands of autonomy for movement/transgression/perversion. Thus, for Sade, what we urgently need is a philosophy that works through this "perversion" — a philosophy that enables us to transgress all the assumptions of moral *apriority* that traps philosophical thinking. In this, Sade actually inaugurates the activity of philosophizing through the perverse force of spontaneity of the Kantian autonomous self — that is, it presents philosophy as a discourse on/of perversion.

Though this import of Sade was hardly captured by his contemporary critics, they were in a sense right in labelling Sade *dangerous* for Sade intends, and relentlessly so, to make us face our self in its stark nakedness. For Sade, it is crucial that we face and come to terms with our true transgressive nature before we construe any ideal of the moral or the social. Sade is skeptical about Enlightenment's promise of 'autonomy', not because he disvalues or rejects the

value of freedom, but precisely because Sade seems to hold that the realization of this promise — though a necessity — would unleash a creature that is fundamentally *transgressive* in its very nature for which we stand completely unprepared. Accordingly, for Sade, the very idea of autonomy entails a direct contradiction with the notion of the social/moral. The latter cannot operate without sensible boundaries and the former essentially looks at all boundaries as challenges to transgress.[37]

NOTES

1. Breton, Andre. 1996. *Free Rein*. Translator Michel Parmentier and Jacqueline D'Amboise. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. 61.
2. Huxley, Aldous. 1941. *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for their Realization*. (London: Chatto & Windus), p. 271.
3. Two of the most infamous charges, where allegations of sadism were made upon Sade, were those of Jean Testard and Rose Keller. For details of the allegations made and Sade's response to them see, Thomas, Donald. 1992. *The Marquis De Sade*. (London: Allison & Busby), pp. 51*ff* and 75*ff*; Lever, Maurice. 1994 (1993). *Sade: A Biography*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (New York: Harvest Book), pp. *119ff* and 115*ff*.

   For a biographical sketch of Sade, see Thomas, Donald. 1992. *The Marquis De Sade*. (London: Allison & Busby); Lever, Maurice. 1994 (1993). *Sade: A Biography*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (New York: Harvest Book); Gray, Francine Du Plessix. 1998. *At Home with the Marquis De Sade: A Life*. (New York: Simon & Schuster); Carter, David. 2011. *Brief Lives: Marquis de Sade*. (London: Hesperus Press Ltd.). For a collection of essays that provide broad and critical perspectives on Sade's ideas and thoughts, see, *Must We Burn Sade?* Edited by Sawhney. (New York: Humanity Book, 1999); *Sade and the Narrative of Transgression*. 1995. Edited by D.B. Allison, M.S. Roberts and A.S. Weiss. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
4. This *exile* was read by the Surrealists as a resolute expression of his freedom, thus almost exalting Sade, within the literary circles of the early twentieth century, to a Socrates of Modernity. In him they found a thinker who was willing to die for his radical ideas rather

than abandoning them for the sake of a harmonious societal existence. To them, he emanated *defiance*.

5. For an introduction to Sade's thoughts and ideas see, Phillips, John. 2005. *The Marquis De Sade,* A Very Short Introduction. (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Phillips, John. 2005. *How to Read Sade.* (London: Granta Books); Airaksinen, Timo. *The Philosophy of the Marquis De Sade.* 1995 (1991). (London: Routledge).
6. A few who sought to make sense of him in the nineteenth century did so in embarrassment, without even claiming authorship to their works on him. In the true sense of the term, it was not until Maurice Heine, who can be safely baptized as the first serious scholar of Sade, that Sade gained some scholarly attention. Heine revived, with critical notes and cross-examination of various available manuscripts from the various avenues in France, the first accessible works of Sade. Heine's project of resurrecting Sade was then carried out with the same academic criticality, rigour and enthusiasm by Gilbert Lely, who apart from reviving Sade's works and some of Sade's correspondences, gave the scholarly community a two-volume biography of Sade. It was through the efforts of these scholars, and the attention that his name managed to garner during the trail of the French publisher, Jean-Jacques Pauvert — who had published Sade's works in the early 1950s — that Sade was saved from dying in oblivion for the second time. By the second half of the twentieth century, Sade had managed to draw the intellectual attention of thinkers like Adorono, Bataille, Barthes, Beauvoir, Blanchot, Klossowski, Lacan, Paulhan, Horkheimer, to name a few. The works of these thinkers brought back a gaze that sought to make sense of Sade's writings precisely in terms of what was till then considered banal to the point of horror– the 'pornographic violence' and the 'violent pornography'.
7. As quoted in Coward, David. "Introduction" in Sade, Marquis de. 2005. *The Crimes of Love: Heroic and Tragic Tales, Preceded by an Essay on Novels*. Selected and Translated by David Coward. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. vii.
8. This is precisely the state that is akin to Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych, who though knows that he too shall die, somehow manages to suspend his belief concerning his own mortality. See, Leo Tolstoy's, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), a novella that explores death in terms of its existential import.
9. *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (Henceforth, cited as *PB*), first appeared in 1795 with anonymous authorship as a two-volume work. All refer-

ences here are from, Sade, Marquis De. 1965. *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings.* Compiled and Translated by Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse, with an Introduction by Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot. (New York: Grover Press).

10. See, Jacques Lacan. 1989. "Kant with Sade". Trans. James B. Swenson, Jr. *October*, Vol. 51., p. 55.
11. Jacques Lezra. 2003. "Sade on Pontecorvo". *Discourse.* Vol. 25; No.3., p. 71.
12. See, Beauvoir, Simone de. 2012. "Must we Burn Sade?" in *Simone de Beauvoir: Political Writings*. Edited by Margaret A. Simons and Marybeth Timmermann. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press). In contrast to this, Barthes highlights the merits and nuances of Sade's literary style in a much more sympathetic manner. See, Barthes, Roland. 1989. *Sade / Fourier / Loyola.* Translated by Richard Miller. (Los Angeles: University of California Press).
13. Such a reading would have to completely ignore or disown Sade's own declaration to his wife in his 1781 letter where Sade proclaims '...yes, I admit I am a libertine and in that area I have imagined everything that can be imagined. But I have absolutely not acted out everything that I imagined nor do I intend to. I am a libertine, but I am not a criminal or a murderer.' [Cited in, Heumakers, Arnold. "De Sade, A Pessimistic Libertine" in *From Sappho to De Sade.* Edited by Jan Bremmer. (London: Routledge), p. 108.]
14. For a concise overview of the crests and troughs of Sade as a literary figure, see Hulbert, James. 1988. 'The Problems of Canon Formation and the "Example" of Sade: Orthodox Exclusion and Orthodox Inclusion' in *Modern Language Studies.* Vol. 18/No. 1., pp. 120-133.
15. The clearest expression of Sade's thesis is found in his *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), which like his *Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man,* is explicitly philosophical in its concern, though framed in the form of a Dialogue. The former text will be our central concern in this chapter.
16. Unfortunately, it was precisely such a reading that found an appropriation for the first time within the rising community of psychologists devoted to the study of sexual behaviour in the nineteenth century, which included the likes of Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Krafft-Ebing was one of the foremost authorities of the time on "sexual inversion" (sexual perversion) whose work *Psychopathia Sexualis* was seeing its 11th edition by 1901. It is in the hands of these "scientific" minds, the obsessive and explicit pornographic violence in Sade works was

abjectly isolated from all the other significance that it might have had, and was seen purely in terms of a 'sexual fetish', leading Krafft-Ebing to even term this form of sexual 'perversion' as 'Sadism'. This further sealed the bond that had always managed to be drawn between Sade and his works, and people unhesitatingly read his works as a mere expression of the brutal artistic fantasies of a perverted mind; *his* mind. For a brief but incisive glimpse of Sade's *alleged* crimes see, the "Introduction" by Coward to, Sade, Marquis de. 1999 (1992). *The Misfortunes of Virtue and Other Early Tales*. Translated by David Coward. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). For an overview of psychologists and scholars engaged in the field of 'sexual inversion' then, see Ellis, Havelock. 1906 (2001). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversions*. (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific).

17. Fowler. Albert. 1957. "The Marquis de Sade in America" in *Books Abroad.* Vol.31/No.4., p. 356.
18. We must remind ourselves here that we are aware today that within the *Era of Enlightenment* itself, there were contesting strands concerning "human nature" and the best modes to realize them. Notwithstanding these differences, they nevertheless shared some common traits; cardinal amongst them being a clear sense of distrust upon religious authority that demanded dogmatic faith, their emphasis upon the importance of reason as a mode of knowledge, and their firm insistence upon the notion of individual liberty. However, they differed in terms of the extent, scope and relevance of these aspects and their roles within the sphere of the *political*. While the *Radicals* among them wanted a complete revamping of the social-political order through the eradication of Tradition, Revelation, and all forms of Tyranny– which for them meant the abuse of authority and power for anything other than the good of the people and the securing of their liberty; the *Moderates* among them wanted a carefully curated position with aspects of the old world as essential constituents of the new world. Kant, can be safely lodged within the Moderate camp. However, neither Nietzsche nor Sade can be easily placed within either.
19. However, unlike the radical enlightenment thinkers, he took the overemphasis on reason to be misguided, and unlike Rousseau's Romanticism, he did not view *nature* in the light of some *higher* ideals. It is this that distinguishes him from Rousseau. Though in Sade, much like in Rousseau, one finds the exaltation of the thesis of a returning back to *nature,* but this apparent similarity between them

soon evaporates under their respective discerning of the quintessence of nature *qua* nature. Sade's depiction of *nature* as indifferent and unpredictable is precisely an inverted image of Rousseau's portrayal of nature. Sade construes nature as essentially being in conflict with the intrinsic tendency of the autonomous man to transgress any given limits, including the limits set by nature in terms of its *telos*. [Also see Note 30 below].

Furthermore, looking explicitly at Rousseau-Sade in terms of their construal of the self-other relationship, Mercken Spaas holds that though 'Rousseau traces the relationship by means of a descriptive text following a hypothetical evolution of society, Sade does so in a prescriptive text which aims at freeing human behaviour in a republican society'. However, in such a reading, Spaas fails to notice that the Sadean aim is *not* to prescribe, though Sade's texts are provocatively prescriptive in their form. His prescriptions are, in fact, couched descriptions that represent man in his essential nature. This is the reason that though Sade was quite well-versed in history, his 'prescriptive stance' does not seek to draw itself from either a historical or a factual premise. And though Spaas is right in holding that 'both authors explore limits of human experience — Rousseau by a reconstruction of its origin, Sade by a deconstruction of the prevailing modes of behavior' (1978, p.71) — the point that needs to be precisely emphasized is that as in all acts of deconstruction, what is left behind by Sade is not a state of affairs that has changed but rather a changed perspective upon the same existing state of affairs. Deconstruction, after all, is primarily a methodology to make explicit the underlying implicit biases operative within a given paradigm in order to help us understand the deeper mechanisms and structures at work. Further, in holding that 'Sade bases his views on the Self/Other relationship on the animal model where Rousseau defends specifically human values', Spaas seems to undermine the fact that the mark of *transgressiveness* as a modality of the principle of movement is peculiar to us alone. It is for this reason Sade emphasizes that the *violence of man* upon himself or others is completely absent in the animal world. The in-text citations provided in this note refers to, Mercken-Spaas, Godelieve. 1978. "Some Aspects of the Self and the Other in Rousseau and Sade" in *Substance.* Vol.6&7/No. 20., pp. 71-77.

20. Perhaps, the first systematic interpretative attempt to understand the Sadean corpus was carried out by Pierre Klossowski in his *Sade* My

Neighbor (1947/1967). Klossowski seeks to make sense of Sade within the available philosophical frameworks that depict the Sadean characters as participants of the Hegelian dialectic towards a reconciliation within a plane of transcendental morality. See, Klossowski, Pierre. 1991 (1967). *Sade my Neighbor.* Translated by Aplhonso Lingis. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press).

21. Pierre Klossowski. 1991 (1967). "The Philosopher-Villain" in *Sade my Neighbor.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Illinois Northwestern University Press), p.14.
22. Ibid., p.15.
23. See, Lacan, Jacques. 1989 (1963). "Kant with Sade" in *October*. Vol. 51. Translated by James B. Swenson, Jr., pp. 55-75.
24. Zizek in his reading of Lacan is quick to point out that the contemporary notion of the 'Law' is precisely this Sadean externalization of the Kantian *voice of conscience* where the 'Law' itself becomes the voice of the conscience. See, Slavoj Zizek. 1998. "Kant and Sade: the Ideal Couple" in *Lacanian Ink*. Issue 13. 1998. Site: https://www.lacan.com/zizlacan4.htm.
25. For a reading of Sade in relation to Kant from a more *deconstructive* stance, see, Martyn, David. 2003. *Sublime Failures: The Ethics of Kant and Sade.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press).
26. It is also this celebration of a transgressive man that drew the surrealists towards Sade. But by this very fact, the Sadean notion of transgression forecloses the possibility of any form of aestheticization, as attempted by the surrealists. In Sade, man overcomes the very ideal of 'the horrific' not through a process of aestheticization but rather by transgressing it into the 'more horrific' till the process tends towards boredom and subsequently expresses its autonomy by negating *nature* itself.
27. Klossowski, Pierre. 1991 (1967). "The Philosopher-Villain" in *Sade my Neighbor.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press), p. 20. In this sense the 'French Revolution' was an outrage, a transgression for Sade. Sade's insight is that the revolution, though natural in its occurrence and its grotesque manifestation, is nevertheless unnatural in so far as it hopes to secure a peaceful realm. This hope for Sade mistakes the very nature of man and it is this mistake that draws Sade away from sharing the optimistic vision posited by the revolution since it undermines, and mistakenly so, the very idea of man. For Sade, we are in our true nature beings in constant endeavour to manifest nature's primary drive, i.e., to create

via destruction. We can, for Sade, assert our autonomy only through our transgressions. Thus, in Sade we find the perfect expression of the form '*I am because I can*'.

28. Klossowski, Pierre. 1991 (1967). "The Philosopher-Villain" in *Sade my Neighbor.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press), p. 21.
29. For a broad explication of the context and the variation of Sade's usage of the term 'libertine' see, Heumakers, Arnold. "De Sade, A Pessimistic Libertine" in *From Sappho to De Sade.* Edited by Jan Bremmer. (London: Routledge), [Specially see, pp. 108-112].
30. Though Sade does accord a higher value on 'nature' over 'reason' and its constructs, he does not identify 'nature' with a static and a predictable systematic mechanism that can be completely grasped in terms of 'the adored laws of nature'. *Nature,* for Sade, is to be understood more in terms of a primordial form of force, which in its essence is *movement* — an eternal movement that is completely unpredictable in its manifestations. What we would generally call 'nature' is what Sade would take to be a particular phenomenal manifestation of that primordial force. Thus, death in all its forms, murder and abortion included, merely fulfills this formal demand of nature for *movement*.

    It is for this reason that Sade is one of the earliest proponents of active abortion who refuses to attach any negative value in its evaluation. In fact, anticipating the 'autonomy-argument' offered in favour of abortion in the celebrated 'Roe Vs. Wade (1973)', Sade, who held the thesis of 'equality of sexes', sees abortion as the right of a liberated woman. Unlike Aristotle, who takes abortion to be only a legitimate means to control the population of an ideal republic (see Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk.VII:Ch.16:1335b), Sade takes abortion to be a matter concerning the expression of one's right over one's body rather than a matter concerning the right of the state over one's body. Sade further sees abortion as a legitimate means to counter the unequal sexual liberty enjoyed between the sexes, where one is punished for adultery by virtue of bearing the mark of it while the other bears no visible mark of participation at all.
31. Elucidating the consciousness of the moral law, Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* writes: 'Suppose someone asserts of his lustful inclination that, when the desired object and the opportunity are present, it is quite irresistible to him; ask him whether, if a gallows were erected in front of the house where he finds this opportunity

and he would be hanged on it immediately after gratifying his lust, he would not then control his inclination…' (*CPrR*, 5:30).

32. Pierre Klossowski. 1991(1967). "The Philosopher-Villain" in *Sade my Neighbor.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press), p. 13.
33. Madame de Mistival's body, (Eugenie's mother) in fact bears the mark of this ultimate act of transgression. Her vaginal and bowel cavities are filled with syphilis infected sperm and sewn up by Eugenie herself, on the suggestion of Madame de Saint-Ange, so that the poison remains *within*. Sade's carefully crafted scene, with the female characters as the perpetrators of violence, symbolically suggests that the ultimate act of transgression constitutes in the act of nature itself transgressing its own *telos*.
34. Frame narrative or frame story is a literary technique of embedding companion narratives within the main narrative.
35. *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade,* commonly shortened to *Marat/Sade.*
36. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the play, in terms of its critical acceptance was largely seen as a work representing the 'total theatre' of the absurd marked by senseless violence and perversity, and thus appropriately set within the confines of the Charenton asylum with the mad inmates, including Sade himself, as actors enacting the play. For the majority, even Weiss's play was interpreted as highlighting the 'absurdity' of it all. But is not Weiss's *Marat/Sade* meant to shake us off from the self-denial that we live in, whereby the pleasure we derive from these outrageous stimulations in turn outrage our sense of our self-projected moral/social selves? Reviewing the work in 1968, Wuletich writes, '…the reviews and essays of virtually every critic of *Marat/Sade* demonstrate indiscriminate affirmation of all varieties of spectacles provided they are ingenious and entertaining, some critics even going out of their way to call vices virtues and justify pornography, cruelty, and barbarism on pseudo-philosophical or pseudo-aesthetic grounds' (p. 99). But set in the background of the Revolution, Wuletich reads in Weiss's work, the Sadean prophecy that these depicted acts of violence, depravity and cruelty would one day be a stark reality of the enlightened society (p. 91). The in-text citation provided in this note refers to, Wuletich, Sybil. 1968. "The Depraved Angel of "Marat/Sade" in *Contemporary Literature*. Vol.9/ No.1., pp. 91-99.

37. What is peculiar to Sade's analysis of human nature is the hesitancy he seems to advocate in optimistically adopting the movement towards the true nature of man as an *ideal*. Sade's writings indicate a deep distrust in the faith that man's perfectibility must necessarily be in accordance with his truthfulness to his own nature. Sade rather seems to hold that whether one ought to celebrate this approximation of one's true nature is dependent upon the horizon that is set by us in this pursuit of perfection. For Sade, as is indicated in his *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, such a pursuit, given man's essential transgressive nature must rather be curtailed if the ideal that we set for ourselves is the establishment of an ideal republic. Our *being* in its very essence is, for Sade, intrinsically opposed to any structure of moral/social, political, or religious, because in essence man defies all structural relation with an 'other'.

CHAPTER 7

The Sadean Libertine: Autonomy as Perversion

> The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.
>
> –Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.[1]

> It has pleased Nature so to make us that we attain happiness only by way of pain.
>
> –Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*.

The acknowledgement of the Sadean thesis that perversion is, in fact, the exclusive mode of expression of the freedom that is intrinsic to the self leads to the recognition of the fact that perversion is not merely a *necessity* but rather the foremost expression of our intrinsic nature, and thus the inevitable "normal". In other words, perversion, within the Sadean thesis, must express itself precisely *through*, and *in*, the phenomenality of our *being* as *beings in* and *of* the world. Consequently, freedom *as* autonomy is both our mode of participating in the primordial principle of movement in *nature*, as well of affirming its inevitability by virtue of being a part of *nature*. Understood thus, it is evident that perversion must be accommodated within the phenomenality of the world, not as matter of choice or as sympathetic compensation, but rather as a necessity of existence itself.

But if perversion *is* our essential nature, then how have we

come to lose sight of this immediate truth? Accordingly, Sade's must account for our amnesia and address the question, "How have we come to forget, what cannot seemingly be forgotten?" That is: "How precisely did we hide from ourselves the very nature of our *being*?" Sade takes this to be the primary question, which if satisfactorily addressed, can reveal much more than merely the structure that facilitates this forgetfulness in us.

In tune with the dominant trend of his times, and as ingrained within the spirit of Enlightenment, Sade diagnoses the condition of forgetfulness as a result of our entrenchment in our constructed edifices of 'religion/morality' that serves as a veil to keep our sight away from recognizing our primordial transgressive nature. Our moral/religious structures, which when taken as *a priori* and as the transcendental ground of our autonomous nature, manages to convince us that our autonomous nature is fundamentally defined by the limits of what *cannot* be transgressed. It is through this illusionary curtailing of our transgressive nature that the self comes to be grasped as a puny and a diminutive self—a self that is thereby bound to a structure of *oughts* and that can only celebrate its opposition to its inherent *principle of movement* and its drive to transgress *all*. A moral structure, therefore, ensures that our autonomy hits an *apparent* unscalable wall. Thus, a large portion of Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* is dedicated to the deconstruction of our religious/moral facade through a semantic dissection of our notions of 'divine', 'god', 'virtues', 'evil', 'vice', 'conscience' and the like, which Sade takes to be the foundational pillars sustaining the weight of the limiting bounds imposed by our religious/moral structure upon our autonomous self. Sade is in no way uncertain that it is the edifice of our religious beliefs and practices, that we have come to be embedded in, that attenuates our ability to recognize our primordial nature. It is this Sadean portrayal of our religious/moral structures that *coincidentally*[2] reverberates in the works of Nietzsche nearly a century later, though there it appears in a much thorough and nuanced articulation given Nietzsche's sensitivity to the history of Christianity.

Significantly, in Sade, the foregrounding of our religion/morals as a farce is not the *end* towards which his scrutiny moves. Rather,

and more importantly, his critique, in order to dispel the veil of the moral facade afforded by our structures of morality and religion, is an attempt to ultimately help us see the urgency with which we must come to terms with our own genuine autonomous nature — our freedom — and what this subsequently entails for our construal of the social/moral order itself.

And given that Sade positions himself within the landscape of the Enlightenment movement, his contention that the edifice of religion is but a farce is itself hinged upon the cherished belief of his contemporaneous Enlightenment thinkers that the rational structure underlying reality can accommodate no contradictions. After all, if reason is order and harmony, no disharmonious element can be permitted by a rational structure. Sade, therefore, works to expose the inherent inconsistencies harboured within the moral facade of our religion/morals. Thus, if the edifice of our religious discourse is inherently inconsistent in terms of the beliefs it upholds, then Sade insists that we, as rational beings, must unwittingly accept that the structure of morality as proffered by religion, along with the ensuing picture of human nature, as illusory too. More importantly, Sade intends to expose that our belief in the indubitability of the mark of autonomy as the primal mark of the rational moral self — as demonstrated by Kant and celebrated within the folds of Enlightenment thinkers — simply runs counter to our religious belief in an *a priori* moral order. Thus, as Sade sees it, the project of Enlightenment must choose between the exclusive disjunctive pair of autonomy of the self or the *givenness* of a moral/social order. In the Sadean analysis, the non-recognition of this fundamental choice has led us to wilfully adopt and embrace both these contradictory demands. It is under the greater burden of attempting to live this contradiction that we have managed to transform our existence into an unbearable curse.

As Sade sees it, it is through this illusionary religious structure that we have managed to lace ourselves with a set of delusionary moral values such that we have come to give ourselves as virtues the counter-intuitive drive to efface, not merely the interests of the self, but the very phenomenality of our being itself. Sade pronounces our very idea of *virtue* as 'counterfeit divinities' that 'is but a chi-

mera whose worship consists exclusively in perpetual immolations, in unnumbered rebellions against the temperament's inspirations'. In his defense, he provokes his reader to ask if '...such impulses [to efface the self can ever] be natural?' For him, the inherent contradiction that we live, through the experience of our impulses of 'ambition' and 'pride' on the one hand, and the demand of virtue to moderate it in the light of selflessness on the other, lead us into a state of 'situational numbness, of torpor' that in a delusional way makes us committed to the pursuit of the highest ideal of 'a being who has no urges'. How can, asks Sade, 'it then be better, wiser, more just to perform sacrifices to egoism than to one's passions?' For Sade our inability to see the inherent contradiction in the vision of a life that must be deprived of life itself, of any spontaneous motion — of passion and joy — is both shocking and dangerous.[3] In fact, Sade construes the sustenance of our belief in God precisely as a necessity arising both out of our acceptance of this contradiction, and our need to make sense of the burden of the contradiction that we then seek to live. It is the historical fact of our acceptance of this contradiction that paves way for both the genesis of, as well as the unshakable faith in, the existence of God.[4] Accordingly, 'God', for Sade, is a 'deplorable' creation that is necessitated, by either our 'frailty' or our experience of existential 'terror' of eternal motion.[5] It is thus 'a disgusting fiction' that truly deserves to be a 'repulsive object of hatred', if one is to truly reclaim one's self as one's own.[6] Thus within the Sadean analysis, the Kantian attempt to institute the divinized realm of the *Transcendental*, and its postulates like God and the apriority of *duties*, is precisely yet another manifestation of our *self-denial* to acknowledge the actuality of the existential terror we face when we encounter the principle of movement as the primordial principle of *nature*.

It is in legitimizing our denial of this *self-denial* itself that then leads us to fabricate the categories of "evil" and "abnormal" — the "pathological" in general — as a modality to make existence meaningful and bearable. But as Sade sees it, given that we overlook the fact that the category of *evil* is but *our* mode of categorizing the manifestation of our attempts to reconcile ourselves with the primordial *principle of movement* that is inherent in nature, we fail to realize that

evil can never be reconciled. Its reconciliation precisely demands the complete wiping out of the horizon of any transcendental morality. That is, if the *apriority* ascribed to our moral structures are false, then our judgments ascribing *evil* are invariably false as well.

The Kantian conciliatory approach towards this contradiction by invoking an idea of transcendental *causality* as a form of *intelligible* cause, therefore, inevitably encounters the challenge of reconciling the enigmatic fact of worldly *evil* with the fact that *autonomy* would have to necessarily be "just" and thus, 'should never be able to ally itself to the essential injustices decreed by nature'. Given that, for Kant, spontaneity as moral determination would simultaneous be a 'willing of the good', even

> God would constantly have to will the good, while Nature must desire it only as compensation for the evil which serves her laws... [Subsequently], it would be necessary that he, God, exert his influence at all times, while Nature, one of whose laws is this perpetual activity, could only find herself in competition with an unceasing opposition to him.[7]

Our faith in the absolute supremacy of God in the light of such a problematic logic is, for Sade, yet another fatal act of 'stupidity' on our part — an attempt to defer the inevitable recognition of the eternal principle of motion. It is this act of deference that postpones the realization of an 'inherent force' in

> nature herself that enabled by reason of her energy, [the ability] to create, produce, preserve, maintain, hold in equilibrium within the immense plains of space all the spheres that stand before our gaze and whose uniform march, unvarying, fills us with awe and admiration.[8]

Given that, for Sade, *nature* is thus 'matter in eternal motion', it is this primordial principle that comes to be simply manifested in our pursuit of spontaneous fulfillment of the desires of sensibility that is 'placed in us by Nature herself'.[9] All our diverse actions, in so far as their ontological basis is concerned, are but manifestations of this underlying singular *form* of *movement*. Seen thus, our so-called tables of '*vice* and *virtue*' are simply our imposed classification and hierarchization upon the various embodied manifestations of this principle of motion in its numerous material contexts that are

'relative to our manners and the climate we inhabit' within the phenomenal world.

That is, Sade accepts that the Kantian thesis that autonomy provides us with the *form*, though not the content, of our choices. Seen thus, for Sade too, human freedom *as* autonomy can thus only provide us the *form* of the 'good', which is marked by spontaneity, but cannot afford to give us the concrete values that would *contentually* constitute the good itself. Accordingly, for Sade, all our concrete choices and actions that *can* be accommodated by the *form* of this singular principle of motion would have to be seen as *good*. And given that all of our actions and choices that we have come to label as "evil" or "immoral" are but mere manifestations of the primordial principle of movement, the very category of "evil" is itself superfluous.

Our belief in the *a priori* nature of a specific set of moral values and the laws expressing them — that is, our belief in a pure moral conscience that stirs us from *within* — is, for Sade, an upshot of the susceptibility of our credulous minds towards superstitions that is fostered through self-deception by our so-called religious/moral frameworks that foster certain orientations towards the world and the self.[10] As Sade sees it, long periods of such subjugation of the self under the dictates of such fabricated laws ultimately make them appear to us as emerging from *within* the depths of our moral conscience itself. Consequently, what was imposed by us thus comes to be ultimately seen as our intrinsic nature itself. The moral conscience, as the internal source of moral laws, is itself a farce.[11] For Sade, the annihilation of religion/morals is thus a precondition for the realization of one's authentic *conscience* that is free from such lies and deceit. It is only then that one's conscience can genuinely hear the dictates of Nature 'written in the hearts of all men'.[12] It is only such a *conscience*, where nature's impulses can be discerned that can truly become the seat of free actions.

Further, Sade contends that even in terms of its cognitive content, our religious beliefs are embedded in a structure that is itself a product of immense creativity, cunningness and self-deception on our part. It is indeed a craft *par excellence* to present our weakness — to face the truth of our *being* — as strength. For Sade,

religion affords us a structure that over time has excelled in the art of concealing the fact that our will is just too weak to embody nature's fundamental principle of motion. That is, we have turned into beings who no longer have the strength to be autonomous and free. In brief, it is a *will* that is not strong enough to *transgress*. In fact, though Sade's attack on the cognitive content of religious belief lacks much of the nuanced expressions that Nietzsche provides us, he nevertheless anticipates Nietzsche in upholding the notion of "God" as our fabrication that is forged precisely as a counter-measure to our recognition of our inherent transgressive nature. He anticipates Nietzsche in that he takes our creation of the notion of God — the transcendental ground of morality — as marked by 'imprudence, weakness and folly'. This farce, as Sade sees it, is immediately revealed under the light of critical scrutiny, where the notion of "God" begins to manifest itself as a mirror image of our weakness. After all, Sade contends that under a critical gaze the Christian God comes across as nothing more than a portrait of 'an unfortunate fellow' who 'created us to worship him' while we can merrily mock his omnipotence.[13] But this farce, Sade acknowledges, is well concealed with yet another postulated threat of God's *wrath* or "eternal torment" for the defiance of His *Will*.[14] The protective shield afforded by such a posited "threat" ensures that we do not see *His* weakness *as* weakness, while concealing ours through a structure of faithful obedience. Sade reminds us emphatically that we must never forget that it is not for no reason that 'ignorance and fear... are the foundational twins of every religion' that demands obedience on the basis of faith.[15] For Sade, the postulate of God's wrath inaugurates the possibility of relocating the locus of our existential *terror* from the revealing encounter with nature's inherent principle of eternal movement onto 'a fear of the unknown'. It is in this crafty superimposition of the 'unknown' as the source of our discomfort, that permits us a consoling — even if delusionary — fabrication of 'hope'. The soothing effects of hope unfolds precisely against the horizon of our self-betrayal — against the horizon of our conversion of our existential terror into a feeling of 'dread of God', the *Unknown*. The whole of our moral structure

that thus ensues is nothing more than an institutionalization of this 'hope' furtively cast as a structure of perfecting one's self — of cognizing one's finitude.

It is no wonder then, as Sade sees it, that historically the invention of God finds its true origins in the context of the fact of 'despotism' of the nobles and aristocracy whose 'persecution' bolstered this *fiction* amongst the weak and the powerless, and consequently became the very basis for morality.[16] The creation of this fiction was the cunning move of the subjugated — the weak, and the powerless — in a bid to curtail the transgressive drive of the aristocratic *will* that was powerful and extracted absolute obedience. The fabrication of God was thus a countermove to disarm the *free* — the autonomous will — of its very freedom by postulating in turn, an even more powerful *Will* than those of the nobles and the aristocrats. It was in this subversive move of the *weak* that "God" and his *Will* were born.

Thus historically, the twin pillars of hope and dread, for Sade, prepare the groundwork for all of our moral/social structures by subjugating the natural transgressive spontaneity of our embodied will to a regulative structure that provides us both with a 'hope towards' a better existence, as well as a 'dread for disobedience'.[17] It is here that we begin our transformation from a being who asserts one's transgressive nature — one's spontaneous nature — into a being who obeys *in* hope. But as Sade points out, this fabrication too is rooted in our transgressive drive, except here, in our weakness, one attempts one final vengeful and bold movement of turning the principle of movement *eternally* against itself. In this, the invention of God was a subverted act of transgression on the part of the weak wherein the spontaneity of the self was curtailed precisely by transgressing its very drive to transgress. It is, for Sade, precisely towards this end that all the institutionalization of "Thou shalt..." and "Thou shalt not..." garners momentum in human history. It was by institutionalizing this fiction that the expression of any natural transgressive perversity, which *is* the authentic nature of the self, was made to confront a wall whenever it sought to 'disregard, to disobey and to transgress' — that is, whenever it sought to assert

its primordial autonomy.[18] Consequently, for Sade, the 'object of horror' that we had forged in the face of our existential *terror* is what has historically come to impede our own natural spontaneity, and steadily threatens to efface the nature of our genuine autonomy from our conscience, altogether.[19]

In the light of this Sadean analysis, all *a priori* structures of social/moral order, therefore, have one primary purpose, namely, to curtail the spontaneity of the autonomous self through a deceptive projection of *hope*, complimented by *fear*, if not adhered to. Seen thus, the force of the Kantian belief in the *a priori* nature of the moral order lies precisely in the delusion created by the sincerity of intention that it exhibits. After all, it *promises* us a much better realm of existence in lieu of our abidance to the demand of moral purity. But as is the case with all instances of delusionary promises, the Kantian demand for the sacrifice of our phenomenal self at the altar of moral purity is but a demand for the effacement of the autonomous self. Such has always been the case, on the Sadean analysis, with all our structures of religion/morals, whereby they seek to curtail the primordial demand of the self for *movement* — a movement free of restrictions.

Through this frame of *hope-fear*, Sade therefore reads 'gratitude' as an invention of the weak to subvert the 'pride' of the powerful.[20] For him, the 'values of generosity, humanity, charity' are invented and preached precisely by 'imposters' and 'indigents… to secure sustenance and toleration', lest the autonomy of the powerful — their freedom — unleashes itself once again. The vice of 'incest' itself is, for Sade, merely a creation 'grounded on the fear' of 'certain families becoming too powerful'.[21] On a similar note, for Sade, the cherished Christian values of 'benevolence' and 'charity', which sustain the entire edifice of the rhetoric of 'selflessness', are but cajoled manifestations of our 'pride' rather than 'authentic virtues' that are cunningly devised as modes of disempowering the *other* into 'inactivity'.[22] That is, 'altruism' manifests itself as sublime and beautiful precisely because 'it is false'; because in nature nothing is either 'beautiful' or 'sublime', it just is *as it is*.[23]

Thus, as Sade sees it, the fundamental move in the institutionalization of moral values to curtail the spontaneity of the embodied

will lies in the manner in which the *self* is stealthily distanced from nature through a devious projection of the our *self* as being set apart from the rest of nature.[24] In this, Sade contends, Christianity's promise of salvation is precisely a promise that one can rise above nature itself — that one can *transgress* nature. However, in doing so, it cunningly executes a subversive move that is antithetical to the very demand of nature's primordial transgressive *form* of motion by binding it to the twin notions of *dread* and *hope* that the embodied will — that is, we — dare not *transgress*. Thus, as Sade sees it, in the final analysis, our fabricated structures of religious morality themselves divulge the fact of unavoidability of nature's principle of *eternal movement* — the inescapability from its overarching reach. Religion too, it turns out on the Sadean analysis, to be a 'perverted' mode of transgressing nature by waging a war on her ordained *telos*.[25] Morality's calculative portrayal of humans as superior to other creatures of nature by virtue of its moral conscience, is precisely a manipulative structure that demands the subversion of our very transgressive self as a precondition to rise above *nature*. Thus, the call to transgress *nature* turns out to be, on the final analysis, a call to efface ourselves — a call towards nihilism though dressed in a vocabulary of optimism. It is precisely this nihilistic tendency that is inherent to it that denies this act the status of a genuine expression of autonomy. This transgressive ardour for self-effacement, given its nihilistic grounds, lacks the self-sufficiency of a genuine expression of autonomy. The force of its *call* depends upon the *a priori* source of our dread and hope, and thus in this dependency, it nullifies its own autonomy.

In fact, the weakness of the weak is displayed precisely in their very disowning of the true transgressive nature of their creation of morals, and in their denial of their creation as being an act of transgression against the 'strong' and against *nature* itself. As Sade sees it, what underlies the effort of the weak in their bid to override the dictates of nature's principle of movement — as manifested in the strong aristocratic will — is precisely the transgressive nature of their own self. The weak, after all, exhibit the intrinsic transgressive nature of the self in their very denial of what is natural. That is, for Sade, the Christian values are themselves, in a deeper sense,

an expression of our inner transgressive nature that fails to express itself genuinely *as* perversion. Thus, for Sade, given that our actions *outside* the bounds of a forged contrivance of religion or morality must essentially be rooted in our primordial transgressive nature, the invention of Christianity is no exception as well. After all, if our inventions could effectively *erase* our intrinsic nature, then it would be highly suspicious to consider it as either intrinsic or fundamental in the first place. Thus, as Sade sees it, the celebration of altruism, as foregrounded within the Christian value-system, even if farce, is precisely a celebration — even if inauthentic — of one's effort to transgress the dictates of *nature*. The institutionalization of religion and the moral structures that accordingly ensue from it, are thus, the material manifestation of an *attempted* revolt of the weak on discovering the principle of eternal movement inherent in existence — a *desperate* revolt to arrest this *movement* itself.

As Sade sees it, the forging of our table of virtues are thus a desperate attempt on our part to arrest the 'law of nature' that assures sustenance to only those capable of asserting their existence — only those who can conformingly embrace the inextinguishable *movement* of nature. That is, it is a desperate attempt to overcome the fundamental truth of *nature* that to exist is to be in a 'state of perpetual strife and destruction',[26] wherein the weak shall 'yield to the strong'.[27] It is precisely in our inability to accept our weakness *as* weakness — our inevitable defeat — that we turn towards nihilism. After all, for Sade, the inability to positively embrace the originary principle of movement and its consequences is symptomatic of our failure to embrace the autonomy of the self, and thereby, is a failure to embrace life itself. Thus, in the Sadean analysis, to *truly be* is thus to *be free* — autonomous, and thereby, transgressive.

Ironically, like Kant, for Sade too, the cry for 'equality' thus comes to be a mere proclamation of 'uniform importance of all individuals' *sub specie aeternitatis*. But for Sade, this proclamation simply ascertains nature's 'perfect indifference' towards the 'victim' of dominance and reaffirms for us that the injured person cannot be 'more precious to Nature' than the one who injures. Thus, our invocation of the category of 'cruelty', if legitimately invoked, can

merely be a modality of labelling this *indifference* that is inherent in *nature*. Seen thus, *cruelty* signifies that which is merely in tune with nature rather than being indicative of a breach. [28] After all, Sade asserts that, 'cruelty, very far from being a vice, is the first sentiment nature injects in us all'.[29] The failure to recognize our nature as 'stamped' upon us, and the resultant aberration of our natural self, is but the consequence of the 'modifications ensured by our education'. In that, we can be analogically compared to 'a tree' that has been crafted through 'arboriculture'.[30] Sade's contention is that it was in defiance of nature and her dictates of egoism, that the expression of what was truly natural to us — that is, the very materialization of our self-assertions — came to be portrayed as 'cruelty' and disvalued as a "vice". Thus, for Sade, our labelling of 'vice' as 'depravity' is not merely indicative of our erroneous construal of what autonomy genuine entails, but rather indicative of how far we have come to believe our own lies. Seen thus, if the so-called natural 'evils' like 'wars, plagues, famines, murders' are conceived as, 'necessary in accordance to the law of nature's laws', one must, for the sake of consistency, absolve man as being blameworthy for abiding by the law of his own transgressive nature.[31] After all, the self in its essential nature operates in a mode of self-sustenance, which for Sade, is blatantly obvious even through a cursory glance at the 'primitive stage of the savage man'.[32] But through the delusional belief in an *a priori* moral/social order, the self imposes upon itself a demand that completely inverts its character resulting in an alienation from its natural 'state of perpetual and reciprocal warfare' with the rest of existence. Altruism precisely denies the self its self-centric orientation and thus deprives it of its very life force of activity bestowed upon it by nature itself.[33]

Accordingly, Sade's work obsessively depicts acts of cruelty to enable us to confront the simple fact that the construal of something as 'cruel' necessarily entails a harmonious landscape that presupposes existence as being necessarily woven with a moral thread. The horror that these depictions manage to draw from us is indicative of how deeply we have come to value the *lie* promoted by the ideal of humanism, and have thereby come to label

as 'crime... anything that conduces to a different end' from those of our fabricated ideals.[34] It is from the firm belief in altruism that expressions of natural spontaneity of the self, which pivots around self-interests, come to be erroneously marked as a 'perversion' and 'violence'. For Sade, to recognize the necessity of violence is to be receptive of one's own inherent sensibility, which has been suppressed into a state of hypocrisy through a structure of lies that we have been educated into. In fact, the realization of freedom is, for Sade, simultaneously a recognition of 'cruelty'.[35] That is, Sade sees cruelty as one of the marks of the liberated autonomous self in so far as freedom *as* autonomy is essentially transgressive, and the manifestation of that which is transgressive very often comes to be schematized by us *as* cruel. That these expressions of autonomy happen to be seen *as* cruel *by us* from within the bounds of our 'normal' is a matter of complete indifference to the liberated self for it partakes in cruelty not for the sake of any other pleasure or interest, but solely as an expression of one's autonomy. Hence, Sade clearly distinguishes 'cruelty' with a conscience of ownership from the species of cruelty 'that results from stupidity, which, never reasoned, never analyzed, assimilates the unthinking individual into a ferocious beast' without affording any 'pleasure' and thus bears no promise of 'liberation' in contrast to cruelty that arises from an act of transgression *as* perversion. It is only through perversion that the genuine self 'awakens in cruelty [and it is also cruelty] that liberates it'.[36] In it, one realizes oneself finally as a *libertine* — the free, autonomous being who is *what* one primordially always was.[37] Thus, Sade's forewarns us that it is only in the discerning individual that 'genuine cruelty in forms of excess... procures liberation' of the self.[38] The acts of such a liberated self, even though deemed as unnatural and in conflict with everything of moral value by others, are but expressions of its natural autonomy and that all they do can 'be demonstrated to be within the boundaries of the nature of man'.[39] Thus, within the Sadean formulation, transgressions that might appear 'blackest' and the 'most frightful crimes' are but the ones that are the genuine creation of an unbridled autonomous and spontaneous self.

NOTES

1. Wilde, Oscar. 1904. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. (New York: Charterhouse Press), p. 232.
2. Even a cursory reading of Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* enables one to recognize its voice as being clearly echoed in the central plots of Nietzsche's works. However, Nietzsche does not acknowledge either Sade's works or Sade as an influence. But then, to be fair to Nietzsche and other scholars who *might* have been influenced by Sade, Sade's works were not something that one could publicly cite either, without risking a dent at one's image and prospects of publication.
3. *PB,* pp. 208-9.
4. See, *PB,* p. 209.
5. *PB,* p. 210.
6. *PB,* p. 241.
7. Sade asks, '... am I to hear in reply, that God and Nature are one? 'Tis an absurdity. The thing created cannot be the creative being's equal. Might the pocket watch be the watchmaker?' (*PB,* p. 210)
8. *PB,* p. 210-11.
9. *PB,* p. 223.
10. Akin to Locke's criticism of our belief in the innate nature of moral values, Sade clearly takes our *concrete* moral values as a product of our geo-cultural locale, and thus as matters of pure accident. It is no less than a folly to seek their origins in some innate plane of *moral conscience* that is untouched by our sensibility. See, *PB,* pp. 217-8; also, see, *PB,* p. 354. All knowledge in their concrete manifestation, Sade reminds us, much like Hume, is invariably the 'outcome of experience and experience is only acquired by the exercise of the senses'. (*PB,* 304-5).
11. For Sade, this internalization occurs through the cultivation of fear in divine reprehension — either hereon in this world or the one that is to come — in the name of 'impiety, sacrilege, blasphemy', and 'atheism', that fortify these laws of religion and ingrain them in us till we deceive ourselves into believing that our conscience genuinely 'hears' these laws and begin to accept them as one's own moral voice. See, *PB,* pp. 308-9.
12. *PB,* p. 304.
13. *PB,* p. 301. Thus, Sade assures us that 'atheism is the one doctrine of all those prone to reason' (*PB,* p. 299).
14. *PB,* p. 211.

15. *PB,* p. 304.
16. *PB,* pp. 214-15.
17. *PB,* p. 305.
18. As Nietzsche too would emphatically emphasize later, that if God is dead, it is precisely because we have murdered him.
19. See, *PB,* p. 214.
20. See, *PB,* p. 287.
21. See, *PB, p. 236.* For Sade, the very basis of the ideal of the 'family' that stands upon the virtue of *selfless* bonding; an institution that proves the possibility of actualizing altruism in the form of parenting, is itself a farce. For him, the idea of the 'family' too, has its origins in the arts of deception and camouflage. The values that emerge from such a structure of moral valuations are, for Sade, inevitably and equally deceptive. Thus, the virtue of 'care and obedience' of a dutiful child is but a facade to ensure the unquestioning reduction of a one's *being* as instruments of furthering the interests of the parents (*PB,* p. 219). Likewise, reciprocal parental love is 'fictitious, absurd', and grounded fundamentally in 'self-interest, prescribed by usage and sustained merely by habit' (*PB,* p. 354). And the 'politic attentions they show us in our infancy have no object but to make them deserving of the same consideration when they are become old' (*PB,* p. 284). They are but well couched self-interest and equations of commerce posited as 'tenderness' (*PB,* p. 285). Likewise, the virtue of *fidelity* is a well-couched call for the effacing of one's self-desires in relation to the steady satisfaction of the needs of the other, with 'divorce' as its well-crafted mechanism for ensuring its sense of pseudo-justice. For Sade, fidelity merely opens up the possibility of the self to be reciprocally enslaved to the other (*PB,* p. 223).

    Similarly, on the Sade's analysis, the posited virtue of 'love' though fundamentally grounded in our natural instinct 'to possess', comes to be neatly re-dressed as a supreme value that demands us to 'efface our self' and to 'voluntarily... deprive oneself of all life's sweetness' (*PB,* p. 285). Sade reminds us that 'they were the first Christians who, daily persecuted on account of their ridiculous doctrine, used to cry at whosoever chose to hear: "Don't burn us, don't flay us! *Nature says one must not do unto others that which unto oneself one would not have done!*"'. For Sade, it was through this lie that we moved away from our genuine self that was meant to 'delight in itself'. (*PB,* p. 253).
22. See, *PB,* p. 215. In a similar vein, 'charity' and the value of 'pity' are,

for Sade, convoluted modes of destroying the intrinsic ability of man to rise above the 'misfortune one is born into'. Sade asserts, that the 'spontaneous' self has the intrinsic ability to transgress its own facticity through the channeling of the energy and resources bestowed on him by his transgressive nature. Unfortunately, one's nature thus runs counter to the Christian demand that one partakes of, and lulls us into celebrating our unfortunate condition as divinely fated. See, *PB*, p. 340.

23. *PB*, p. 309.
24. In tune with his naturalism, Sade holds that this hierarchy is 'found to stem from our pride's prejudices', which is itself absurd to hold, since man is but yet another creature 'fortuitously placed, like [other natural objects], upon this globe, he is born like them; like them, he reproduces, rises, and falls; like them he arrives at old age and sinks like them into nothingness at the close of the life span Nature assigns each species of animal, in accordance with its organic construction... the inquiring eye of philosophy is absolutely unable to perceive any grounds for discrimination'. (*PB*, p. 330).
25. For Sade this implies that through its values of 'pity', 'charity' and 'compassion', the Christian value-structure wages a war on nature's dictates of 'self-preservation' and her mechanism of natural selection of existence. It defiantly seeks to preserve those who fail the test of nature to sustain their self-existence, subsequently wreaking the 'State' itself by unwanted population. (See, *PB*, pp. 215-16).
26. *PB*, p. 253.
27. *PB*, p. 254.
28. *PB*, p. 283.
29. *PB*, p. 253.
30. *PB*, p. 254.
31. *PB*, p. 231.
32. See *PB*, p. 284.
33. See, *PB*, p. 286. Sade's *libertine* recognizes this demand of hypocrisy as an inevitable mark of the 'social', or a mark of 'character that is indispensable to man in society'. (*PB*, p. 279). He realizes that he is 'condemned to live amidst people who have the greatest interest in hiding themselves... in disguising the "vices" they have in order to exhibit nothing but "virtues" they never respect' and thus he recognizes the futility and danger of being honest. Accordingly, the Sadean libertine, recognizes the necessity of 'yielding to the fact' that dissimulation and hypocrisy are bequeathed to us by society as

a necessity for the very sustenance of the ideal of the 'social' and for the very possibility of a 'civilization' *as such.* (*PB,* p. 279).

34. *PB,* p. 274.
35. This Sadean thesis is what Simone de Beauvoir too takes as being central to his account of freedom. Though it must be added that for Simone de Beauvoir it is precisely the failure on the part of Sade to transgress this aspect of freedom that his ethics of freedom fails and remains incomplete. See, Beauvoir, Simone de. 1953. *Must we Burn Sade?* Trans. Annette Michelson. (London: Peter Nevill Ltd.).
36. *PB,* p. 255.
37. Correspondingly, Sade distinguishes two varieties of 'crime' — the first being an act that is fueled by desperation rather than imagination, such as stealing or murder or robbery, while the second being those that are fueled by the force of imagination to transgress itself. The first category, for Sade, is a brute crime and unworthy of any praise. Dolmance rejects *charity* precisely because he sees them as the ground for the production of 'thieves' and 'assassins'. (See, *PB,* p. 215). Also see, *PB,* p. 279.
38. See *PB,* p. 263.
39. See *PB,* p. 274.

CHAPTER 8

The Perverse Self: Body and the Sadean Republic

> ...your body is your own, yours alone...
>
> –Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom.*

> Flow! my fluid flows! ...and I die!
>
> –Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom.*

Sade shares the Kantian thesis that the phenomenality of the world, our bodies included, must be *distinguished* from our intelligible nature that finds its expression through it. This agreement with Kant, notwithstanding, Sade would go on to insist that the Kantian error lies in holding the two to be *separable*. In that, for Sade the autonomy of the self cannot be indifferent to the phenomenality of one's being, as asserted by Kant. For Sade, it is not merely the case that the only mode through which our autonomy — when accurately discerned in terms of its fundamental transgressive nature — can ever find its expression is through the phenomenality of my being; but more importantly, my 'body' is constitutive of my autonomous nature itself. Thus for Sade, the Kantian demand of purity *from* the phenomenality of our existence for a genuine assertion of one's autonomy inverts the true nature of autonomy itself. For the Sadean libertine, autonomy cannot be construed sans the materiality of nature and my existence. Accordingly, for Sade, our values, if they are grounded in my autonomous nature, and

thereby are of genuine value, must have their locus as the 'body'. It is such a realization that redeems our understanding what freedom *as* autonomy is, and what we are truly capable of within the larger scheme of nature.[1]

For Sade, no transgression can manifest itself in absence of a corporeal body and thus the transgressive self is necessarily expressed though a transgression that is marked *through* the body. For Sade, it is precisely through the denial of the corporeality of the self that we permit ourselves to conceive of the Kantian noumenal realm as a realm that is *in-itself* and devoid of the phenomenal corporeality of our material world. In fact, as Sade sees it, the first move towards the accommodation of altruism within a moral structure must, therefore, necessarily begin with — as is attested by the history of our value-systems — the disowning of the body, and along with it, the disowning of its basic instincts and drives. It is precisely this move of effacing the locus of one's self *as* the body, and thereby reconfiguring it as being *in* the body, that enables the thriving of Christian values and morality in general. This reconfiguration, which is afforded by the structure of our language, is what misleads us into construing our autonomy in pure incorporeal terms, and consequently steers us towards the relinquishing of our rights over it. It is in this surrendering of one's rightful claim over one's body that we come to grant the world the right over it, and thereby legitimize their claim over ourselves; while under the illusion that our *self*, nevertheless, remains *ours* alone. It is through this deceptive scheme that the world then finds a locus to scribe its values on us, thereby binding us to a value-structure that completely undermines our autonomy.

Therefore, genuine birth of authentic values — values that conformingly reflect our nature — comes about only through the reclaiming of one's body as being *essentially* inalienable from one's autonomous will. Consequently, for Sade, just as genuine autonomy individuates my actions as *mine*, the ownership of values emerge precisely through the recognition that 'your body is your own, yours alone'.[2] Thus to celebrate one's autonomy is to celebrate the body with the recognition that such celebrations surely 'warrant no shame'.[3] Accordingly, the bounds to *enjoy* one's body is

only fettered by the extent of one's faculty of imagination through which 'one knows joy' and the 'most piquant delights', for it is precisely the faculty of imagination that provides the possibility for the expression of nature's underlying *form* of motion — that is autonomy — through the construal of possible acts of transgression within the phenomenality of the world.[4] Thus, to recognize one's body as essential to one's self is also to shatter the shackles of one's faculty of imagination from the bounds of customs and its heralded constructs of the ideals of reason — to break one's faculty of imagination free from the scribed triadic aspects of regularity, order and the *a priori*. Accordingly, for the Sadean libertine, to claim one's body as one's own is to embrace the 'divine outbursts' or 'spontaneity' of a 'disordered imagination' in so far as the bounds of reason and the rationally ordered are but mere social constructs that have been inscribed on us.[5]

Like Kant, Sade construes the faculty of imagination as a faculty of synthesis that synthesizes the *form* underlying the determination of my choice with the *content* of my consequent action into an organic whole. Except the synthesis, for Sade, is between the primordial form of transgression and its material expression in terms of our *actual* acts of perversion. It is our faculty of imagination that grounds our expressions of our autonomy when it is 'absolutely free of prejudices' and is free to transgress its own bounds. Spontaneity that is entailed by one's autonomy, therefore, demands the transgression of the 'routine'. And in this Sadean insight is embedded the view that *completeness*, *finality* and *stability* — the three markers of a rational order — contradicts the genuine nature of our self, which is set to eternally express *movement*. For Sade, the faculty of imagination is the sanctum of 'force' that moves us into actions, and thus genuinely living and transgressing the limits set up by one's imagination are inevitably congruent. Therefore, much like the Kantian moral order, the Sadean expression of autonomy too never attains its finality within the phenomenal realm. But while Kant takes this to be an intransgressible limit imposed by our sensibility that partakes in the phenomenality of the world, Sade takes this deferring of finality as the intrinsic nature of the faculty of imagination itself, which must, when genuinely free, transgress

itself, forever pushing us 'towards the inconceivable'.[6] For Sade true liberty is thus only found in the *excess* that never fails to exceed and remains unsated. After all, every satiation is the death of what the imagination desired — and is subsequently also the fertile ground for our imagination to create a new bound to transgress — with which a new desire is born, and the *movement* of nature thus carries on eternally. Sade metaphorically puts it thus, 'my fluid flows!... and I die!...'[7] Seen thus, destruction, decay and death are inalienably one with life itself.

To abhor destruction is also to abhor nature's creation, for 'destructions are just as necessary to her plans as are creations'. Thus, destruction, for Sade, 'like creation, is one of Nature's mandates', sustaining the principle of *eternal movement*.[8] Seen thus, death is not a termination but a transformation of the body. That is, death is not 'a true finis, but a simple transformation, a transmutation of matter... no more than a change of form, an imperceptible passage from one existence into another'.[9] Accordingly, the self as a phenomenal entity is itself in a process of self-transgression by virtue of its never-ending pursuit of the actualization of our transgressive potentiality, aided by our faculty of imagination. Thus, Sade holds that one need not look for any transcendental grounds of freedom since the mark of self-transgressive imagination in man itself proclaims that man is *essentially* free!

For Sade, the Kantian thesis, that to uphold human autonomy entails his conformity to the law of reason is, therefore, an aftermath of our deep seated dependency on the fabricated truth of religion, that man is paradoxically *free* to 'obey' the laws of God. Here, we must remember Sade's constant insistence that 'theism is in its essence and in its nature the most deadly enemy of liberty'.[10] Sade reminds us that it is our failure to realize that it was through a structure of lies and deceit, promoted through a schematic schooling of principles, which ran counter to the dictates of nature, that the 'priests' managed to transform themselves as the first 'legislators' of man.[11] We of course hear Sade's cry;

> Lycurgus, Numa, Moses, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, all these great rogues, all these great thought-tyrants, knew how to associate the

> divinities they fabricated with their own boundless ambition; and, certain of captivating the people with the sanction of those gods, they were always studious, as everyone knows, either to consult them exclusively about, or to make them exclusively respond to, what they thought likely to serve their own interests.[12]

Our habitual dependence on laws — the tool of these early legislators to shun freedom; this viscid residue of the lie of religion — is what Sade fears will fail the revolution to liberate and truly free ourselves, and to finally see ourselves *as* what we truly are. On Sade's final analysis, our pursuit to reclaim our autonomy — that is, the project of Enlightenment — would ultimately fail to secure genuine autonomy precisely because of our inability to give up our chronic dependency upon some form of *transcendent* grounds for our values.[13] To Sade, this dependency of ours on some *a priori* moral laws is indicative of the fact that the venom of religious values created by the "weak" have largely succeeded in its goal of transforming the once autonomous man into a being who can no longer think for itself.[14] The structure of morals, for Sade, thus transforms us into unnatural beings that are not only easy to legislate, but rather *demand* legislation. Religion prepares a kingdom of beings *willing* to be ruled. As Sade sees it, this is the harsh reality of the Kantian *kingdom of ends*.

In Sade's political analysis, it is also precisely due to our dependency on such laws that tyranny, in its many forms, sustains itself. A thriving tyranny is indicative of a loss of our inherent autonomy.[15] Religion trains us, as Sade sees it, to look outwards for the source of legitimacy of one's actions and choices. In that, *theocracy* provides the womb for all forms of *totalitarianism* given that the former seductively trains us to inadvertently look for an external source of legitimacy for our actions, and thus bewitches us to savour *unfreedom* as freedom.[16] For Sade, upholding any form of *a priori* social/moral order that has a locus which is external to the self — even if enticingly laced within the language of "reason" and "rational" laws — is coextensive with tyranny itself, and thus is merely an attempt of the religious framework to present itself in a form that appears secular. Thus, Enlightenment's project of restoring and securing the autonomy of man, for Sade, demands more than 'breaking scep-

ters'. It demands that we 'pulverize the idols' as well.[17] For Sade, religion halts the very '*becoming* of man' by breeding a man who fails to celebrate his existence, by teaching him to forget the primordial energy that is inscribed in him by nature and by inscribing in him a contempt for his body — the only medium through which autonomy finds itself and its expressions.[18]

It is our fabricated table of moral values, which we have delusionally come to believe as a *given*, that bewitches us to experience *un*freedom *as* freedom. It is this habitual acceptance in the *givenness* of our value-system that curtails our transgressive nature by a thorough dismissal of our corporeality and by marking any corporeal expressions of genuine autonomy as "perversions of the flesh/body". As Sade sees it, the reclamation of autonomy of the self lies precisely in the uncovering of the facade of our moral and religious structures that veil my freedom from me, and distance me from my own corporeality. Thus, contra Kant, for Sade, freedom is not ensured by our movement *towards* the moral law. Rather the efforts should be to *un*-moralize ourselves so that we experience genuine freedom as is inherent in our nature. In this, unlike Kant, Sade takes it as a given that *freedom* is already a *reality* in so far as we are already inherently free.

But Sade is amply clear that man must co-exist with others, and co-existence within a shared phenomenal space necessarily demands some order. In this, the Sadean libertine, like the Kantian autonomous self, does need laws of legislation. In fact, it is through the invocation of this necessity demanded by the very nature of legislation that the curtailing of individual freedom has always been legitimized in the history of Ideas.[19] Moreover, like Kant and Plato, Sade insists that our recognition for the necessity of regulative laws within an ideal republic of free individuals must, however, ensure that our laws are themselves immanently amicable to our primordial nature and not in contrast to it. That is, the laws of the republic of free individuals must 'mirror' our nature and 'issue from it'.[20] So too, for Sade, if the promise of equality and liberty is to truly hold, then the republic of free individuals would have to ensure that the dictates of nature are not stifled and that we 'establish all the security necessary' towards that end.[21]

However, given Sade's formulation of autonomy as the essential marker of our primordial freedom in terms of our drive to transgress, the laws of the libertine, unlike the Kantian laws, are not something that the self must *aspire* to conform to. On the contrary, if they are to be laws meant for the autonomous self, then these laws must *conform* to our true nature and not the other way around. Thus, within the Sadean republic, nature alone can be the measure of one's values.[22] As creatures of nature, our moral evaluations can only be judged in terms of what 'nature inspires in us' through its principle of movement. The scale of good and bad can thus only weigh the degree of our acts in terms of their conformity with, and their conduciveness towards, the fundamental dictates ensuing from the nature of our self. And it is exclusively within such an evaluative framework that values ought to be measured.

Consequently, for Sade, the republic of the free and the autonomous must be built upon two principles alone; that of *equality* in terms of the value of the transgressive drive that each harbors and of *liberty* in terms of the propensity to realize it.[23] The former acknowledges our intrinsic nature as autonomous and the latter ensures the right to express the *form* of spontaneous motion, inscribed in me by nature, within the shared phenomenal plane of my existence.[24] Thus, for Sade, the foremost principle governing the *libertine* is nature's prescription of egoism that demands 'preserving one's essence at no matter whose expense'. Accordingly, the laws of the Sadean republic must necessarily take cognizance of this foremost dictate of nature.[25] Thus, within the Sadean republic, the beautiful falsehood of altruism can merely *urge* the 'strong' towards the values of 'humanity, fraternity, benevolence' for 'reciprocal obligations' from each other, rather than *demand* it as a *duty*. That is, for Sade, an ideal republic is fundamentally hinged upon an *expectation* from its members rather than an *obligation* that can be demanded of them. Seen thus, the very invocation of the notion of "contract" in the formulation of a republic is a betrayal of freedom.

Consequently, in Sade's analysis, though the vision of the republic of free individuals within the project of Enlightenment is framed through the lenses of equality and liberty, these notions in their hands are nonetheless trapped within the fictitious idea

of the origin of the republic in an 'originary contract'. In this, the ideal republic that it promisingly projects is thereby suspiciously suggestive of their submission to an *a priori* table of values. Sade's incisive and crucial insight is that it is in upholding the legitimacy of the idea of an 'originary contract' that we betray the genuine nature of our *being*. Our faith in the idea of an 'originary contract' fundamentally assumes that we can, through the mere force of a willful agreement on our part, dispense off with our primordial ties to the dictate of our very nature, and shed our primeval egoism for a form of altruism of commerce. That is, the thesis of 'originary contract' grounds itself upon this inadmissible belief that nature would, in light of our collective act, bend its underlying governing principle for human convenience. It is in this cunningly crafted, but nevertheless erroneous, notion of an 'originary contract', that Sade sees all the laws of the promised republic of Enlightenment as ultimately reposed.[26]

Prima facie, the 'originary contract' appears to be a *fair* and a *just* arrangement. *Prima facie,* the republic's 'imposition of conditions' upon an individual's freedom, through the contract, appears alluringly legitimate in the light of the 'guarantee' that it offers in terms of safeguarding what is rightfully one's own by institutionalizing punishments for those who violate their liberty to secure what is not rightfully theirs. However, on a closer scrutiny, it is clear that this 'guarantee' of the republic is secured precisely on the promise of the individual to curtail one's intrinsic nature — one's inherent tendency towards egoism. And, if this is the case, then the legitimacy of the republic's guarantee is cardinally hinged upon the faulty assumption that one can, in fact, wilfully *give up* one's freedom — *as if* one can bend natures dictate and give up one's autonomy in degrees. Alternatively, such a modality of securing a social/moral order for co-existence, Sade argues, can be secured only on the assumption that all those who pledge the contract 'possess' something other than what nature imparts to each, namely, one's autonomy — that is, one primordial transgressive nature along with the faculty of imagination to ensure its unfolding in the phenomenal world. In other words, the contract theory problematically assumes property and possessions — which are but *accidental* to the self — as a *natural*

and an *essential* extension of one's existence, which one brings with oneself prior to the pledging of the contract.[27] Such an assumption, problematically supposes a status of material equality, rather than the equality of natural drives, amongst the original signatories of the imagined contract.[28] Philosophically put, the contract theorists are fundamentally wrong in assuming that our ideas of freedom *as* liberty can tamper with, and manipulate successfully, the very nature of freedom *as* autonomy. That is, *our* ideals of peace and security that colours *our* notion of *liberty* is problematically assumed as having the power to alter our natural autonomous nature.

In fact, for Sade, if the social contract theorists manage anything, it is that they precisely underline the inviolability of our transgressive nature as the primordial dictate of nature. If carefully discerned, what a contract theory manages to essentially achieve is the presentation of *egoism* in disguise. It merely secures the bare right of existence of a weak and an endangered self, while securing the interest of the strong by legitimizing all that was amassed by the strong through the expression of his strength prior to the signing of the contract. Seen thus, what the 'contract' extracts are certain self-imposed prohibitions by the strong upon themselves in exchange that the weak entrap themselves irredeemably within a structure of weakness and suffering. Thus, on careful examination, the thesis of the *originary social contract* gives away its foundational oppressive nature and shows that in essence it is not 'a pact among free men [but is rather a] weapon of the strong against the weak... [through which] the rich enchain the poor [and they alone are the beneficiaries of] a bargain into which the poor man enters so thoughtlessly', and perhaps, helplessly.[29]

For Sade, in truth, what alone can be considered, if such a contract amongst free individuals is to obtain at all in accordance with the foremost principle of equality, is merely their primeval transgressive instinct and their self-centered drives. What each free individual brings to the table of negotiation is not possessions or *rights* to possessions, but merely *the instinct to possess*. It is with regards to this aspect alone that we are all equal. Thus, the subversive question, that Sade raises is this: "Is the promise of a 'kingdom of ends' itself not a contradiction — a myth that is grounded in a fun-

damental confusion?" How do we, in the lure of Enlightenment's promise, then deal with the egoistic animals that we are in terms of our basal self-assertive nature that is essentially grounded on the form of *transgression*. As Sade sees it, any *social order* — which is the first responsibility of any *ideal* republic to secure — stands in direct conflict with the essential nature of our autonomous self, since our freedom is inalienably and insatiably *transgressive*. This, after all, as Sade intends to foreground, is *essentially* in dissonance with the very demand of a social order, for social order demands that the self recognizes the import of the "other" as necessarily lying beyond the bounds of transgression. It is this demand of social/moral order that wrecks the essential and underlying fabric of freedom. Thus, our being in its very essence is, for Sade, intrinsically opposed to any structure of moral/social, political, or religious, because in essence man defies all limiting structural relations with an "other". How then do we make sense of humanism that Enlightenment promises along with its promise of the 'free-man'?

The Sadean challenge, therefore, is to precisely address the nature of freedom we acquire in light of the fact that we are in our bare truthful selves bestowed with — as intended by nature — an inalienable form of transgression. In fact, Sade's depiction of the libertine as an individual with a disarming attitude of indifference towards one's own death highlights precisely this Sadean insight that in absence of a posed limit, the self manages to pose *itself* as a limit to transgress. For Sade, it is precisely in the inability to cognize any limit to transgress that the experience of 'boredom' sets in. In this sense, Sade's existential self does not even require a Sartrean "other" to position itself as its *hell*. It can generate its own hell. And here, Sade is more Kantian than Kant himself. After all, Kant consistently acknowledges an inalienable form of violence to the self that shadows every move of the self towards its autonomy. In his moral theory, Kant positions the necessary experience of pain as a consequence of our conscious rejection of our subjective interests and inclinations in fulfilling the demand of *purity* demanded by the discharge of a genuine autonomous choice. In Kant, it is precisely the experience of this "moral feeling of pain" that is indicative of our movement towards our true noumenal self. Sade treads this

Kantian route and essentializes this self-effacing aspect of the self. But in recognition of the mythical status of the noumenal, which Kant firmly believed in, what thus remains, as Sade concludes, is the effacement of the phenomenal self *by* the phenomenal self not at the altar of moral duty but that of one's autonomous nature itself.

Here too, Sade anticipates Nietzsche in the portrayal of man as essentially egoistic in its most absolute form. In Sade we encounter egoism, not merely as prioritization of the self over the other but rather as a complete absence of an 'other' *as such*. Therefore, the very nature of the Sadean autonomous self undermines the affective powers of any dialogical structure. Consequently, the Sadean autonomous man is irredeemably solitary.

It is, for this reason, Sade has Dolmance instruct Eugenie to develop apathy while executing violence since the feeling of empathy distorts and dilutes the authenticity of the assertion of one's autonomy. Much like Aristotle, who stresses upon habituation in the practice of virtue, Dolmance instructs Eugenie in the importance of the repetitiveness of the act of perversion. As seen earlier, for Sade, 'apathy' is what distinguishes a genuine act of self-assertion or perversion in contrast to similar acts of violence or cruelty carried out under the influence of other interests. Like the Kantian demand of *purity*, an expression of autonomy, for Sade, must necessarily be devoid of any other element or externally imposed constructs of 'moral conscience'. Klossowski duly emphasizes this facet of Sade's philosophy when he writes that the Sadean 'monstrosity is the zone of being outside of oneself, outside of conscience'[30]. In this context we come to understand that the Sadean libertine is not interested in the act of violence *per se* or in the brutalization of an "other" *as such*. Rather, the "other", in Sade, transforms merely into a mediating locus for the self's pursuit of transgression. The Sadean libertine can thus be pictured as a self that is enacting an act of transgressing one's own sense of one's transgressive prowess *indifferent* to everything other than its sense of self-assertion — even to the point of self-effacement. Towards this end, violence for Sade is not an act that *in itself* secures *pleasure* for us. Pleasure is rather secured by the act of transgression, which materializes *as* an act of

violence.[31]Accordingly, the characters in Sade's works are never quite involved with an "other" *as such*.

Seen thus, Sade is cautious about Enlightenment's promise of 'autonomy', not because he disvalues or rejects the value of liberty, but precisely because Sade seems to hold that the realization of this promise would unleash a transgressive creature that we are completely unprepared for. In our project of securing *liberty*, we are, for Sade, completely oblivious to the fact that the very idea of autonomy entails an irresolvable contradiction with the notion of a social/moral order. The latter cannot operate without inviolable boundaries and the former essentially looks at all boundaries as challenges to transgress. Accordingly, Sade argues, that if the promise of an autonomous self, as engrained in the project of Enlightenment is actually secured, then moral concerns would ultimately become something completely inconsequential for us.

But apart from this inherent conflict, the promised republic of the Enlightenment embraces a second inherent challenge. Given the inherent transgressive nature of an autonomous self, it would always seek to transgress the bounds of the 'Enlightened Republic', even if these demands of constraints upon the free individual are minimal; and even if they are posited as an *expectation* rather than a *duty*. Is this not why Sade, in the most ignored portion of his *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, declares that the '*insurrection*... is always indispensable to a political system of perfect happiness...'.[32] Thus, the challenge emerges in the form of the question, 'how does the Enlightenment sustain itself on its onwards march?'[33] After all, the Enlightenment project is itself grounded upon a 'revolution' that is already ultimately rooted in this transgressive nature of man. Sade wonders how a republic that emerges through an act of transgression could then curtail transgression, which is its very ground.[34] Thus, Sade holds that the project of the promised ideal of the free republic 'is criminal already' and cannot attain its contrary without bringing forth its own ruin.[35]

Sade's point seems to be that the marriage between a social/moral order and the autonomous individual is a contradiction that is simply unrealistic and unsustainable. Or perhaps — and this is merely a *perhaps* — Sade's intent is to caution us about the impending

unbearable burden of existence that the project of Enlightenment, if actualized, would bring about. Sade perhaps wants us to pause and face the mirror and see our *being* in its nude and truthful self — that is to finally see ourselves as beings whose sole sanction of existence is to pursue the 'cruel and egoistic' drives instilled in us by nature that is 'eternally driven to transgress'.[36] After all, if we really 'have got back upon our feet and broken with the host of prejudices that held us captive', and are willing to begin with the fundamental equality bestowed upon us all by nature to 'hear her voice [then we too must be] fully convinced that if anything were criminal, it would be to resist the penchants she inspires in us rather than to come to grips with them'.[37]

But if, to be human *at last* is to realize one's autonomy, and if this freedom is the realization of such an authentic self, then for Sade, what better way to understand the force of our natural drives than the drive of *lust*, the 'primal passion'? As Sade points out,

> ...no [other] passion has a greater need of the widest horizon of liberty than has this, none, doubtless, is as despotic; here it is that man likes to command, to be obeyed, to surround himself with slaves compelled to satisfy him; well, whenever you withhold from man the secret means whereby he exhales the dose of despotism Nature instilled in the depths of his heart...[38]

We must remember, as suggested by Simon Blackburn, that even in the 'medieval imagination' it took a Phyllis to draw Aristotle out 'from his study to the garden, from the domain of reason to that of nature'.[39] And thus, for Sade, if one is out to understand the ontology of one's being, then philosophizing ought to begin in reflections concerning the '*bedroom*'; it is here that the authentic 'free self' reveals itself in all its egoism along with its self-centered 'violent' relation with the 'other'.

Perhaps we misread Sade as elevating his own 'psychophysical destiny' into a matter of 'principles of ethics' and ultimately as human destiny itself. Perhaps, rather than a prescription we should read his works as a cautionary description of what autonomy truly entails. One could then read the Sadean project as more of an interrogation posed at us seeking to know if we are willing to

embrace the ideal of freedom at all costs. If our commitment to the project of Enlightenment holds, then we would need to make way for transgressions as genuine expressions of autonomy, 'however contrary' they might appear to us.[40] We may now consider if Eugenie is not the ultimate portrayal of the transformed crusader of Enlightenment, who declares herself to be a 'worthy pupil of Dolmance'[41] — the Sadean *Zarathustra*, with her metamorphosis complete in the final act of her expressions of freedom to the horror of her mother, who not surprisingly is portrayed as the representative of the traditional morality and a 'virtuous' woman 'who has never in her life committed *a faux pas*...'?[42] Eugenie's mother, Madame De Mistival, her virtues already brutalized before her final encounter with Eugenie, stands to be brutalized and tortured yet again, as if Sade seeks to suggest the 'rape of virtues' all over again if the promise of Enlightenment materializes. Her punishment is itself a revelation of sorts — not death but decay authorized by her very husband — suggestive of the hypocrisy latent in the promise of a 'family' whose ideal is 'the protected sphere'.[43] This portrayal is suggestive of the Sadean anticipation of the disruption of our social/moral order if the project of Enlightenment, in fact, attains its fulfillment. In this, the Sadean libertine portrays the picture of the autonomous man, who though autonomous, is not merely solitary but lost by virtue of his own autonomy through a failure to make sense of the world that surrounds him.

Thus, Sade's philosophy can be positioned as an interrogation of the *intent* and *extent* of our commitment to freedom and to the ensuing principles of liberty and equality. In brief, are we willing to do all it takes to be as liberated as Eugenie? It is worth a pause to hear Sade through the almost faint and unnoticed voice of Le Chevalier — who deplores what 'being free' entails to the very idea of 'humanity' — when he bemoans the violent acts of the libertine as being legitimately justifiable through the ideals of liberty and equality that Dolmance preaches. Though an equal accomplice in the acts of cruelty that are dished out to Madame De Mistival, we must hear La Chevalier's confession with some seriousness when he lets Dolmance know that 'it is horrible, what you have us do; this at once outrages Nature, heaven, and the most sacred laws of

humanity'.[44] Do we not partake of Dolmance's stance that whether the 'other', 'does or does not share my enjoyment, whether it feels contentment or whether it doesn't, whether apathy or even pain, provided [one] is happy, the rest is absolutely all the same to me'.[45] And if we listen carefully we can hear an echo in Dolmance of the slogan, "I *am* because I *can* and I *will* because I *must*".

NOTES

1. *PB*, p. 209.
2. *PB*, p. 221.
3. *PB*, p. 267.
4. *PB*, p. 232.
5. See, *PB*, p. 233.
6. See, *PB*, p. 235.
7. *PB*, p. 243.
8. *PB*, p. 275. For Sade, it is an unfortunate failure on our part to realize that 'the one and the other of these functions are interconnected and enmeshed so intimately that for either to operate without the other would be impossible'. This is why the Sadean *Zarathustra*, Dolmance, emphatically proclaims that 'it is only by way of pain one arrives at pleasure' (See, *PB*, p. 280).
9. *PB*, pp. 330-1.
10. *PB*, p. 300. Sade claims that it is this shrewd move of asserting his transgressive nature precisely through its denial, that alienates man from his own nature as essentially free by curtailing, through externally imposed laws, his freedom — his eternal movement of transgressive imagination. It is through such an imposition that the priests managed to become 'thought-tyrants' by completely arresting our faculty of imagination. (See, *PB*, p. 302).
11. See, *PB*, p. 300.
12. Ibid.
13. See, *PB*, p. 296.
14. Sade observes, anticipating Nietzsche, that this is the subversive mode in which the priests ensure power over men without deploying power.
15. Sade makes this incisive point that it is religion that provides the 'plinth' for all forms of tyranny (See, *PB*, p. 301), and that 'there is never more than a single step from superstition to royalism' (*PB*,

p. 300). For Sade, it is this power of religion that has led to the steady marriage between the '*scepter* and *censer*' such that history reveals to us that 'he who can serve kings must adore gods' (See, *PB*, p. 299), for the structure of power of the tyrant is founded upon the edifice of religion. The former merely partakes in our need for laws — a need established as a habit by religion.

16. See, *PB*, p. 309. For Sade, this perennial outward gaze in us for laws ensures the tyranny of the *aristocrats* and *royalists,* and thus they have been, as history testifies, the most fervent defenders of religion. (*PB*, p.2 99). Sade is the first to dare us to 'inspect the history of every race' if we care to find the truth. History highlights '...kings always upholding religion, and religion sanctifying kings'. (*PB*, p. 300). It is Sade who reminds us that we 'cannot possibly liberate' man 'from royal tyranny without at the same time breaking... the fetters of religious superstition [for] the shackles of the one are too intimately linked to those of the other'. (*PB*, p. 298). We must remember that it is Sade who is the first to proclaim, 'let there be no doubt of it: religions are the cradles of despotism: the foremost amongst all the despots was a priest'. (*PB*, p. 305).
17. *PB*, p. 300. Though Karl Marx popularized the central notion that religion confines and dulls the masses from realizing the truth, and is thus a useful ally in ensuring the securement of power, it is Sade who provides the scaffolding for such an articulation.
18. Sade contrasts this with 'paganism', which he sees as arousing 'the verve of great men'. Like Nietzsche, who juxtaposes his age with the age of the Greeks, Sade juxtaposes his with the age of the Romans. (See, *PB*, pp. 298-301).
19. Scholars like Isaiah Berlin have consistently highlighted this uneasy relation between legislation on the one hand and freedom on the other. Berlin construes the project of rationalization of moral/social order in the hands of some philosophers of freedom — who anchor it in some form of transcendental/transcendent ground — as inaugurating the possibility of validation of some form of social control. The danger of such a possibility, as Berlin sees it, is the opening up of a legitimized space for totalitarianism in the name of human *progress* or that of the *greater good*. See, Berlin, Isaiah. (2002). *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. Edited by Henry Hardy. (London: Chatto & Windus); Berlin, Isaiah. (2002). *Four Essays on Liberty.* Edited by Henry Hardy. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
20. *PB*, p. 307.

21. See *PB*, p. 316.
22. *PB*, p. 360.
23. *PB*, p. 307; Also, see *PB*, p. 309.
24. However, given the variance amongst humans with respect to the imaginative manifestations of the form of spontaneity, the idea of a *universal* paradigm of evaluation goes against the very grain of the principle of equality. Thus, conformity to values must be suitably recognized as being constrained by 'the degree of energy nature has given us to this end' and thus must be accordingly evaluated. (See, *PB*, p. 309). Sade, and later Nietzsche, believes that the whole theory of social contract or 'the vow or the pledge taken by all of a nation's individuals' which sanctifies and provides the 'foundations of all the laws' of the state and legitimizes punishment to those who violate them is yet another fabrication and a 'weapon of the strong against the weak' and thus cannot ground the republic of free men. The Sadean critique of the 'contract theory' though brief, is nevertheless worthy of attention.
25. *PB*, p. 314; Also, see *PB*, p. 253.
26. See, *PB*, p. 313.
27. Further, as Sade sees it, the notion of a 'contract' cannot even serve as the legitimate ground for the laws of promised republic since it essentially favours those who 'already have' over 'those who do not', and thus violates the foremost principle of equality. In Sadean analysis, the whole notion of a 'contract' is itself steeped in inequality. In fact, 'theft' is not seen as a crime by Sade, since for him it is a legitimate mode of securing one's material sustenance by the poor and the weak. (See, *PB*, pp. 213-4).
28. It is under the light of this shady oath of contract, Sade pronounces, that the 'right to private property' gains the status of a natural right, while in fact 'by it the rich enchain the poor [and they] alone benefit from the bargain to which the poor man enters so thoughtlessly…' (*PB*, p. 214).
29. *PB*, p. 314.
30. Klossowski, Pierre. 1991 (1967). *Sade my Neighbor.* Translated by Aplhonso Lingis. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press), p. 32.
31. Though in his engagement with Sade, Bataille recognizes the demand of 'absolute solitude' made by Sade for the emergence of the autonomous man, he treats this as a fallout of Sade's insatiable urge for the "excesses of pleasure" (p.169). Thus, Bataille casts Sade's philosophical project as an attempt to justify a *subjective* pursuit of an excess of

bodily pleasure where the act of transgression– which Bataille posits as the "pursuit of the *excess*"– is merely a means towards that end. In fact, Bataille deems the very demand of solitariness in Sade to emerge due to the historical fact of his solitary confinement '...in his lonely cell [that] led him to deny out-right the claims of other people.' For Bataille, it is in his prison cell in Bastille that Sade fleshed out this demand as his first principle to give 'us a true picture of man for whom other people did not count at all'. (p.167). Paginations cited here for Bataille's work refer to, Bataille, Georges. 1962. "De Sade's Sovereign Man" in his *Death and Sensuality: A Study of eroticism and the Taboo.* (New York: Walker and Company).

Bataille, in his reading of Sade, follows Blanchot's, *Lautréamont and Sade,* where Blanchot takes 'the inviolable solitude of a jail cell...' lived by Sade as fundamentally informing his portrayal of the abject solitary nature of man's existence as inevitable (p. 8). As Blanchot reads Sade, he finds that, 'Sade's declared principles, which we might call his basic philosophy, appear to be simplicity itself. This philosophy is one of self-interest, then of complete egoism. Each of us must do what pleases us, each of us has no other law but our own pleasure. This morality is founded on the primary fact of absolute solitude. Sade said it and repeated it in all its forms: nature creates us alone, there is no connection whatsoever linking one man to another. Consequently, the only rule of conduct is that I favor all things that give me pleasure, without consideration of the consequences that this choice might hold for the other'' (p.10). Paginations cited here for Blanchot work refer to, Maurice Blanchot's, 2004 (1949) *Lautréamont and Sade.* Translated by Stuart Kendall and Michelle Kendall. (California: Stanford University Press). However, Blanchot's positioning of Sade within the rubric of 'self-interest' might lead us, once again, to construe Sade as an advocate of nothing deeper than naïve hedonism, which consequently would lead us to miss the deeper ontological imports in his works with respect the nature of the self and the notion of autonomy *as* freedom.

32. See, *PB,* p. 315.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. See, *PB*, p. 333.
36. After all, this ugly side of the self as capable of being driven by the 'passions' was well recognized by the ethics of Plato and Aristotle, for whom ethics is primarily a struggle to establish a justified mode of

legislating our desires through our rational aspect.

37. *PB*, p. 316.
38. *PB*, p. 317.
39. Blackburn, Simon. 2004, *Lust*. Oxford (Oxford: University Press), p. 10.
40. See, *PB*, p. 318.
41. *PB*, p. 356.
42. *PB*, p. 207.
43. See, *PB*, p. 366.
44. See, *PB*, p. 360.
45. See, *PB*, p. 343.

SECTION IV

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche [1844–1900]

...the one who mastered Kant's discovery of autonomy so well, that he could have legitimately claimed it as his own. It is in Nietzsche's smithy that Kantian autonomy is hammered into a shape so as to finally enable the individual to stand all alone, *as* an individual, devoid of any dependency upon culture and its various socio-moral structures. It is here that one finally pronounces one's mark of autonomy as one's alone.

...the one who was a master of the craft of casting suspicions, and often seen as the harbinger of existentialism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism.

...the one who intends to teach us the necessity to punctuate our beliefs with *space* and *time*, to grasp their *context*, and to see them *within* human history. It is with Nietzsche that we come to see autonomy as the marker of our power to *create*.

CHAPTER 9

Nietzsche's Tragic Man: Autonomy as Creation

> So you want to *live* "according to nature?" Oh, you noble Stoics, what a fraud is in this phrase!
>
> –Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* §9.

> ...there is an eternal struggle between the *theoretical* and the *tragic views of the world...* what I understand by the spirit of science is the belief, which first came to light in the person of Socrates, that the depths of nature can be fathomed and that knowledge can heal all ills.
>
> –Nietzsche. *Birth of Tragedy,* §17

> You are sad and shy when looking at the past,
> But trust the future when you yourself trust:
> Are you some kind of eagle in pursuit?
> Or just Minerva's favorite hootootoot?
>
> –Nietzsche, *Joke, Cunning and Revenge* (Rhyme No.53).

Nietzsche's works of course do not share the same grim fate as those of Sade. In terms of reception of his philosophical corpus within the twentieth-century academic fraternity, though not a Kant, Nietzsche was not a Sade either.[1] Nevertheless, as we shall see, his works, share a close thematic affinity with the Sadean corpus in terms of its rejection of religion/morality, its critique of the accepted notion of "truth", and in its proclamation of the obscurity and lies that pervade our very notion of "what it is to be *human*". Writing nearly a century later, Nietzsche much like Sade, declares

that the realization of a genuine autonomous being cannot be construed within a moral/social order that still hinges itself upon the very religious framework that lies dismantled due to the onslaught of the forces of Enlightenment. Therefore Nietzsche, like Sade, proclaims that with the *death* of "God", not only can one no longer be *just* a human, but more importantly, we cannot conceive of our existence against the outlines of the same old horizon of values that we are accustomed to. For Nietzsche, it is precisely because we still tacitly share such an existential horizon of meaning from the past — though it is no longer available to us — that various social ideals that we hold close to us appear viable and accurate representations of the realm of the socio-political. In Nietzsche's analysis, these representations — such as those of democracy, socialism, or capitalism — are not merely shallow in their representative depth, but a farce. Like Sade, Nietzsche thus rejects both our unshakable faith in the rational aspect of our being — especially in its manifestation as a blind faith in the natural sciences — as well as our recourse to Romanticism as an alternative to it.

However, unlike Sade, whose works needed, and still need, a strong interpretative act of "purification" to even find its place within the limits of *academic* acceptability, Nietzsche's does not demand the arduous task of pleading to be seen *otherwise*.[2] Very early on, Nietzsche found a powerful abettor of his works in Heidegger, and he found in Walter Kaufmann his own Heine and Lely, who was pivotal in showing the inappropriateness of portraying Nietzsche as the precursor of the Nazi ideology.[3] Notwithstanding their differences, both Heidegger and Kaufmann, gave Nietzsche what he himself could not secure — a place of significance within the academia and a worldwide readership. While Heidegger managed to draw a critical attention upon Nietzsche by placing him as a valuable member within the landscape of western thought, Kaufmann did the murkier task of not merely making the Nietzschean corpus available to the broader anglophone world, but also provided it the needed structural coherence that aided other interpretative frameworks to look at the Nietzschean corpus. Further, both Heidegger and Kaufmann worked on Nietzsche from their own distinct, and sometimes opposing, positions. This consequently gave the Nietzschean

corpus a more robust form, and opened it up to the possibility of accommodating various postures for its appropriations.[4] It is this vibrant beginning within Nietzschean scholarship that led to the diverse characterization of Nietzsche's philosophy as the harbinger of existentialism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism.

Today, with the cataloguing of Nietzsche's personal library, which has over a hundred volumes that are critically annotated by him, and through his own admissions, there is a broad consensus amongst scholars concerning the philosophical influences on Nietzsche — Kant being one of them.[5] Not surprisingly enough, Sade is yet to make it to this list. Of course, Sade's exclusion from the list of influences on Nietzsche is inevitable, for Nietzsche neither mentions Sade, nor does his library have any of the works authored by Sade. But then, even Kant's works are absent from Nietzsche's library.[6] Whatever be the truth of the matter, it is of marginal importance to us here.

What is of importance, however, is the fact that Nietzsche's thought-schema shares two central elements with its Sadean counterpart. First, it shares the Sadean skepticism regarding the legitimacy of our insistence on a specific paradigm of religious/moral values; which like Sade, he takes to be a human invention that is fundamentally rooted in structures of illusion and deceit. Second, like Sade, Nietzsche too upholds the primacy of *nature* and thus emphasizes the "animal-nature" of man *qua* man. He refuses to construe man in terms of the superimposed characteristic of a *disinterested* rationality. In fact, much like Sade, but with more finesse, Nietzsche holds this stance consistently throughout his philosophical corpus. Further, in Nietzsche too, the emphasis on the primacy of "nature" cannot be identified with either an appeal for a "return to nature" as found in early Romanticism, or with the reductive "scientific" notion of "nature" that conceives it in terms of a mechanical system regulating itself in conformity with certain *a priori* and established universal "laws". In fact, for Nietzsche, hitherto, all our construals of "nature" have been being informed by structures of significations that are themselves our creations. Thus, in a way, our construals of *nature* have always been a projection of our own self-created, hideous and delusional values. That is, for

Nietzsche, our construals of "nature" has always been foundationally grounded in 'an error' — a 'lie'. Nietzsche writes,

> So you want to *live* "according to nature?" Oh, you noble Stoics, what a fraud is in this phrase! Imagine something like nature, profligate without measure, indifferent without measure, without purpose and regard, without mercy and justice, fertile and barren and uncertain at the same time, think of indifference itself as power — how *could* you live according to this indifference? Living — isn't that wanting specifically to be something other than this nature? ...But in fact, something quite different is going on: while pretending with delight to read the canon of your law in nature, you want the opposite, you strange actors and self-deceivers! Your pride wants to dictate and annex your morals and ideals onto nature — yes, nature itself —, you demand that it be nature "according to Stoa" and you want to make all existence exist in your own image alone — as a huge eternal glorification and universalization of Stoicism![7]

For Nietzsche, we superimpose all of our invented values and our 'sense of purpose' upon nature, and then ironically pretend to be surprised to have discovered the grounds of our values and our existential meaning *in* nature. Like Sade, Nietzsche too conceives *nature* as merely an indifferent principle of *eternal* motion that is without a 'purpose'.[8] And appropriating Kant's phenomenal-noumenal divide, Nietzsche takes our characterization of nature in terms of 'good' and 'evil' to be confined to the realm of the phenomenal, and therefore, construes them as *our* impositions on nature.[9] Thus, as Nietzsche sees it, if our quest is to genuinely understand both *nature* and our own *being*, then we urgently need a 'de-deification' of nature before we 'begin to "*naturalize*" humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, [and a] newly redeemed nature'. Such a 'de-deification' of nature is necessary 'to translate man back to nature' as *homo natura* and in coming to see man *as* man, without the 'many vain and overtly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have been so far scrawled and painted over that basic eternal text of *homo natura...*'[10] It is only after the completion of such a quest that we can truly strive to live according to the dictates of nature.[11] Thus, Nietzsche begins his *On the Genealogy of Moral*,[12] a work he acknowl-

edges to be a more mature offering,[13] by provocatively asking the rhetorical question:

> We remain unknown to ourselves, we seekers after knowledge, even to ourselves: and with good reason. We have never sought after ourselves– so how should we one day find ourselves?[14]

Emphasizing the animal-nature, or the *bestiality* of man, in one of his more articulate formulations, Nietzsche writes that an unfortunate error — among the four fundamental errors of man that he lists — that is responsible for leading us away from our true being is that man 'endowed himself with fictitious attributes...[and then placed] ...himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature...'[15] Nietzsche's insistence on the primordiality of our animal-nature, and his highlighting of our inability to domesticate ourselves despite our sustained efforts towards that end, through the construction of structures and institutions of 'culture', is what brings Nietzsche close to Sade.

Thus, the fundamental attempt of the Nietzschean corpus is to make sense of our *being* in terms of autonomy as our primordial nature. Subsequently, the effort is then to address the consequent question, "how then, do we deal with *this* being?" In brevity, the Nietzschean and the Sadean projects converge precisely in this reclamation of man *as* man, the *homo natura*, who has already been discovered by Kant to be essentially 'autonomous', and thereby, as being marked by 'spontaneity'. What, however, makes Nietzsche crucial to us is that it is through him that we come to see the Kantian connection to this specific project of reclamation of man through a 'de-deification' of nature. If we come to see Nietzsche's attempt at the 'de-deification' of nature as essentially being a Sadean project, then Nietzsche's engagement with Kant's notion of "freedom" might enable us to see Sade against the horizon of Kantian thought-schema in more concrete terms, thereby enabling us to see Nietzsche and Sade as throwing light upon the problematic project of Enlightenment itself.

Nietzsche's attempt at the de-deification of nature is deeply informed by the philosophies of the ancient Greeks. His exposure to

the Greek modalities of thinking greatly shaped his own position.[16] He read in Democritus' atomism/materialism and Heraclitus' peculiar thesis of nature as the principle of motion (indifferent to any anthropomorphic purposes), an alternative to the theo-teleological view of nature as propounded by Plato and Aristotle. In fact, it is this influence of Democritus that comes to be strongly rejuvenated during his reading of Friedrich Albert Lange's[17] work, *History of Materialism and Critique of its Present Significance* (1865), enabling him to both appreciate, as well critically engage with, Kant.

At the same time, Nietzsche saw in Schopenhauer, the transformation of Kant's problematic realm of the noumenal into the category of the *'Wille'*, 'which has neither cause nor knowledge, [and] manifests itself, when subjected to an apparatus of representation, *as* world'. In fact, Nietzsche goes on to add that 'if we subtract' from Schopenhauer's position 'all that he received as heritage of the great Kant… the one word 'will' with its predicates is left behind'.[18] Though he does see Schopenhauer's reduction of the Kantian realm of the 'thing-in-itself' to the 'Wille", and consequently to "nature" itself, to be of great philosophical value; he nevertheless holds that Schopenhauer's error lay precisely in his inability to go 'beyond Kant'.[19] Nietzsche, on the other hand, intends to go beyond both Kant and Schopenhauer. In transforming Schopenhauer's notion of the *Wille* into a more immanent, non-anthropomorphized 'nature', he seeks to accomplish precisely that.

It is clear that Nietzsche shares a bivalent relation with Kant, as he does with almost all of his major known influences — as is exemplified from his relation with Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Socrates, to name a few. As early as 1866, we hear Nietzsche's adulation of Kant when he writes, in the oft-quoted letter, to his friend Herman Mushacke:

> The most meaningful philosophical work which has appeared in the past ten years is undoubtedly Lange's *History of Materialism*, about which I could write a ream of panegyrics. Kant, Schopenhauer, and this book of Lange's — I don't need anything else.[20]

Nietzsche's initial engagement with Kant towards the mid-1860s was thus much in tune with the general appreciation of

Kantian philosophy — a spirit that was prominent during the period. This engagement with Kant would remain throughout Nietzsche's intellectual life, though in a much critical vein during the subsequent years, as is highlighted in his conscious attempt to generate a critique of Kant's critical philosophy by substituting Kant's Transcendentalism with a thoroughgoing "philosophy of immanence". Thus, Nietzsche's voice appears, in a significant mode, to articulate a position that consciously places itself against the horizon of the Kantian position.

Interestingly, Nietzsche takes Kant's engagement with the notion of causality to be his central achievement. In fact, we find a more mature Nietzsche, writing in 1882 on the 'real achievements of philosophical thinking that one owes to Germans', specifically singling out Kant's treatment of causality from the Kantian corpus. He writes:

> Kant's tremendous question mark that he placed after the concept of "causality"- without, like Hume, doubting its legitimacy altogether. Rather Kant begins cautiously to delimit the realm within which this concept makes sense...[21]

The numerous occasions that we find Nietzsche reflect, dissect, and elaborate this particular aspect of Kantian thought is suggestive of the fact that Nietzsche recognizes Kant's construal of the self as the originary locus of the entire apparatus of sense-making and as bearing a great import upon the nature of our agency. After all, it is through the self that the Kantian categories and forms — the category of *causality* being one of them — operate and render the phenomenal world as *meaningful.* It is also through the self that Kant opens up the possibility of our moral agency. But for Nietzsche, Kant himself misses to realize the true import of his radical discovery and consequently falters under the weight of the philosophical dogma of universality of sense and the demand of apriority of truth. It is, as Nietzsche sees it, in response to these demands that Kant unfortunately renders these categories and forms as *transcendental.* But Kant realizes that such a move is perilous for the autonomous status of the moral agent, since the moral self is then squarely placed under the rubric of the transcendental apparatus of sense-making.

As Nietzsche sees it, it is this recognition of the problematic subsumption of moral agency under the knowing self that leads Kant to thereby split the self into two aspects — the *knower* and the *doer*.

In the Nietzsche's analysis, Kant's misplaced faith in his own neat schematic arrangement of placing our epistemic prowess to generate *sense* on the one hand and our ability to *act* out our autonomous agency on the other, in two separate transcendental boxes is his unfortunate, but unavoidable, failure. Kant's enchantment with the philosophical dogma, as Nietzsche sees it, makes Kant unable to escape from the error of alienating these two inalienable aspects of our self. That is, for Nietzsche, Kant's greatest philosophical blunder was his separation of the *knower* from the *doer*. For Nietzsche, this blinds Kant to realize that sense-making is precisely a manifestation of our agency — that is, the *knower* is but a *creation* of the creative force of a *doer*.

Beginning with his *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche underlines the fact that the shift occasioned by the rise of *Socratism* in terms of our construal of the *self–reality* relation is made possible precisely by the recasting of the originary Apollonian–Dionysian drives that were taken as the fundamental markers of the self. These drives are, for Nietzsche, the *natural* and *originary* artistic modalities that shape our interactions with reality. Simply put, they are the Nietzschean transcendental conditions of experience. The *Apolline* grounds the *possibility* of infusing differentiations, delineations, categorizations — in short, *order* and *illusions* or what Nietzsche calls, 'world-image of dream'; while the *Dionysiac* grounds the *possibility* of oneness, of *un*differentiations — in short, *chaos, un*order, or what Nietzsche calls, the ground of our 'mystical' encountering of an 'intoxicated reality'. For Nietzsche, the manner in which we attune ourselves to the play of these drives is what fundamentally determines the nature of our creative enterprise as *artists* – as creators of sense and significations. It is against the horizon of these primordial drives that we *create* forms and assemblages of order — that is, create enabling structures of signification — or in short, *illusions*. And as Nietzsche wants to underline, prior to the rise of the *Socratic* man the Greek world encouraged the encountering of existence — as exemplified by Greek Tragedy for Nietzsche — through an appreciative fusion of

these drives.[22] The *Socratic* man on the other hand, for Nietzsche, marks the advent of a shift that is exclusively Apollonian, such that the Dionysian comes to be seen as the *unreal* and as an illusion *in* itself. For Nietzsche, this tremendous feat is achieved by the Socratic man through the crafty equating of the *Dionysiac un*order with the shallower notion of '*dis*order' such that the *Dionysian* now comes to be seen as legitimately subsumed within the *Apollonian* itself. After all, *dis*order can be made sense of only against the horizon of order, and it is precisely in warding off the possibility of *dis*order that order sustains itself. The primordial *Dionysiac un*order when construed as *dis*order, thus comes to be grasped as a mere negative phenomenal force to be *overcome* — its manifestation comes to be taken as a symptom of the decomposition of order, rather than its equal partner-*horizon*, as had always been the case prior to the advent of the *Socratic* man. This, as Nietzsche sees it, is what enables the recasting of the *Apolline* as the realm of Being and Truth, and the *Dionysiac* as the realm of appearance and *becoming*. It is, for Nietzsche this reconfiguration of the originary Apollonian-Dionysian drives that enables the portrayal of knowledge as a linear movement of the self — now cast as a *knower* — from the realm of chaotic *appearance* to the realm of order/*reality*, and thereby *Truth* itself. Thus here, the *Socratic self* comes to be construed as a *knower* of *Truth* by virtue of its transparency towards *Being*, rather than a *doer* who infuses *meaning* and thereby *generates* truth itself.

It is precisely the import of this lost creative agency — as a necessary mediator in the art of sense-making — that is emphasized and extended by Nietzsche, in his first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872); and it is also this aspect that we find him returning to more than a decade later while writing his *Attempt at a Self-Criticism* (1886), which was to be the preface to the second edition of the work. In a way, Nietzsche credits Kant for calling attention to this problematic positioning of the self as a mere *discoverer* of sense and truth within the Socratic vision, and for imparting it with some sense of *agency* — even though in Nietzsche's final analysis, the Kantian effort turns out to be inadequate. Nevertheless, the Kantian influence, though mediated through Schopenhauer, is clearly operative here when Nietzsche holds that the sense we seem to 'discover' in the world

is, in fact, what we have infused into the phenomenality of the world ourselves through 'illusionary constructs' — that comes to be labelled as *culture* — to make our existence meaningful and bearable.[23] For Nietzsche, it is this active infusion of sense on our part that gives rise to the various structures of meanings — of significations — that leads to the rise of distinctive cultures and their ideals. Left to itself, nature simply operates with complete indifference to our conceptions about her. And it is precisely in terms of this unique ability to create meanings that we are autonomous beings with the *freedom* to make sense of existence — or what Nietzsche in his later works comes to speak of in terms of our 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*).[24]

In Nietzsche's diagnoses, the modern world's ideal of the Socratic 'theoretical man' that casts the self as the one 'who is equipped with the highest powers of knowledge [and] works in the service of science and whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates', is merely an instance of one such *illusion* that we have infused into nature through our ability to generate structures of signification. That is, for Nietzsche, the modern man finds himself within the illusion of a *Socratic culture* that grounds itself in 'an optimism' and 'believes itself without limits!' precisely because one delusionally forgets that the 'theoretical man' is precisely an ideal, an illusion, that one has infused into the world.[25] And one ironically grounds this optimism upon the discovery of the forms of 'causality' as the key to the *hidden* secrets of nature, while remaining forgetful of the fact that the form of causality is itself our infusion into the world. It is precisely this optimism, as Nietzsche sees it, that Hume sought to challenge. But unlike Hume, who doubts its legitimacy altogether, Kant, for Nietzsche, correctly deciphers the truth in our optimism about our misplaced faith upon 'causality' by showing us that the form of causality aids us well in making *sense* of the phenomenality of the world, precisely because the sensible structure of the phenomenal world is *our* construct in the first place.[26] But this then, for Nietzsche, entails that our 'theoretical man' can hardly ever know anything about 'nature' per se, *sans* his impositions upon it. Nietzsche, thus, reads the Kantian project of drawing a limit to reason as being synonymous to the drawing of the limits of the

possibility of the 'theoretical man', and consequently, as drawing of the limit to the optimism operative within the Socratic culture itself. It is Kant, and following him Schopenhauer, who thus takes the modern man out of his own self-deceiving optimism through a thorough disclosure of his error. As Nietzsche sees it:

> The hardest-fought victory of all was won by the enormous courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer,* a victory over the optimism which lies hidden in the nature of logic and which in turn is the hidden foundation of our culture. Whereas this optimism once believed in our ability to grasp and solve, with the help of the seemingly reliable *aeternae veritates* [eternal truths], all the puzzles of the universe, and treated space, time, and causality as entirely unconditional laws of the most general validity, Kant showed that these things actually only served to raise mere appearance, the work of maya, to the status of the sole and supreme reality and to put this in the place of the innermost and true essence of things, thereby making it impossible really to understand this essence — putting the dreamer even more deeply to sleep, as Schopenhauer put it.[27]

Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* (1878) is consistent with his appreciative reading of Kant's disclosure of the limits of the illusion of the theoretical man. It is appreciative of Kant's underlining of deluded optimism of the 'theoretical man' and the farce of his quest to *discover* nature. Though, by then, Nietzsche is also clearly beginning to move away from the version of Materialism as expounded by Lange, which as he saw it, had the tendency to overtly adopt a romantic approach towards the treatment of this problematic and consequently fail to adequately ground the emergence of the 'theoretical man' in its historical and material grounds of origin. More importantly, we see Nietzsche drifting away from Schopenhauer's uptake of Kant, and consequently the distance that he secures from Schopenhauerian pessimism concerning the nature and the extent of the import of man's creative endeavour. Nietzsche is more optimistic about our ability to forge sense and what this forging existentially entails for us. And notwithstanding the fact that we have a clear indication of a more mature, much *colder* Nietzsche, with his notion of the 'Free Spirit' emerging here; we still find him stressing the perilous optimism of the theoretical man in his quest

to discover the *eternal* truths of nature. Nietzsche continues to construe such quests for truths as a manifestation of our delusional efforts, afforded by the illusionary optimism that bewitches us under the Socratic web of significations. Worryingly for Nietzsche, by now we have come to a historical juncture wherein what were mere illusions have now come to be posited as indubitable truths. It is under this delusion that we have come to erroneously believe that if we perfect our investigative tools then the absolute and certain truths available to us in matters concerning mathematics can be approximated and attained in matters concerning *nature*. This delusional belief derives its strength, Nietzsche stresses, from the fact that we forget that *numbers* are our creation too. They too, for that matter, owe their significatory powers to the illusions we cast — through the superimposition of the principle of 'unity' that we have managed to invent. It is this wilful forgetfulness on our part that leads us to translate our created notion of *unity* into the belief that 'there are various identical things' or even that 'there are things' in the first place.[28] And for Nietzsche, 'this is just where error rules; for even here, we invent entities that do not exist'.[29] Thus, Nietzsche asserts that Kant was right when he declared that

> "Reason does not create its laws from nature, but dictates them to her," [and that] this is perfectly true in respect to the *concept of nature* which we are obliged to apply to her... but which is [also] the summation of a number of errors of reason.[30]

Nietzsche pronounces that, 'to a world that is *not* our idea, the laws of numbers are completely inapplicable: they are valid only in the human world'.[31] It is this Kantian insight that is central to the Nietzschean project and that stands as its foundational pillar — an insight that he *never* gives up. But, at the same time, it is also during this period that we find Nietzsche truly overcoming Kant. And it is in this overcoming of Kant's influence that he simultaneously overcomes Schopenhauer. This movement in Nietzsche is definitive by 1873, as is suggested by his notebook entries during this period.

The thematic of freedom, as seen earlier, in its first occurrence in the Kantian corpus, is encountered precisely as a cosmological problem that leads reason to struggle with an antinomy concerning

our belief in necessary relations within the empirical world and the form of causality underlying it. What is of importance to recall here is that in Kant, the entire edifice of this antinomy is rooted in the distinction between the noumenal/*thing-in-itself* and the phenomenal/*thing-as-they-appear-to-us*. Nietzsche clearly understood this distinction and the nature of the synthetic judgment that followed this division. In a very perceptive remark noted sometime in between the summer of 1972 and the beginning of the following year, Nietzsche notes:

> ...the concept pencil is mistaken for the 'thing' pencil. The "is" in the synthetic judgment is false: it contains transference; *two different spheres between which there can never be an equation* are juxtaposed (Emphasis mine).[32]

It is important to note here that Nietzsche accurately highlights that *all* synthetic judgments are in a sense 'a false equation' for they cannot, in the final analysis, represent in the true sense of the term what we take them to present, i.e., the *thing-in-itself*. The legitimacy and usefulness of synthetic judgments, for Nietzsche, is confined within the specific realm of the *constructed* – the realm of appearances, the phenomenal. To claim anything beyond is to go beyond the permissible and treat a metonymy as an *essential* definition of the thing itself. For Nietzsche, it is Kant who helps us see the truth of the matter in revealing that '...the essence of synthetic judgments lies in a *metonymy*'.[33]

For Nietzsche, this essentially entails that all definitions that pertain to the realm of appearances, and thereby language itself, in essence, share the *form* of a metonymy. By 1878, Nietzsche articulates this insight in a much clearer formulation when, in *Human, All Too Human,* he writes:

> The importance of language for the development of culture lies in the fact that, in language, man juxtaposed to the one world another world of his own, a place which he thought so sturdy that from it he could move the rest of the world from its foundations and make himself lord over it. To the extent that he believed over long periods of time in the concepts and names of things as if they were *aeternae veritates* [eternal truths] man has acquired that pride by which he has raised

> himself above the animals: he really did believe that in language he had knowledge of the world.[34]

Of course, for Nietzsche, the linguistic creation of this 'illusion' — that is, the whole construct of a 'culture' over nature through the mediation of language — need not necessarily translate into a web of deceit and delusion, but it does so precisely because of the misplaced 'pride' of the Socratic man in his own supremacy over other animals given his cherished mark of rationality. It is this pride that leads the creator to forget that his creation *is* a *creation*. Thus, he goes on to add:

> The shaper of language was not so modest as to think that he was only giving things labels; rather, he imagined that he was expressing the highest knowledge of things with words; and in fact, *language is the first stage of scientific effort*... Very belatedly (only now) is it dawning on men that their belief in language they have propagated a monstrous error.[35]

Clearly, Nietzsche is conscious of Kant's contribution towards our realization of our *creative* ability concerning our sense-making endeavour, but unlike the early Nietzsche, by the late 1870s he has started to seriously doubt the inferences that we have drawn from the logic of this realization, particularly the ones drawn by Kant himself. Accordingly, in the same passage Nietzsche indicates the important insight that Kant himself underemphasizes, namely that the whole of our scientific enterprise is itself grounded in language, and thereby partakes in the form of a metonymy as well. In the same passage, Nietzsche reminds us that this neglect veils, for Kant as well, the simple fact that;

> *Logic,* too rests on assumptions that do not correspond to anything in the real world, e.g., on the assumption of the *equality of things, the identity of the same thing at different points in time*; but this science arose from the opposite belief that, [that is, that] there were indeed such things in the real world... So is it with mathematics, which would certainty not have originated if it had been known from the beginning that there is not exactly straight line in nature, no real circle, no absolute measure (Emphasis mine).[36]

This remark is suggestive of Nietzsche's gradual movement away from Kant's belief in the synthetic unity of the sensory manifold, which within the Kantian paradigm, accounts for the 'unity' of 'things', as well as his transcendental unity of apperception, ensuring a secure position for the transcendental subject — for the Cartesian *cogito*. Nietzsche's remark here on mathematics is indicative of his rejection of the Kantian transcendentality of space and time, and as a corollary also suggests his rejection of synthetic *a priori* judgments.[37]

Nietzsche's remark also suggests that he now takes Kant to be himself trapped in this erroneous portrayal of language in so far as Kant holds his transcendental logic as being above language and the phenomenality of the world, and consequently fails to realize that his transcendental logic, in all its symmetry, is nevertheless still a creative construct. Nietzsche here is, thus, already on his way to anthropomorphize the Kantian transcendental structures of reason and, much against Kant's own explicit denial in his *Critique*, to present Kant's transcendental logic as yet another form of *psychologism*. Nietzsche completes this movement by the early 1880s.

For Nietzsche, it is Kant's inability to realize his folly of treating his own conceptual constructs as *in fact* revealing the true nature of *how things stand* in the phenomenal world, that consequently leads him to defend the "truth" of science. It is simply Kant's faith in his logic that blinds him from realizing the simple truth that his logic is a *creation* too — his *very own* creation. It is this creation of his that veils the fact that nature presents itself to him in that manner precisely because he presented nature to himself in that manner. Surely, this does provide the needed regularity and staticity to our understanding of nature — even therapeutically enabling us to function — but then to forget that it is our creative imposition would be a fatal error. An error that Kant commits. That is, for Nietzsche, Kant's very language of logic semantically blinds him to the possibility of picturing a phenomenal world in any way *other* than his. But the truth is, we can, and we have been portraying nature in many hues and shades. As Nietzsche sees it, Kant's picture of nature is merely one of these portraits. We have sought to paint *nature* in a

myriad different ways and our painting

> ...has gradually *become* strangely colorful, frightful, profound, soulful; it has acquired color, but we have been the painters: the human intellect allowed appearances to appear, and projected its mistaken conceptions onto things... and now the world of experience and the thing-in-itself seem so extraordinarily different and separate that it rejects any conclusion about the latter from the former, or else, in an awful, mysterious way, it demands the abandonment of our intellect, of our personal will in order to come to the essential by becoming the essential.[38]

More importantly, it is this unnoticed failing in Kant's thought-schema that leads Nietzsche to realize that there is something fundamentally amiss within Kant's account of the autonomous self. For Nietzsche, the Kantian thesis that the autonomous self must essentially be pictured as an *intelligible*, or what Nietzsche calls the 'metaphysical', *cause* is itself a product of Kant's self-imposed logic which consequently leads him to the delusional belief that it is beyond the corruption of any subjective constructions. It is in this folly that Kant declares that the essential nature of human freedom can only be realized when one completely sacrifices the phenomenality of one's being. But this demand, as Nietzsche reminds us, is itself a product of a certain *language of logic* that bewitches us to forget that we are *actually free* 'even now' within the very bounds of this phenomenal world. As Nietzsche argues, when an individual reflects upon his actions, he feels them as emerging from a feeling that is in fact, '*isolated*, that is, to say unconditioned, without a context'[39]. It rises out of us, with no connection to anything earlier or later. Explicating his point, Nietzsche holds that when we feel hungry, we do not seek to locate this feeling of hunger in a causal relation with the thought that I 'want to sustain myself'. Rather, 'this feeling seems to be asserting itself without cause or purpose'. The whole apparatus of the causal form underlying our actions, through which we relate it with its antecedents, is but a specific modality that we have come to *use* in order to make sense of this feeling. And in this, we are aided by our adoption of a particular logic of language that we have come to label as *free will*. Thus for Nietzsche, much like Sade, what Kant fails to realize is that prior

to the superimposition of the form of causality, we are, in our primeval stage, in fact, already 'free' — as autonomous beings with the freedom *to* cast any *illusion*. We are, for Nietzsche primordially free to cast any structure of signification upon the encountered *existence* and transform it into a *world*.[40]

Accordingly, for Nietzsche, our entire edifice of morality, Kant's included, is but a product of superimposing a particular shade of colour upon the primeval nature of man who is already autonomous as a spontaneous sense-imposing being in his essence. Nietzsche thus reverses the whole Kantian paradigm, for unlike Kant, he holds us as having lost our autonomy, which therefore, can only be regained exclusively within the phenomenality of the world through the shattering of the illusionary web cast by the superimposed structures of sense and values that we have come to be surrounded with. That is, we must begin by wielding the *hammer*. Hence, for Nietzsche, as much as it is for Sade, morality stands in stark opposition to autonomy *as such*. In this sense, to be autonomous is to transcend all superimposed norms or standards in order to realize one's creative prowess. Seen thus, for Kant, the quest for the realization of autonomy is a movement towards the future. By contrast, for Nietzsche, the realization of autonomy is a movement towards the *past*, and it accordingly demands a *returning*.

This movement away from Kant, in terms of his views on human morals, is even more refined and decisive by the early 1880s. In his *The Gay Science* (1882), we find Nietzsche arguing against Kant's central notion that the *moral conscience* — as the expression of the pure rational will — is completely removed from all accidentalities and contingencies of the phenomenal or the *sensible* world, with its locus firmly situated within the realm of the noumenal. After all, this is why the *categorical imperative* legitimately lays a claim upon universal acceptance in Kant. However, as Nietzsche reads it, such a belief must already assume that there is enough similarity among the contents of our acts that we undertake in the phenomenal world to establish the thesis of a shared universal form underlying their determination. And to agree to such a proposal of *universal* determinants of our actions, Nietzsche holds, is possible only through the dissolution of our originary autonomy, and thus in the willful

forgetfulness of our intrinsic "spontaneity". The whole superimposition of the veil of the 'voice of conscience' is what precisely covers up our autonomy, and it is this farce that projects itself as the universal ground of our actions when, in fact, there are none. The voice of conscience can, thus, be taken seriously only when one has forgotten 'who one truly is' and has lost sight of one's autonomy. Nietzsche writes:

> No one who judges, "in this case everyone would have to act like this" has taken five steps towards self-knowledge. For he would then know that there neither are nor can be actions that are all the same; that every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable way, and that this will be equally true of every future act; that all prescriptions of action (even the most inward and subtle rules of all moralities so far) relate only to their rough exterior; that these prescriptions may yield an appearance of sameness, *but only just an appearance*; that as one observes or recollects *any* action, it is and remains impenetrable; that our opinions about 'good' and 'noble' and 'great' can never be proven true by our actions because every action is unknowable; that our opinions, valuations, and tables of what is good are certainly some of the most powerful levers in the machinery of our actions, but that in each case, the law of its mechanism is unprovable. [41]

Thus, as Nietzsche asserts, *contra* Kant, what remains in the reclamation of our autonomous state is precisely the lifting up of the veil of our paradigm of evaluating actions through the illusion of a *moral conscience* that is then, subsequently, taken as the source of our infallible moral intuitions. That is, for Nietzsche, our faith in *moral conscience* marks the transformation of an illusion into a *delusion*. A *genealogy* of our morals is, therefore, urgently needed if we are to trace the genesis of the veil of *moral conscience*. In order to expose the delusionary force behind the myth of moral conscience, the Nietzschean task is therefore akin to the Sadean task of tracing the process of *how* we have come to accept this veil and become forgetful of our true nature as autonomous beings. For Nietzsche, it is here in the history of our illusions that we come to understand and decipher the faith of the 'theoretical man', the trajectory of our

cultural constructs, and the birth of *cultures* itself. Consequently, the Nietzschean genealogical project intends to reveal not merely the history of a particular framework of value, but rather the very grounds of evaluative frameworks, the *telos* and aspirations underlying them, and the subsequent senses that we have superimposed upon existence *qua* existence to create our phenomenal world through them. Consequently, it is such a genealogical revelation that would complement us in the reclamation of our true nature as autonomous beings.[42]

Thus, Nietzsche's genealogical project already assumes the truth of Kant's dictum that the phenomenal world as it *appears* to us is not to be confused with world in itself/ with *nature*/ with the *existence*/ with the *thing-in-itself*. The phenomenal world is, after all, *what we make* the world to be. But unlike Kant, who in Nietzsche's evaluation, manages to trap himself within the semantic illusion of his own logic, and subsequently begins to look for some deeper significance towards the noumenal, Nietzsche clearly rejects such a Kantian transcendental turn.[43] For Nietzsche, Kant's misplaced faith upon the noumenal is what leads him to the formulation of the *categorical imperative*, and consequently makes him construe the realm of the noumenal as the true ground of human agency itself. It is this delusion that manages to entrap Kant and make 'him stray back to "God", "Soul", "freedom", "immortality" like a fox who strays back into the cage'. The force of his own illusion blinds him to his very disclosure that 'all significations are ours and ours alone' and leads him back to the very cage that he 'had broken open'.[44] Nietzsche's fundamental thesis is that any signification that the world might have is necessarily a product of human autonomy, or *spontaneous creativity*. It is this art of casting *illusions* that defines us in our primordial nature. Of course, in the course of having lost this true picture of ourselves, we are now deluded — within our self-created illusions of *culture* and its constructs — and have *mostly* forgotten this creative ability to provide significations for ourselves. And consequently, we have become the docile 'obedient mass', the 'herd', who accepts — and operates within — the *givenness* of a structure of significance that has its origins elsewhere than our

autonomy. That is, we are no longer, the creators of *illusions* — we are no more a 'free-spirit', an 'overman' (übermensch), a 'Zarathustra', the 'Great Giants' that we once were. In light of this, Nietzsche thus declares:

> Let us therefore limit ourselves to the purification of our opinions and value judgments and to the creation of tables of what is good that are new and all our own: let us stop brooding over the "moral value of our actions!" ...[if we] want to *become who we are*- human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves![45]

In short, our *essence* as *creators* of *illusions*, or of structures of signification and sense — as autonomous and spontaneous beings — lie precisely in the very nature of our *being*, which is always in a state of *becoming*.[46] Thus, like Sade, Nietzsche envisions autonomy to entail an *eternal motion*. We are, as far as the project of signification is concerned, eternally bound within the inescapable realm of the phenomenal that necessitates us to *create* illusions (as in the case of an autonomous man marked by spontaneity) or to deludedly *participate* within a culture (as in the case with the majority of us, *the herd*) that would provide us with a particular apparatus of signification to make sense of *existence's* unfathomable void that is devoid of any intrinsic meaning as such. The one who realizes this fundamental truth — which in its first formulation is indebted to Kant's insight of figuring the mark of autonomy as the primordial nature of the self — is the *tragic man*. It is the tragic man who then must create a structure of signification — an illusion — for *existence* to transform into a meaningful world — as *his* world. The idea of this autonomous man — the *tragic man* — that Nietzsche's invokes finds its articulation in the figure of the *overman* (übermensch) in his later works, and is what lies central to Nietzsche's philosophy.[47]

In a notebook entry, Nietzsche perceptively remarks, that Kant's initial insight that 'all constructions of the world are anthropomorphisms', should not have excluded any science from this measure, and thus should have led him to uphold that 'our salvation lies not in *knowledge* but in *creation*' of signification — of meanings — for in our essence that is *who we are*; creators of self-conscious illusions.[48]

To be autonomous is to be a creator of sense *of* the world for *one's self*. And thus, Nietzsche takes the task of a philosopher to be precisely this rather than a metaphysical quest for eternal cosmic essences, when there are none. The philosopher is not, as is usually assumed, the 'theoretical man' of the Socratic ideal — a 'philosopher of *desperate knowledge*' with his insatiable thirst 'for knowledge through a new metaphysics'. A genuine philosopher, in Nietzsche's vision, is someone who feels that 'the *removal of the ground of metaphysics* from underfoot is tragic and yet he can never be satisfied by the bright whirligig of the sciences... For [him] the *image of existence* is completed by the fact that the metaphysical only appears in anthropomorphic form [and thus] he is not a *sceptic*' either. The genuine philosopher — the philosopher with the awareness of the *tragic* — realizes this essential nature of one's autonomy as the source of illusions, and therefore, of all significations. Consequently, the genius is one who realizes that to *be* in the world 'one must *want* even *illusion* [and]that is where the tragic lies' for to live within a structure of meaning *is* to live within a structure of one's illusion.[49] Outside the bounds of one's self-created illusions lie a domain devoid of any inherent sense. That is, beyond the illusions lie the *absurd* — the *un*order — that is simply indifferent to our illusions.

Thus, in Nietzsche, we find a fundamental revision in the very understanding of what autonomy entails. *Genuine* autonomy can, thus, express itself only as an *art* through a genuine artist who 'must create everything anew and *give new birth to life all alone*!'[50] Though clearly, it is in the Kantian spirit that Nietzsche recognizes the consequent 'end of metaphysics as a science', nevertheless unlike Kant, Nietzsche takes this to entail a completely distinct position — namely, 'the unity of philosophy and art for the purpose of culture'.[51] Thus, in Nietzsche, the autonomous man is marked by a *principle of movement* expressed through his spontaneity, much as it is in Sade. But for Nietzsche, contra Sade, the mark of autonomy translates into an act of *creation* — a provision for creating significance rather than an inclination to merely transgress structures of significations with the sole purpose of *transgression*. Thus, while both Sade and Nietzsche construe the emergence of genuine autonomy as demanding a *hammer* to shatter the illusions that have trans-

formed into delusions and enshroud it; Sade takes the hammer to be the only tool that aptly expresses autonomy, while Nietzsche sees the necessity of paints and the brushes alongside the hammer. The hammer, for Nietzsche, is merely the tool needed to shake the self from its delusionary state — a tool for essential clearing of the canvas for the autonomous individual to create *one's* illusions. This is precisely why *art* gathers importance for Nietzsche, since it is precisely *an art* through which we create/interpret a conscious structure of signification, and thereby fabricate *useful* illusions that help us make sense of *existence*.[52]

But then, when do illusions become dangerous? When must one wield the hammer? When do illusions become delusions? Nietzsche believes that illusions become dangerous and transform its pragmatic value into a threat precisely when we lose sight of the fact that they are our creations. It is here that we become delusional and hold illusions to be *real*. And in some cases, such a delusion can be dangerous for it takes us away from the possibility of ever creating another *useful* illusion. Such delusions wrest our autonomy — our power to create — from us. We now turn to this theme through Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

NOTES

1. Nietzsche's works had a limited readership during his most productive years. His works, beginning with his very first book, *The Birth of Tragedy,* was never a bestseller. However, Nietzsche's posthumous influence, especially outside Germany, is quite another story. For a brief introduction to Nietzsche's philosophy see, Tanner, M. 2000. *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Ansell-Pearson, K. 2014. *How to Read Nietzsche*. (UK: Granta Publications). For a general introduction to Nietzsche's philosophy, see, Clarke, Maudenarie. 1990. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Richardson, John. 1996. *Nietzsche's System*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Haase, U. 2008. *Starting with Nietzsche*. (London: Bloomsbury). For introductions to Nietzsche's major works, see, *Introductions to Nietzsche*. 2012. Edited by Robert Pippin. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). For a biographical sketch of Nietzsche see, Hollingdale, R. J. 2001 (1965).

Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Cate, Curtis. 2003 (2002). *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Biography*. (London: Pimlico). For a philosophical contextualization of Nietzsche's thoughts see, Young, Julian. 2010. *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Safranski, Rüdiger. (2003). *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. (London: Granta).

2. This, however, is not to mean that Nietzsche's works are intellectually undemanding. Unlike Sade, Nietzsche does not participate in the cold, curated, and calculated writings of the 'Moderns', which was still the dominant trend followed by his contemporaries. For Nietzsche such a mode of expression was indicative of a 'lack of integrity' and it accentuated the suffusion of the false faith placed upon the belief that *truth* is completely grasped through structures of logic. He thus deliberately wrote in poetic prose that craftily denied any coherent systematization. His works thus demand a serious interpretative exercise.
3. Some interpreters of Nietzsche's works, like Alfred Bäumler, had popularized Nietzsche's philosophy as providing a philosophical legitimization for anti-Semitism in the early half of the twentieth century. Kaufmann managed to cleanse this image by casting Nietzsche's emphasis on the "will to power" as an apolitical thesis that had more to do with the project of "self-realization" of one's true nature, rather than with the *political* as such. Thus, the early period of Nietzschean scholarship took Nietzsche as primarily engaged with the *ethical*. It is also important to note that by the late 1970s, we see the emergence of fresher perspectives on Nietzsche's work that sought to present his thesis as a political one — or at the least, as having an important political import. These scholars saw Nietzsche's engagement as bearing important imports for understanding "nihilism" and the very notions of "knowledge" and "truth". Largely coming from the writings of French thinkers, these new modes of reading Nietzsche ushered in a new wave of interest in Nietzsche. For an early collection of essays on these various new interpretative stances on Nietzsche, see, *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*. 1977. Edited and Introduced by David B. Allison. (New York: Del Publishing Co.). For essays that illustrate how Nietzsche's philosophy was interpreted by various philosophers, see *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence*. Edited by Ashley Woodward. (London: Continuum, 2011). To sample how the emergence of new interpretations of Nietzsche's

philosophy change the emphasis in his works see, Allison, David B. 2001. *Reading the New Nietzsche.* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield).

4. The Heideggerian take on the Nietzschean corpus, largely basing itself on Nietzsche's posthumously published work, *Will to Power,* sought to construe Nietzschean thought as essentially metaphysical, and an apt representative of the culmination of the entire tradition of western metaphysics. In this, Heidegger read Nietzsche as the 'last metaphysician of the West'. Heidegger positioned Nietzsche as *the* definitive voice of western metaphysics. Accordingly, he saw in Nietzsche a platform to pave a way for his own *fundamental ontology*. On the other hand, complementing, though in contrast to Heidegger, Kaufmann saw in Nietzsche's works a fundamental struggle against morality and epistemology, rather than metaphysics *per se*. It is through Kaufmann's cleansing interpretative endeavour of the Nietzschean corpus that readers began to see in Nietzsche, a formidable challenge to the legitimacy of moral values, which for Nietzsche were not at all secular or universal but rather thoroughly coloured by our religious beliefs.
5. For a detailed and comprehensive work on the philosophical influences on Nietzsche, see Hollingdale, R. J. 2001 (1965). *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Brobjer, Thomas H. 2008. *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press). For a collection of essays that explicate Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche, see *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator.* Edited by Christopher Janaway. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). For the nature and extent of Lange's influence on Nietzsche, see Stack. George J. 1983. *Lange and Nietzsche*. (New York: De Gruyter). For the relation between the philosophies of Nietzsche and Kant, see Hill. Kevin R. 2003. *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of his Thought.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); *Nietzsche, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (Vol.1).* 2017. Edited by Marco Brusotti and Herman Siemens, *Nietzsche and Kantian Ethics (Vol 2).* 2017. Edited by Joao Constancio and Tom Bailey, and *Nietzsche and Kant on Aesthetics and Anthropology (Vol 3).* 2017. Edited by Maria Joao Mayer Branco and Katia Hay. All the three volumes are published by (London: Bloomsbury).
6. But of course, given the reputation of the Sadean corpus, it can hardly be expected to be found in someone's library. Moreover, not possessing a book is hardly enough evidence for not having read it

or being ignorant of a book and its contents. After all, there is no evidence to show that, apart from the *Critique of Judgment*, Nietzsche actually read any of the writings by Kant either. In fact, it is generally accepted that Nietzsche's understanding of Kant is mediated by Arthur Schopenhauer's and Friedrich Albert Lange's readings of Kant.

However, even a cursory reading of Sade's, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) and Nietzsche's, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* (1887) will suffice in enabling one to see stark similarities between these two works. Further, we know that Nietzsche did have access to the then available French literature and other French scholarly works. In fact, Jean Paulhan suggests that many nineteenth-century writers plagiarized Sade's writings (See, "The Marquis de Sade and His Accomplice" in Sade, Marquis De. 1965. *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings.* Compiled and Translated by Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse, with an Introduction by Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot. (New York: Grover Press), pp. 3-4.

7. Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2001 (1886). *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman. Translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), §9. Henceforth, cited as *BGE,* followed by the aphorism number.
8. See, *BGE,* § 9*ff*.
9. See, Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1974 (1887). *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Translated, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books), §294. Henceforth, cited as GS followed by the aphorism number.
10. See, *BGE*, §230.
11. *GS*, §109.
12. All citations here refer to, Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996 (1887). *On the Genealogy of Morals.* Translated by Douglas Smith. Oxford University Press: Oxford. Henceforth, cited as GM followed by the Essay number and the aphorism number. For a guide to Nietzsche's, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, see, Hatab, Lawarence J. 2008. *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality: An Introduction.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Owen, David. 2007. *Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals.* (UK: Acumen); Janaway, Christopher. 2007. *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). For detailed exploration of the philosophical aspects of the text, see, *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality: A Critical Guide.* 2011. Edited

by Simon May. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

13. See *GM*, "Preface", §2.
14. *GM*, "Preface", §1.
15. See, *GS*, §115.
16. For the nature and extent of influence that Greek philosophers had on Nietzsche, see Tejera, Victorino. 1987. *Nietzsche and Greek Thought*. (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers); Evans, Daw-Nay N.R. 2017. *Nietzsche and Classical Greek Philosophy: Beautiful and Diseased*. (London: Lexington Books). For the central philosophical concepts and positions of Greek thinkers and the manner in which Nietzsche interprets them, see, Meyer. Matthew. 2014. *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients: An Analysis of Becoming, Perspectivism, and the Principle of Non-Contradiction*. (Boston: De Gruyter). For the engagement Nietzsche had with the philosophy of Democritus, see Swift, Paul A. 2005. *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections on Democritus, Schopenhauer and Kant*. (London: Lexington Books).
17. Lange advocated the necessity for a return to Kantian thought in order to strengthen and better equip the philosophical position of *Materialism*. Lange's works constitute a critical part of the attempt to revive Kant's philosophy during the mid-nineteenth century in a bid to recover from the vacuum that Hegel had left behind within the German intellectual tradition with his Idealism. It was acutely felt that Hegelian Idealism just could not keep up with the rise of 'natural philosophy' that was deeply steeped in a schema of materialism, and which was the pride of the British intellectual tradition. Kant appeared to be a succour in this moment of crisis, thus leading to a steady rise in vocal returns to his works, which was then seen as a fertile ground for a version of critical empiricism that made no metaphysical commitments. It is in such a vision that the Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism saw its birth in the hands of Herman Cohen, himself a student of Lange, who too had joined Marburg by 1872. Nietzsche's voice thus places itself precisely in this era when there is a gradual decline in the Hegelian based eristic against Kantian philosophy.
18. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Writings from the Early Notebooks*. 2009. Edited by Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas. Translated by Ladislaus Löb. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 2. (Henceforth, cited as *NB* followed by the page number). In fact, for Nietzsche, the very title of Schopenhauer's magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation*, is an acknowledgement of Schopenhauer's indebted-

ness to Kant.

19. In Nietzsche's analysis, Schopenhauer could not surpass 'Kant where it was necessary [given that] it had its sights on the concept of a thing-in-itself, which [Schopenhauer] considered... as "only a hidden category" [consequently] leading him to erroneously hold that "the world" could be fitted neatly within the structure of this discovery.' (*NB,* pp. 3-4).
20. See, Hill. Kevin R. 2003. *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of his Thought.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 6-7.
21. *GS*, §357.
22. See, *BT,* §2.
23. This fact is largely acknowledged within Nietzschean scholarship. However, for a different and illuminating take on Nietzsche's source of Kant see, Green. Michael Steven. 2002. *Nietzsche and the Transcendental Tradition.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press). Green's book illustrates how Nietzsche was influenced by the Neo-Kantian philosopher, Afrikan Spir amongst others.
24. Nietzsche's notion of *will to power*, is perhaps the densest amongst his conceptual apparatus and has, in itself, generated a rich interpretative scholarship with regards to its meaning and its philosophical import. Largely, the interpretative burden falls upon the manner in which one interprets the notion of 'power' (*Macht*) as a human drive. In consonance with his overall philosophical leitmotif that emphasizes the primacy of human creativity, first underscored in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, we can safely render the term "power" here as a "power to generate meaning/signification". This is also consistent with his invocation of the notion in his later work, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* where elaborating on the notion he writes, 'Thus the essence of life, its *will to power*... the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, *form-giving* forces that *give new interpretations and directions*..." (emphasis mine). See, *GM*, II, §12.
25. Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999 (1872/1886). *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings.* Edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. Translated by Ronald Speirs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) § 18. Henceforth, cited as *BT* followed by the aphorism number.
26. *GS*, §357.
27. *BT,* §18.
28. For those not familiar with cryptic, though standard philosophical argument, and therefore, unfamiliar with the underlying argument that Nietzsche is invoking here; the premise is that I can make sense

of terms such as 'this', 'that', 'it' or any term signifying an 'object' only when I have already demarcated it as being distinct from its surroundings. But then, the act of demarcation presupposes that I have, within my arsenal of sense-making tools, the concept of 'unity'. For when I meaningfully use the denotative term 'this', I have already rendered that which is denoted by the term 'this' as a *single unit* of existence, and as distinct from the rest of existence, in that moment of utterance. The term 'this' cannot be used meaningfully without the horizon of *difference* which distinctively marks that which is being denoted by the term 'this' as *this*.

29. For Nietzsche, we dig the dark burrows of our own error deeper when we add to this our construct of the 'thing' — the "substratum" — that defines our very modality of construing nature. He stresses that it is precisely here that we must recall Kant, who has already brought to our attention that our quest for absolute truths about nature is based on a substantive ontology 'that distinguishes that which is moving from that which is moved' — the *cause* as necessarily and ontologically distinct from the *event*.
30. Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996 (1878). *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann, with a new "Introduction" by Arthur C. Danto. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), § 19. Henceforth, *HaH,* followed by the aphorism number.
31. Ibid.
32. *NB*, p. 159.
33. Ibid.
34. *HaH* §11.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. We must remember that the characteristics of *universality*, as well as that of *necessity,* pertaining to our claims of knowledge of the phenomenal world is what effectively renders natural science possible. And both of these characteristics hinge themselves precisely on Kant's formulation of the *synthetic a priori* judgment. For explication, see, Chapter III, endnote 15, of this book.
38. *HaH* §16.
39. *HaH* §18.
40. See, *HaH,* §18. Once we realize that 'autonomy' as unconditioned willfulness is our originary stance within the phenomenal world itself, there lies no need, as erroneously deemed by Kant, to draw

the grounds of this "autonomy" from the realm of the noumenal or the *intelligible*, and to consequently contradict our originary position of revelation that nothing can be known about the noumenal, nor this world be causally connected to it. Here too, Nietzsche holds that Kant erroneously assumes the universality of the moral laws to hold by virtue of their groundedness in the noumenal realm, while in fact, the very postulate of universality lies precisely in the underlying assumption of a certain uniformity in basis of individual's actions, and thereby upon a substantive metaphysics of a unitary self that is specifically superimposed by our language of logic. It is, as Nietzsche holds, only under the assumption of such minimal similarities in terms of the basis for our choices that the very idea of altruism and universal values even emerge.

41. *GS*, §335.
42. Ibid.
43. For him, those who see through the Kantian error, realize the Kantian turn towards the *thing-in-itself* is something that 'is worthy of a Homeric laughter, [in that] it appeared to be so much, indeed everything, and is actually empty, that is, empty of significance' for all significations are precisely contained within the realm of the phenomenal, as Kant himself declared. See, *HaH*, §19.
44. See, *GS*, §335.
45. Ibid.
46. We must remind ourselves here that crucial to Nietzsche's claim is the underlying Kantian distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal — a distinction that he held since the early period of his encounter with Kant — which he deploys in his *Birth of the Tragedy* and retains throughout his rejections of other aspects of Kant's philosophy that begins to surface by the early 1870s. Though of course, in his later works, Nietzsche is explicitly ruthless in his rejection of Kant's *Transcendental* philosophy, particularly his transcendental moral paradigm, he nevertheless never gives up the Kantian dualism between the phenomenon and the noumenal, which of course, Nietzsche adapts in terms of the realm of "signification" and the "grounds of signification". For Nietzsche, Kant's primary insight into the form of "causality" goes on to clearly establish that *any* signification that the world has, or might have, is necessarily bound within the realm of the phenomenal, and this 'signification' is independent of the noumenal realm, in so far as we are seeking to make sense of the world *in its phenomenality*. Of course, ultimately this entire edifice

of signification assumes the horizon of the noumenal realm and acts as its "intelligible ground". But as Kant himself emphatically emphasized in his *Third Antimony*, this intelligible ground cannot, without losing its noumenal status, ever be a part of 'series that provides the signification to the phenomenal world'. It is this logical demand that requires Kant to establish the dual aspect of the *form* of causality. Nietzsche's early attempt to appropriate the Kantian noumenal-phenomenal dualism can be read in his ingenious attempt to cast it along the Dionysian-Apollonian schema in his *The Birth of Tragedy*.

47. See, *BT,* §17; §18.
48. See, *NB,* p. 130. Kant, in Nietzsche's evaluation, thus becomes a peculiar case. For in Kant, we have someone who went all the way — so very close to becoming a *Zarathustra* — but by virtue of his error, successfully ruined his own possibility of achieving his autonomy, by getting deludedly trapped within the force of his very self-created illusion. It is, as Nietzsche sees it, in this state of delusion that Kant's faith in the *objective* reality of the very constructs he had once established as *our* epistemic constructs begins to unfold. After all, Nietzsche takes Kant's first *Critique* declaring the impossibility of attributing any *reality* to our notions of 'God', 'Freedom', and 'Immortality' as a hypocritical stance, given that in a bid to provide signification to the phenomenality of our *being,* Kant reinstates the entire basket of these discarded illusions back into our folds again.
49. See, *NB,* p. 130. This is precisely the insight carried forward by later atheistic Existential/Absurdist thinkers like Sartre (or even Heidegger) who go on to argue that the essential nature of an *authentic* self is to "project meanings" and to stay "committed" to it. Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) precisely exploits this theme of the *Tragic*.
50. See, *NB,* p. 103.
51. See, *NB,* p. 110. In his subsequent return to Kant more than a decade later, in his 1886 preface to the second edition of his *The Birth of Tragedy,* aptly titled "An Attempt at Self-Criticism", Nietzsche laments his inability to see that his project could not have been carried forward in either the language of Schopenhauer or of Kant since his 'new and unfamiliar evaluations ran absolutely counter to the spirit, as well as the taste of Schopenhauer and Kant!' See, *BT*, §6.
52. For Nietzsche, therefore, life and art are intertwined. Of course, Nietzsche's views concerning art is not static and scholars are of the opinion that Nietzsche's assessment of art is ambivalent and changes

during different periods of his life. Notwithstanding this fact, what is undeniable is that Nietzsche's valuation of art is always through the lens of its relation to life. For Nietzsche's view on art, see Ridley, Aaron. 2007. *Nietzsche on Art and Literature.* (London: Routledge); Young. Julian. 1992. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

CHAPTER 10

The Overman: Autonomy, Language and Illusions

> Why should our virtues be grave? We like ours nimble-footed:
> Even like Homer's verse, thy have to come and go!
> –Nietzsche, *Joke, Cunning and Revenge* (Rhyme No.25).

> Ideals are fabricated on earth...
> –Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I, §14.

> All great things are the cause of their own destruction, through an act of self-cancellation: the law of life, the law of *necessary* 'self-overcoming' which is the essence of life, wills it so...
> –Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, III, §27.

Nietzsche begins the preface to his *On the Genealogy of Morals*[1] by reminding us, that our quest for the discovery of our true nature is a grand, but nevertheless a futile, quest. It is a vain attempt because we begin our quest by moving in the wrong direction. The seriousness and the sense of gravity that enshrouds it are merely the delusional products consumed by a mind that is enchanted by an illusion created in the past. So too it remains with the question of values, as well as with all other questions that pertain to *our* phenomenal existence, for the significance of all phenomena are *necessarily* illusions. The meaning we read *in* them are, after all, our artwork.

But if significations in the phenomenal world truly have its

grounds, as well as its bounds, within the *creative* self, then how do our moral values come to have a significance that is necessarily "other"-oriented in its very experience? Is this not, *contra* Nietzsche, precisely because the source of its significance lies outside the self? Is it not the necessary externality of this source that thereby manifests itself in my *conscience* as a moral demand that I invariably intuit? Is it not this that makes me feel "bound to my duty", and experience "guilt" when I fail to abide by it? Is it not such an external locus of signification in the "other" that enables me to realize that it is precisely in transcending the *self* that I come to approximate the source of this moral voice? And is it not in this transcendence that I come to understand my own significance in the cosmic order of *beings*?

Nietzsche's primary goal is precisely to show how the apparent profundity of these questions are themselves rooted in our self-created artwork that steadily leads us towards such moral-transcendentalism.[2] Of course, one can, Nietzsche holds, counter our faith in moral transcendentalism simply through a narrative of *utility,* as had been voiced within certain circles of moral-naturalism even during his time. Following them, one could hold that our moral evaluations, which appear as transcendentally grounded, are but based upon the mechanistic structures of *utility.* Such utility-structures are what enable us to have specific relations with others and are, in turn, duly governed by certain laws of utility-functions. However, for Nietzsche, such a vision of naturalism is itself yet another expression of the 'pride' of the 'theoretical man', who fundamentally believes that certain essential objective truths are necessarily hidden *behind* the phenomenal. That is, it essentially explains the signification of the phenomenal in terms of an underlying structure of utility-function that provides the causal relation between our actions and our values, while taking these structures of utility as themselves being a *given*. For Nietzsche, such an assumption of an ahistorical, and therefore universal, underlying form of causality is what provides these narratives the grandeur of *objectivity*. It is this that subsequently enables the positing of the ensuing universal value of altruism, and the notion of "good" in general, as grounded in a structure that is impermeable to any ruptures of history. But as Nietzsche sees it, such a mode of explanation forgets that the very

form of 'causality' is itself a product of our superimposition — the illusion that was neatly created within the Socratic paradigm. Thus, our faith upon the flaunted objectivity and universality of values within any utility-framework is simply deluded.

Nietzsche agrees with Kant in his refusal to locate the source of moral values in the clause of utility. And much like Kant, for him too, the source of these values is ultimately lodged within the *self*. However, the difference, and a crucial one, is that unlike Kant, Nietzsche's is wary of the *transcendental* self as the rightful source of our values. Like Sade, for Nietzsche the very notion of an unembodied self is an impossibility. It is a delusion and our inability to see that an unembodied self is simply the effect produced by the grand Socratic illusion. Rather for him, it is the immanent — the historical and embodied self — that is the source of this value. In concrete historical terms, Nietzsche places the origin of values firmly *within* the spontaneous embodied *will* of the nobility — the Aristocratic self who *wills* these values because their embodied phenomenal self *can*. They embody these values simply as who *they are*. And through this they wedge a distance of *difference* between them and those who are *not like them*. In this, they create a 'pathos of distance'. But this act of demarcation also translates as a demarcation in terms of the corporeal self that *wills* what it *can* and those who *will* to submit to the order laid out by such an aristocratic *will*. In the case of the latter, their *self* must transact an unnatural effort to adhere to the dictates of the *aristocratic will*, which it is itself not. That is, the *abiding will* here is forced to abide by that which it *cannot* genuinely *will*, since one can *will* only what one *is*. For Nietzsche, it is precisely here that a peculiar 'pathos of distance' between the *will* that 'wills laws that demand obedience' and the *abiding will* is born. It is here, for the first time that the *abiding will* experiences the initial shadow of "objectivity". Given that the values that it abides by are not in tune with its very *being*, therefore, these values bring with them a felt sense of "externality", which then informs our construal of values as being objective. On the other hand, in Nietzsche's analysis, the values declared by the aristocratic *will* are in consonance with their embodied being. For the aristocratic selves, these value terms are simply descriptive terms that echo what they in fact *are* and,

what they in fact *do*. That is, here there is no moral gap between volition and their deed. But for the non-aristocratic — the powerless and the weak — these very descriptive terms come to entail a prescriptive force of an *ought* precisely because their corporeal existence denies the actualization of what is being willed. In that, the *good* for them comes to denote what they *are not*, and perhaps can *never* become. Here, between the volition and the deed is a distance that is indicative of a movement from what one *is* to what one *ought* to be. This gap between the descriptive *is* and the prescriptive *ought* is what comes to be inaugurated by the 'pathos of distance'. And it is here, in the *weak abiding will*, that value-terms come to acquire the tonality that suggests an *aspiration*. And, as Nietzsche sees it, with the gradual effacing of the aristocratic nobility, wherein these values were originally hinged, there comes about an utter loss of the external material grounds that can ground them. For Nietzsche, it is this collective amnesia of the actual historical grounds of our values that effectively leads us to postulate a transcendental ground of the *moral conscience* as the source of our *oughts*. This amnesia on our part, for Nietzsche, is pivotal in our imagining of altruism.

In Nietzsche's analysis, our construal of altruism is deeply informed by the notion of 'unegoistic volition', which in its first historical occurrence is merely indicative of an *ought* that emerges from the *pathos of distance*, and where one comes to *value* a value that is detached and external to the self that abides by it. That is, given the loss of the actual horizon of its historical origins, it acquires, over time, the connotation of a 'sense of distance from what is willed', and consequently leads us to postulate the climactic sense of a moral volition as being necessarily '*dis*interested'.[3] Nietzsche grounds his conviction concerning the material origins of our moral vocabulary upon the etymological fact that these value-terms were historically literal and 'unsymbolic' in their semantic denotation.[4] For him, a genealogy of our value-terms disclose that in their early beginnings they were oriented towards our bodies and its tangible traits in terms of their semantic significations. In this, they were crude descriptive markers that were pinned upon the material and tangible aspects of one's existence, such as one's colour, one's spruceness, one's diet, and like qualities. For instance, Nietzsche,

based on his etymological analysis, illustratively shows how "purity" as a value-term, in its originary stance, simply meant someone 'who washes, who denies himself certain types of food which causes skin complains, who refrains from sleeping with unclean woman of the lower classes, who abhors blood'.[5] But with the passage of time, we came to forget their phenomenal signification and their corporeal grounds of denotation, and subsequently deified these value-terms to stand for immaterial qualities that were intangible, *deeper*, and completely detached from our corporeality.[6]

Nietzsche emphasizes the material origins of our value-terms in order to exhibit our error in construing the trajectory of our moral values in terms of a linear progressive movement towards the perfection of our moral self, as was construed by Kant or Socrates. Rather, given the material origins of our value terms, Nietzsche's genealogy intends to reveal their movement as essentially dialectic. Modern values with their presupposed loci in moral conscience are, for Nietzsche, nothing more than products of the pathos of distance and the power-struggle that grounds it. For him, the metamorphosis of our value-terms from its early unsymbolic denotative nature to its modern abstract avatar is nuanced with dialectical twists and turns, even if the metamorphosed product may be reticent and not show the scars and marks of its long and arduous transformative process. The Nietzschean genealogy of values foreground a crucial aspect of our moral values — and in this it is Hegelian — namely, that the term "good", is a *relational emergent*. The significatory aspects of our value-terms emerge through a relation of *disdain* and *vengeance* between the 'powerful' (historically occupied by the knightly aristocrats), and the powerless (best exemplified by the plebeians). It is precisely the web of illusions generated by the clash of significatory-frameworks of the aristocratic and the priestly moral paradigms that have effectively lulled us to hold the delusional belief that moral values pertain to the perfection of a solitary moral self. The truth is that our delusional faith in the perfectibility of our self is itself indicative of our entrapment within the Socratic illusion. For Nietzsche, underlying our moral discourse that prides itself for its quest towards self-perfection are forces that silently work towards our entrapment within the illusions created by this power-struggle,

such that we are never isolated from it and, therefore, have come to forever forget our true nature. In Nietzsche's analysis, what our moral discourse alarmingly promotes, in the garb of a movement towards self-perfection, is rather a movement towards a state of perpetual amnesia of our originary nature — it is a movement towards self-effacement, towards nihilism.

In Nietzsche's genealogical analysis, our modern table of values finds its origins in the power struggle that emerged as a reactive revolt by those who were disdainfully designated as the "bad" — those who lacked the embodied strength to execute their *will* — within the aristocratic value-framework. It is in the experience of this unbearable burden of the pathos of distance, experienced by the *abiding will* that lacks the needed corporeal nature to actualize what is demanded of it, that the priestly moral paradigm surges to create its own value significations. Notwithstanding the incommensurable paradigmatic differences between the created value-structures of 'good', and between their educed contraries of, 'bad' and 'evil', Nietzsche's genealogical analysis invariably seeks to exhibit the phenomenal and material origins of these two warring value frameworks. It foregrounds the basis of their incompatible table of values as lying squarely within their respective phenomenal *facticity*. The 'noble' who grounded in their 'powerful physicality, a rich, burgeoning, even overflowing health, as well as all those things which help to preserve it — war, adventure, hunting, dancing, competitive games, and everything which involves strong, free, high-spirited activity'[7]; and the 'priestly' who were grounded in their 'powerlessness' and in 'customs which are turned away from action and combine brooding with emotional volatility...[and in inactions like] ...fasting, sexual abstinence, of flight "into the desert"... [their] anti-sensual and enervating metaphysics...'[8] Both value-paradigms, emerge specifically within the phenomenal conditions of their respective existence — the nobility marked by the possibility of self-assertion, and the plebeians marked by the inability to do so. Therefore, the values that make it to the table of values within the priestly moral paradigm are precisely those that exhibit traits of their own phenomenal existence. For Nietzsche, this much is evident from the nature of the choicest of the priestly values, that

they essentially underplay anything that their corporeal constitution denies them, such as physical strength, power and action.

Thus, it is here, where through the cunningness of the calculative rationality, that the *weak* – those devoid of the power to *will* – invented the lie of 'salvation' and the postulate of an 'other-world'. It is here that the priestly value framework inverted the traits denoted by the term "good" from its original signification of that which is 'noble, powerful, beautiful, happy, blessed' into that which is 'the deprived, powerless, miserable, sick, ugly'.[9] For Nietzsche, the priestly assault upon aristocratic ideas and values exhibit an act of cowardice that is rooted in their powerlessness *contra* the "nobles". It was their hatred and thirst for vengeance to which their act of creation of values catered, enabling them to cleverly couch their ulterior motives in 'ideals' and in their heralding of 'a new love' – the Pauline Christian *love*. They thus inverted the very structure of the aristocratic values-terms by projecting their ideals through a discourse of *love* while secretly veiling their grounds of *ressentiment*.[10] This facade, however, caves in and reveals its fundamental nature at moments of the inner-most confessions of the 'priestly nobility', where the structure of deceit ruptures and lays bare their resentment and a longing for vengeance on account of their freedom being curtailed to be what they in fact were; *weak* and *powerless*. *Ressentiment* is therefore the manifestation of the seething frustration which is directed towards the ones who held the power over the significatory apparatus of values that forever reminded the weak of their weakness and thier lack of strength to assert their spontaneity. The *weak*, as Nietzsche sees it, will always bear a deep but silent grudge against those who show them the burden that their very existence pose for them. We can hear the truth, Nietzsche proclaims, if only we listen carefully, for one can hear priestly voices – the manufactures of 'ideals' – that proclaim from their 'dark workshop', that 'the blessed in the kingdom of heaven will see the punishment of the damned so that they may enjoy their bliss all the more'.[11]

For Nietzsche, the fact that the priestly value structure is foundationally entrenched in resentment entails that here, for the significatory force of the value-terms to emerge, the determination

of the 'other' prior to the determination of the self becomes a necessity. That is, here, the construal of one's *other* as "evil" is what allows for the construal of oneself as "good" through a creative structure of negation.[12] Thus, for Nietzsche, the resentment that underlies the priestly paradigm of morality, is what allows for the blossoming of peculiar values that are cardinally oriented towards the *other* rather than the self.[13] And in this fundamental orientation, wherein there is a tacit bestowal of primacy to the *other*, it negates the corporeal self along with its primeval spontaneity. The orientation of the priestly significatory structure of value thus stands in stark contrast to the orientation of morality upheld by the knightly nobility. Since there, first and foremost, brimming with self-assurance, the assertive corporeal self that is in tune with its own spontaneity, conceives itself as "good" and construes that which *differs* from it as "other" (as the "bad"). As Nietzsche sees it, the opposition between the two warring significatory structures of value-creation is, therefore, far deeper than the particularities concerning *some* specific values. The difference is far more fundamental for it lies in their contrasting orientations in terms of which the belief in the *primacy of the self* comes to manifest itself in concrete terms. Unlike the aristocratic value-structure, the priestly value-structure necessarily demands the postulation of an "other" as a horizon for the "self" to emerge.

Clearly then, given the demand of the "other" as its precondition, the values that the priestly moral paradigm can afford to project too cannot be indicative of any originary act that emerges "spontaneously" — an act that arises *from* and *for* the corporeal self. The values that emerge here must primordially be *re*actionary, and thus dependent for their emergence upon the stimulus from something *external* to the self. Accordingly, values that emerge from such *re*actionary drive are primordially ordained by a force of negation in its power to deny *life as such.*[14] Therefore, though the priestly significatory structure of value *creates* its illusionary web that indeed provides existence with meaning, it is, nevertheless, not a manifestation of a genuine spontaneous creative drive, for here, the creative force always manifests itself as a *means* to negate that which already *is*, namely, its *other*.[15] Thus, though the veil of illusion that it casts through its created values may explicitly assert the primacy

of the self with its emphasis on *the inwards turn* as a prerequisite for morality, Nietzsche underlines the fact that this structure of morals on evaluation reveal, that contrary to its claims, it is necessarily oriented *outwards*. Its emphatic projection of an *inwards* turn is a farce, since the moral force behind its prescribed actions are essentially grounded upon a source that is exterior to the self, and never genuinely upon a fabric of spontaneity. Seen thus, such a moral structure levies no demand for an inward turn of one's moral gaze at all. For Nietzsche, given that all structures of signification conceal their genuine nature through the imposition of a *creative* illusion, what the illusion of the priestly moral paradigm conceals is precisely its primeval resentment, and its intent to curtail the spontaneous expressions of autonomy.[16] And it manages to do this precisely by curating the self in a position of *apparent* primacy, while in truth it is always the *other* that undergirds it. It is this discovery of what lies concealed under the illusions cast by the priestly framework of morals that Nietzsche desperately wants to share with us.

It is here, in the delineation of the markers of a genuine manifestation of autonomy that Nietzsche and Sade part ways. Contra Sade, for Nietzsche, not every *transgression* is therefore a *transvaluation*, and therefore, not every assertion of the self is a self-assertion. For Nietzsche, this is exhibited by the fact that the transgression of the aristocratic table of values by the priestly moral paradigm draws its sustenance precisely by concealing the autonomy of the corporeal self through an act of indefinite postponement and transference of one's agency and one's responsibility of self-expression over to "God".

But how precisely is such a concealing made possible within the priestly paradigm? To conceal one's resentment and to present it as love demands that one aptly conceals the existential burden of the impossible *oughts* that one carries. After all, such a concealing demands a craft that can conceal one's existential corporeality, which though soaked in powerlessness can still be presented as a bold self.

In Nietzsche's analysis, in concealing our genuine nature, the crafters of the priestly framework of morals draw from the art of linguistic manipulation — the greatest weapon in the arsenal of the

"theoretical man", who is heralded within the Socratic vision. It is in language that the *pathos of distance* transforms into a dangerous formulation. The "weak" linguistically transform the existential pathos of distance as a celebratory chasm, thereby creating a necessary gap between the agent, or the subject behind the acts, and the act itself — that is, it essentializes the necessity for a distance between the performer and the performance; the *will* and the *deed*.[17] This illusory gap between the 'will' and the 'expression of the will' is then presented as a necessity for the very possibility of the idea of a 'free choice' or freedom. It is this illusory gap crafted between the *doer* and the *deed* that enables the powerless to conceal their originary trait of 'powerlessness' and present it as a display of their 'power' *of choice* — as their *freedom*. Thus, through this linguistically weaved illusion, all that are intrinsically inherent to our weak corporeal self, namely our weakness and our meekness, are portrayed as a deliberate manifestation of an 'act of choice' providing us the illusion that we could very well have *done*, and *been*, *otherwise*. Nietzsche writes:

> [T]his cleverness... has, thanks to forgery and self-deception of impotence, clothed itself in the magnificence of self-abnegating, calm, and patient virtue, exactly as if the weakness of the weak man itself — that is, his *essence*, his action his whole single, unavoidable, irredeemable reality — were a free achievement, something willed, chosen, a *deed, a merit...*'[18]

As Nietzsche sees it, it is this illusion — afforded through the manipulation of language — that splits the *doer* from the *deed* and thereby sustains the invocation of a non-corporeal self as the seat of my freedom. And it is precisely through this illusion that the weak and the powerless finally portray those who are genuinely autonomous in their self-assertion as "evil" — as those who are unfree — because in such beings, their "self" and "its expressions" manifest in terms of a single corporeality. Their deeds defy this distance from their will. That is, their *acts* and *being* merges into one; the *represented* (being) and the *representation* (actions) becomes one. That is, the deed as an expression of the *will* and the *will that expresses itself* are one and the same. But under the colours of the linguistic illusion,

where a divide is carefully wedged between the act and the agent, one can legitimately demand that spontaneity *must not* express itself as what *it is*, leading to the steady decadence of the autonomous self in the name of morals. That is, within this linguistically created illusion, the spontaneous expressions of self-assertion of the autonomous self can be *legitimately* censored and demanded that it be curtailed. Subsequently, the inability to subject one's self-assertion to such a structure of censorship can then be deemed as a mark of *un*freedom — as their inability to *be,* and *do, otherwise*. Thus, through the institutionalization of this linguistic gap between the will and the deed, the weak successfully fabricate their inherent weakness as a matter of choice, and through this they elevate their weakness and position themselves as the holders of a higher moral ground.[19] Nietzsche writes:

> ...popular morality distinguishes strength from expressions of strength, as if behind the strong individual there were an indifferent substratum which was at liberty to express or not to express strength.[20]

For Nietzsche, though Kant thankfully discovers our primeval mark as that of being autonomous, his characterization of autonomy unfortunately falls prey to this linguistic illusory web cast by the priestly framework of significations. It is under the enchantment of this linguistic illusion that he demarcates the *Wille* (or legislating will) from the *Willkür* (or the will of the self *as* phenomena). And it is precisely through this delineation that Kant inaugurates the possibility of "choice". As Nietzsche sees it, it is also the force of this linguistic illusion that leads Kant to articulate autonomy in terms of a "promise" that the moral law demands from us. Autonomy, for Kant, can be presented as the explicit fulfilling of a tacit promise that we shall abide by our "duty". Seen thus, within Kant's moral framework, the act of "promising" is primordial; a desideratum demanded by the principle of autonomy itself. It is precisely this structure of *promise* that relates the *Wille* to the *Willkür.*[21] Now, the Kantian promise is not just a promise that is kept under all circumstances; it is rather a promise whose *keeping* has nothing to do, whatsoever, with circumstances at all. This independence from circumstances, or what Kant calls the freedom from the world of

sensibility, enables it to be a promise that *categorically* holds, *eternally*. It is this that then secures the Kantian belief that an "ought" *surely* implies a "can", for it is indifferent to the phenomenal conditions of our existence.[22]

But as Nietzsche sees it, once one breaks free from this delusion and is disenchanted with the illusion cast by the priestly framework of significations, the Kantian effort to relate the "ought" with a "can" appears unnecessary and redundant. After all, this very cleft is itself a product of the illusory division between the *will* that wills and the *will* that abides. Rather, autonomy precisely entails that there is no gap between the "ought" and the "can", for it is the "can" that simply transforms into an "ought" as an *afterthought*. That is, in reality, there simply is the deed that is done. In truth, as Nietzsche sees it, there simply is the corporeal "I" *expressing* its autonomous expressions. Put concisely, the autonomous corporeal self, simply *does,* and it is in that deed that both the "can" and the "ought" emerge.

Thus, in Nietzsche's formulation, spontaneity as a mark of autonomy, is merely another mode of characterizing an individual whose actions originate *in*, and is driven by, the *present.* And that truly speaking, autonomy forecloses the possibility of positioning spontaneity in relation to either the past or the future. For Nietzsche, the very idea of an autonomous being who is served by an *eternal memory* and whose being is a constant fulfilling of a *promise*, runs counter to the very notion of autonomy itself. Thus, contrary to Kant's "moral memory", Nietzsche deems "moral forgetfulness" as the essential capacity of the autonomous man.[23]

But, if Nietzsche is right in his genealogical tracing — and given Nietzsche's conviction that the illusions cast by the structure of significations of the priestly paradigm still reigns as a dominant mode of meaningfully navigating through existence — surely then, a *genuine* autonomous being can only be an object of an anxious hope. A hope that can only materialize precisely at the moment when the ideals fabricated through structures of lies, accumulated and strengthened over thousands of years, begin to rupture.[24] That is for Nietzsche, the autonomous man can emerge only when one transcends "culture" — the culture that we have nurtured over cen-

turies beginning with Socrates and his ideal of the theoretical man, and adorned over centuries with Christian moral values. Thus, one thing is certain for Nietzsche; man must overcome his *history* if he is to overcome himself rather than wait for the "end of history". And for Nietzsche, to transcend history is to transcend the historical man. This moment of transcendence brings about not merely the undoing of history, but rather presents the avenue to create one. That is, if the very signification of the phenomenal world arises as my imposition, then surely, I must, even as a realized autonomous being, provide it *some* signification or the other. I must shroud it with a veil of illusion all over again. After all, following the Kantian insight, there are no other grounds or source of signification other than the self. Thus, though this transcendence and the overcoming of history helps us attain our naked facticity — a facticity that was hitherto couched within the trickery of language and held upright within a structure of lies built over thousands of years — is the rediscovery of our genuine nature not too great a burden for us to bear? Is it not, as Nietzsche's 'madman' declares, that by virtue of murdering God, we thus become not merely powerful, but the bearer of a great responsibility as well. Must we then not discharge the role that "God" performed in generating significations upon existence? Must we not then shoulder the responsibility of providing signification to the world — to existence *as such*? Nietzsche writes:

> The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him–you* and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? ...Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? God, too, decompose.
>
> God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? ...Is not

> the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us — for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.[25]

Within Nietzsche's formulation, we thus encounter *our being* in its nakedness — bereft of all illusions and delusional significations for the first time — not as a "man" but as *ourselves*. In the very overcoming of one's history, one can no longer encounter *man* in oneself since the garb of *that* "man" has been shed the moment one overcomes history. After all, the *idea* of "man", with its entire connotative scope, is itself a product of that historical illusion as well. Neither does one, at this juncture, recognize in one's being the *purity* of one's nature, for the very notion of "purity" too is a product of history. This state of transcendence is thus not Rousseau's state of nature, but rather a state of primal "innocence" that is stark and brute.[26] This *innocence* is a product of the loss of one's language — the very scaffolding that is required by the art of creating illusions; the art of erecting structures of signification.[27] The Nietzschean invocation of primal innocence is thus not to be confused with the moral innocence that emerges in contrast to the *cunningness* of a man-of-the-world. After all, in the overcoming of history, all that that can act as a moral horizon of contrast to even enable such an articulation within the dichotomous pair of *innocence–cunning* has been shed as well. Thus, this innocence is *brute*, in so far as it is an *absolute* loss of sense — an absolute loss of meaning. Centrally, the loss of evaluative language also entails the ineffability of the state one is in. Accordingly, one cannot even assert one's moral worth. In fact, for Nietzsche, one cannot assert anything in this originary state — a state of *un*order — for assertions demand significatory impositions. What meaning would the *overman* (übermensch) — even give himself and to existence *as such* in the absence of an *order*. After all, for Nietzsche, all sense-making activities are efforts to churn out an illusory order to enable us to categorize and strait-lace existence into some comprehensible state. Or, would the realization of the *overman* usher in a mode of existence more deprived in meaning and abundant in meaninglessness and absurdity? What would this

overman do? The very boredom of his being![28] Thus, what lies beyond the 'good and the evil' is a void, which if we manage to reach, we would have to deal and fill, all over again, with *significations*. That is, all men share the curse of Sisyphus. This is, for Nietzsche, the truth of *eternal resurrection*![29]

If we pause here and care to reflect upon the nature of this Nietzschean *hope*, we soon come to realize that it does not disclose, in any concrete terms, what the actualization of this hope brings forth. The Nietzschean *overman*, even as an object of hope remains vacuous, still intangible — a hitherto *unknown*. It is a phantom, characteristically in a void. Is this not why Nietzsche deems 'fear' as a necessary accompaniment of our hope in the coming of the *overman*. But we must pause to raise a question here to consider the status and extent of this promise.

Much like Kant's autonomous self, Nietzsche's *overman* has *not yet* materialized within the frames of present times. Thus, as is clear, Kant, Sade and Nietzsche would all agree that man is *yet* to become "man" when weighed against the horizon of autonomy. But for Nietzsche, the *overman* is a *desperate hope* that is pitched against the forces of historical moulding.[30] Nietzsche himself wishes to be granted,

> ...a glimpse of something complete, wholly successful, happy, powerful, triumphant, something still capable of inspiring fear! A glimpse of man who justifies mankind, of a compensatory, redeeming stroke of luck on the part of man, a reason to retain faith in mankind![31]

The sincere desperation in this expression of Nietzsche's is suggestive of an unreachable possibility. The hurdle in the realization of one's autonomy, as Nietzsche sees it, is in the task of overcoming the comforting lure of the 'culture' one finds oneself in. After all, in Nietzsche, to discover one's autonomy is to transcend one's own historical self, that is to say, one must transcend the very *fact* of one's 'community', which is the same as transcending one's *culture* too. Is this not the reason that Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* can only be encountered in the mountains? After all, the idea of a "community", in contrast to the demands of autonomy, posits the originary demand of always *remembering* that one's identity blooms exclusively

within it. It essentially presents my being as a *being* who must never forget this primordial "promise" to the community to never forget it. Therefore, the very idea of a "community" is, for Nietzsche, grounded upon the idea of a "promising man", and the institution of promising clearly demands the inculcation or invention of a moral memory as a 'counter-faculty... by means of which *forgetfulness* is... suspended.'[32] The birth of a community is thus the beginning of the end of the possibility of rediscovering one's autonomy.

It is precisely for this very reason that though the idea of a 'community of an equal among equals' was an invention of the 'noble spirit', the 'noble spirit' historically loses its very autonomy by taking its own creation too seriously. It is his created illusion that caters to the development of a 'morality of customs' giving the early foundations upon which historical man subsequently shapes his very ideas of "community", "culture", and ultimately of "society" itself. The idea of a "community", and the accompanying morality of customs, thus breeds a man who must *remember*.[33] Thus, the invention of 'memory' is, for Nietzsche, what is pivotally responsible for enabling man to think *casually* in terms of *means* and *ends*, thus helping him to shape the world in terms of the illusory web of "regularity" and "utility" — enabling him to distinguish between things that are necessary and those that are contingent to his *original will*. It is on the basis of such a memory that man comes to shape himself as 'regular, calculable, necessary', and as capable of negating his intrinsic spontaneity — of neutralizing his inherent unpredictability. It is only the predictable man with a strong memory that can promise to abide by an "ought" and can vouch for himself beyond his *present* to the community.[34]

The breeding of the man who *genuinely* promises, thus, moves in a direction that is in stark contrast to the demand of spontaneity which is rooted in *forgetfulness*, and thereby lacks the temporal dimensions of the *past* and the *future*. The rise of the man who can promise is thus paradoxically also the decline of man in terms of his autonomy. For Nietzsche, the ideal of modernity's promised sovereign self, bound by the memory of a web of originary "ought", therefore, presents itself as an inherent contradiction.

But then, how has modernity therefore come to construe the

possibility of autonomy in terms of a "sovereign animal" who is also paradoxically endowed with the faculty of moral-memory — the counter-faculty of genuine spontaneity?[35]After all, is not the cultivation of "memory" a central demand within the Kantian paradigm of the *sovereign self*, the autonomous individual? After all, is not Kant's vision of autonomy precisely the fruition of the faculty of "memory", wherein the self finally gets hold of the inviolable laws of one's "conscience" and the memory to never forget the originary promise?[36] Nietzsche answers these questions in the affirmative. He writes:

> The breeding of an animal which is *entitled to make promises*– is this not the paradoxical task which nature has set itself with respect to man? Is this not the real problem which man not only poses but faces also? ...The extent to which this problem has been solved must seem all the more surprising to someone who fully appreciates the countervailing force of *forgetfulness*...[37]

Deflected by the historical forces of illusions, in Nietzsche's analysis, modernity's ideal of the *sovereign man* is indeed a paradox. Unwittingly, they replace our inherent spontaneous nature with *conscience,* which for Nietzsche is simply a term for the institutionalized memory of the promises and responsibilities one holds *eternally*. It is this distorted version of the *sovereign man* that modernity aspires towards, with the misplaced belief that *conscience* is primordial, ahistorical and apodictic, rather than man's own creation. In other words, the creator gets trapped within his own creation, and thus what was historically invented through a series of manipulation and calculation and sustained by structures of pain and punishment,[38] eats into its own history, and in due course of time comes to pose itself as eternal, *a priori* and absolute.[39]

In Nietzsche's view, the beginning of the loss of the genuine autonomy of man is, therefore, marked by his departure from his natural spontaneity; and it is through this departure that he paradoxically arrives at the misconstrued image of the modern/Kantian autonomous being who is duly *tamed* through a calculus of pain. As Nietzsche sees it, it is only when one gives up one's endowed spontaneity can one arrive *as* modernity's autonomous,

and thereby sovereign, man — as someone who can reason through a tedious chain of cause-effect relations, who remembers one's *promise;* in brief, a being who has a conscience and can cohabit within a community through a transference of one's *will to power* – that is, his spontaneity to create significations — over to the 'law'. "Bad conscience" is thus what the 'state', the 'community' the 'oppressively narrow and regular morality' — *culture* in short — manages to achieve through the invocation of a calculus of pain or 'punishment', in its project of securing for mankind the misconstrued ideal of the 'sovereign man'. A 'sovereign man', who is, to speak in Kantian terms, *one* with the law and order. Thus, *bad conscience* is not, for Nietzsche, what it is generally taken to be, namely, an *a priori* mechanism of moral intuitions that indicates that *we have done what we ought not to have done*. It is not a manifestation of our intelligible or our intrinsic moral nature, but rather a creation of history, and of our own making. It is, in Nietzsche's analysis, through the mutilation of the ignominious 'forgetfulness' — the originary mark of the man-animal — that the cultivated faculty of 'memory' secures for modernity its degenerate image of the 'autonomous' man. And such a man must essentially bear an existence that is torn between his inalienable spontaneity — which history has misconstrued in his conscience as necessarily evil — and the delusionary demands imposed on him by modernity's ideal of the sovereign man. For Nietzsche, it is this internal struggle wherefrom emerges the experience of 'guilt' or 'bad conscience'.

Seen thus, it is not a surprise that for Nietzsche, 'bad conscience' is an 'illness... but an illness in the same way that pregnancy is an illness'.[40]After all, it is 'bad conscience' that signals the birth of a docile, 'tamed and domesticated' man who fights his 'animal self' and the lucrative call of his spontaneity. When understood in its context, for Nietzsche, "bad conscience", is thus:

> ...the deep sickness to which man was obliged to succumb under the pressure of that most fundamental of all changes– when he found himself definitively locked in the spell of society and peace... in a single stroke, all their instincts were devalued and "suspended"... reduced... to thinking, drawing conclusions, calculating, combining

> causes and effects, to their "consciousness"...[It is a] ...result of a violent separation from his animal past, of a leap which is also a fall into new situations and conditions of existence, of a declaration of war against the old instincts, which previously constituted the basis of his strength, pleasure, and fearfulness.[41] [The product of the inner struggle between] ...the old instincts... making their demands [that are now] difficult and seldom possible to obey'.[42]

A patient reading of Nietzsche's examination of this struggle between the illusory web of significations created by us and our natural spontaneity, especially as offered in his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, appears to take the form of a proto-psychoanalytic analysis. In that, Nietzsche's intent is to make us recognize the hard truth that irrespective of the suppressive force exerted by our cultivated cultural memory and the ensuing delusions that it generates, what one must ultimately face, and come to terms with, is the essential and immediate nature of one's autonomy and the entailed creative drive — that is, one's spontaneity towards creation.

As Nietzsche sees it, within the priestly value-paradigm, it is the demand of this creative drive — which when unheard, suppressed, and proscribed to manifest itself in the world — that begins to express itself through a violent 'inward turn' notwithstanding its convoluted form.[43] It is here that the '*instinct of freedom*' [or what is the same as *will to power*] is forcibly made 'invisible and made latent', 'forced back, trodden down, incarcerated within' and made to vent 'itself upon itself'.[44] It is through this phenomenon of turning man's basic instincts inwards — what Nietzsche calls the *internalization of man* — that man transforms himself into a site of 'self-violation' and 'artistic cruelty', 'branding oneself with a will', as a 'soul voluntarily divided against itself; a soul which makes itself suffer for the pleasure of it'.[45] In Nietzsche's analysis, it is the suppression of our autonomy — the suppression of our spontaneous creative drive — that surfaces in this convoluted form within the priestly paradigm as the *moral will*, and which materializes itself as a distortive force demanding an effacement of the corporeal self.[46] For Nietzsche, it is precisely the suppression of our autonomy that expresses itself as *nihilism*.

For Nietzsche, the aristocratic framework of signification, by

contrast, manages to prevent the emergence of such a distorted force even within the frames of a "community" because there they merely bracket their natural spontaneity. Their spontaneity of self-assertion is merely put on a temporal hold — is merely deferred — rather than eternally suppressed. Though the autonomous self within the aristocratic paradigm of values *consciously* suspends the scope of expressing its inherent spontaneity when it finds itself within its created space of a 'community of equals'; it is nevertheless constantly on the lookout for avenues to express its *will to power,* or its spontaneous creativity, upon the 'common people and half-animals'.[47] It is precisely this consciousness on their part for the necessity to 'let loose' their spontaneity at regular intervals that necessitate avenues of wars and conquests. But from a value-paradigm that is external to this aristocratic form of life, such expressions of their creative drive *appear* as senseless violence. The expressions of their creative will appear as an unnecessary display of strength to those who are at the receiving end of this bargain. And it is in this that the priestly revolt fabricates its originary legitimization. Thus, the call for eternal suppression of our spontaneity within the priestly paradigm inaugurates the emergence of autonomy as a demand of violence upon the 'whole of his old animal self', that is, upon his corporeal self.[48]

Thus for Nietzsche, the war inaugurated by the advent of the priestly framework of signification upon our natural spontaneity, with its thick illusory web of meanings, opens up the avenue for our natural spontaneity to manifest itself as an active distorting force that promotes self-negation and enigmatic values and ideals of selflessness and self-sacrifice. In this sense, bad conscience is not a dormant and innate faculty of moral intuition as the modern mind takes it to be. It is rather a fabricated, reactive and a distortive force that colours the realization of the deplorability of one's embodied self — the 'ugly' — as being latent with the possibility to transform into that which is 'beautiful', and subsequently into 'beauty as such'.[49] It is through this imaginative play of contrariety that the distortive force of autonomy brings forth the idea of man as a 'being in process', as 'a being in preparation'. It thus projects man as a being who is *yet* to realize that 'he is an end in himself' — a goal

that is yet to be achieved — and deludes him into seeing his present *ugly* corporeal self as 'a pathway', 'a bridge', 'a great promise'.[50]

Nietzsche's final submission seems to be that modernity's conception of 'the sovereign man' as the "autonomous man", even if it does manage to free itself of all explicit religious markers, can nevertheless never disown its underlying heritage of *this* 'bad conscience' — of *this* fundamental genealogy from where its moral values emerge. As Nietzsche sees it, it is precisely because of Kant's partaking of this heritage that the Kantian man is eternally directed towards the ideal of autonomy as a 'promise' given by him to himself — an ideal that precisely demands the very form of self-denial in its abject rejection of any demands of the phenomenal realm, and thereby a complete denial of one's natural instincts, which are seen with the vilest form of contempt. For Nietzsche, Kant's reading of 'bad conscience' as a conspicuous sign of our intrinsic moral nature, rather than a distorted expression of our autonomy, is what sustains the Kantian paradigm of morality. In this secularized avatar, bad conscience is posited beyond any reproach, at least, in Kant. And consequently, for Nietzsche, the rise of atheism in modern times is not a herald of a 'second' return to 'innocence'. Given that atheism upholds the same values of self-effacement in the garb of *humanism*. In that, it in fact raises 'bad conscience', a historical product of our own fabrication, into the realm of the natural itself. In Nietzsche's examination, if atheism is truly to be atheistic, then it must not merely give up the idea of "God" but also the long shadow of values that this idea inspires. Nietzsche writes:

> After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave– a tremendous. Gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown– And we– we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.[51]

The question that requires our attention, if we take Nietzsche seriously is thus this — how, and in what forms, is this internalization of man and his secularized 'bad conscience' manifesting itself in the present? That is, how is our freedom towards spontaneous creativity — our autonomy — expressing itself *now*? In what latent

contradictions do we live, and in what contradictions does the very idea of the "autonomous" individual sustain itself? For the call of autonomy, as Nietzsche highlights, when made from within the confines of a "culture" is surely a contradiction, even if we fail to see it as that.

NOTES

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996 (1887) *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. Translated by Douglas Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Henceforth, cited as GM followed by the Essay and the aphorism number.
2. See, GM, Preface, §2.
3. See, GM, I, §2.
4. GM, I, §6.
5. Ibid.
6. Within Nietzsche's genealogical tracing, unsymbolic terms that once denoted one's position in the socio-political hierarchy is what comes to designate one's position in the hierarchy of 'spirituality' within the crafted folds of the priestly paradigm of values.
7. GM, I, §7.
8. GM, I, §6.
9. GM, I, §7.
10. See, GM, I §8. Nietzsche uses the term "ressentiment" to imply a maleficent feeling of hostility and frustration that is rooted in the inability of the *plebeians* to translate their hatred for the powerful into an act of self-assertion, given that they are both powerless and weak to do so. We shall use the English term "resentment" to mean this for lack of a better term, even though the English term does not carry the aspect of "frustration" that is essential to the Nietzschean notion of *ressentiment*.
11. GM, I, §15.
12. See, GM, I, §10. For Nietzsche the aristocratic table of values arrange themselves within the rubric of the "good" and the "bad", while the priestly table of values arrange themselves within the rubric of the "good" and the "evil". Characterizing their difference in terms of their denotative powers, Nietzsche takes the former pair of terms as broadly describing corporeal qualities, while he takes the latter pair of terms as broadly signifying abstract, and intangible qualities.

13. For a study of the Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* that is centered on the thematic of "ressentiment" in Nietzsche, see, Elgat, Guy. 2017. *Nietzsche's Psychology of Ressentiment: Revenge and Justice in On the Genealogy of Morals.* (New York: Routledge). For an exploration of Nietzsche moral philosophy through the various psychological concepts that Nietzsche invokes see, Alfano, Mark. 2019. *Nietzsche's Moral Psychology.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
14. For Nietzsche, the 'crucified god' as a 'symbol' of the priestly paradigm is clearly the ultimate manifestation of such a demand for self-erasure (See, *GM,* I, §8).
15. See, *GM,* I, §9; *GM,* I, §11; *GM,* I, §12.
16. *GM,* I, §10.
17. *GM,* I, §13.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. Also see, *GM,* I, §14.
20. *GM,* I, §13.
21. For a general introduction to the *Wille-Willkür* distinction, see, Allison, Henry E. 1990. *Kant's Theory of Freedom.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 129-136. For a distinct take on this distinction where autonomy and spontaneity are distinguished and aligned along the *Wille-Willkür* division, see, Beck, Lewis White. 1960. *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 176-181.
22. But as Nietzsche sees it, for this relation between the "ought" and the "can" to hold, as depicted by Kant, the "will" that creates the "ought" and the "I" that performs the "ought" must secure the same degree of sovereignty. But this is surely an impossibility in Kant, given that the "I" that performs the "ought" is bound in its corporeality to *obedience* by the very bonds of an eternal promise to abide by the "ought".
23. *GM,* II, §1.
24. *GM,* I, §12.
25. *GS,* §125.
26. Though we do not engage in a comparative analysis between Rousseau's and Nietzsche's philosophical stances here, for those interested see, Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 1996 (1991). *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
27. Nietzsche takes language to be essentially bound to the realm of the phenomenal and, thereby, to the realm of our created illusions of meaning and sense. For Nietzsche there is no language outside the phenomenal realm as much as there is no phenomenal realm without

language. They are, for Nietzsche, coextensive. It is precisely for this reason that for Nietzsche, the shareability of meaning is coextensive with the shareability of language. In a sense, Nietzsche anticipates the Wittgensteinian thought, that to share a language is to share a *form of life*.

28. The aristocratic nobles, contrary to what we may come to easily believe– is not *yet* an 'overman', given that not all their actions bear the mark of spontaneity. A careful reading of the *Genealogy* clearly pronounces that this mark of spontaneity is at best in a state of dormancy when these nobles find themselves 'among equals' (*inter pares*). Here they come to be 'strictly restricted by custom, respect, usage, gratitude, even more by circumspection and jealousy, and... in their relations with one another prove so inventive in matters of consideration, self-control, tenderness, fidelity, pride, and friendship' (*GM*, I, §11). After all, the originary mark of the self's spontaneity is *necessarily* restrained in any social context, given that the 'social' demands an 'other-orientedness', an orientation that is outwardly. Spontaneous acts are necessarily subjective as these acts are, for Nietzsche, the originary expressions of one's subjective creativity– the urge to provide meaning– or a *will to power*. Accordingly, the *being* of the 'noble spirit' is marked by spontaneity only when they '*regress*' or '*go back*' to the 'innocent consciousness' from the 'confinement and enclosure within a peaceful community' and 'enjoy freedom from all social constraint' as within the context of a war (*GM*, I, §11). The 'noble spirit', at best, *approximates* 'the overcoming of man', both ontologically– since the 'noble spirit' is not always 'who he is' given that he too finds himself bound by the confines of high *culture* or 'morality of customs', notwithstanding its inverted structure of values, in contrast to the priestly paradigm of values. As Nietzsche goes on to emphasize, 'communality' that emerges within the structure of 'morality of customs' necessarily hinges upon 'responsible actions' with regards to equals, even though, given its exclusive nature, it is not yet an overarching *culture* for all. What, however, separates the aristocrats of the 'high culture' from the *plebeians* of the 'priestly culture' is that they never lose awareness of their own autonomy and are always careful to seek avenues to manifest their assertive and spontaneous nature.
29. What is usually emphasized in Nietzsche's philosophy is his *Individualism*, which is then generally presented as a celebratory thesis. Nietzsche's emphasis on the primacy of the individual is

well established. However, in my interpretation, Nietzsche's thesis of Individualism is more of a cautionary revealing of the state in which the individual finds himself once he overcomes the morality of the herd, that is, overcomes his history. My reading of Nietzsche aligns itself in terms of its foundational orientation with the views of Julian Young. See, Young, Julian. 2006. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). For essays that explore the possibility of reading Nietzsche's philosophy beyond his Individualism, see *Individual and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy.* 2015. Edited by Julian Young. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Also see, Ridley, Aaron. 1998. *Nietzsche's Conscience: Six Character Studies from the Genealogy.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

Further, Nietzsche's philosophy has been interpreted, and is open to a variety of (mis)interpretations. In fact, it is this facet of his writings that allowed the appropriation of his philosophy in the USA by readers who placed themselves at different points within the Left–Right ideological spectrum. For a history of the reception of Nietzsche's philosophy in the USA, see, Ratner-Rosenhagen, Jennifer. 2012. *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and his Ideas.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

30. GM, II, §24.
31. GM, I, §12.
32. See, GM, II, §1.
33. Ibid.
34. GM, II, §1.
35. We must emphasize here that *the act* and *the will to act* — that is, the promise and its realization — in the *genuine* sovereign man or the *overman* is such that this division is rendered superfluous given that the act and the agent seamlessly merge into one without the mediation of the faculty of 'memory'.
36. GM, II, §2.
37. GM, II, §1.
38. In Nietzsche's analysis, modernity's image of the promised autonomous and sovereign self has been made possible precisely through the invention of 'memory', a faculty that is sanctioned by an intricately woven structure of a calculus of pain — first through the postulate of the 'wrath of god' and then through the modern secularized structures of 'punishment' of the institutions of law and justice.

39 For Nietzsche, memory, as a necessary faculty for modernity's ideal of the 'sovereign man', thus 'unfortunately' shares its origins with this

very principle that was invoked by the pre-historic man who 'guessed that the most powerful aid to memory was pain' in the creation of a community. Thus, the beginning of what Nietzsche calls 'the enormous labour' or the 'morality of customs– the special work of man on himself' to make himself 'calculable' that begins '*prior to the onset of history*' is what precisely provides the foundations for both the priestly paradigm of morals, as well as modernity's ideal of the 'sovereign man', notwithstanding their self-conscious positioning of themselves in contrast, and in stark opposition, to one another (See, *GM*, II, §2; §3).

40. *GM*, II, §19.
41. *GM*, II, §16.
42. *GM*, II, §17.
43. See, *GM*, II, §16.
44. *GM*, II, §17.
45. *GM*, II, §18.
46. For a general introduction to Nietzsche's moral philosophy with explicit emphasis on his *Genealogy*, see Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. 2014. (London: Taylor & Francis). For a broader overview of his moral philosophy see, May, Simon. 1999. *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on 'Morality'*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press); Stern, Thomas. 2020. *Nietzsche's Ethics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
47. *GM*, II, §17.
48. *GM*, II, §18.
49. *See, GM*, II, §18.
50. See, *GM*, II, §16.
51. *GS*, §108.

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